

# **GENDER SENSITIVE JOURNALISM AND TELEVISION MEDIA IN SERBIA AND CROATIA**

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institutions and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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## ABSTRACT

My thesis engages with controversies in feminist media scholarship regarding the objectives of, and the possibilities for, feminist cultural politics in the mainstream media. More specifically, I examine the principles and practices of gender sensitive journalism, and the opportunities for it in the television media. I contribute to feminist media scholarship by identifying the main aspects of feminist normative ideas about gender equality in journalistic content and by offering more insight into how different factors enable or hinder feminist agency in the mainstream media.

My project is also the first full-length study in the areas of gender and journalism and feminist media activism in Serbia and Croatia, and it fills a gap in gender and media research on the two countries after 2000, the year when the authoritarian regimes were ousted. In this period, the local gender- and media-related initiatives and the requirements with regard to the EU integration processes, have spurred women's NGOs' media activism, leading to the creation of pockets of pro-feminist journalism, but also to a generally greater media attention to gender-related issues. I explore these developments by analyzing two main sets of data: the selected Serbian and Croatian television programmes and my interviews with their producers and feminist media activists from women's NGOs, who have tried to introduce aspects of gender sensitive journalism into the mainstream media.

By interrogating feminist normative ideas about gender equality in the media at the levels of feminist media scholarship, advocacy and journalistic practice, I identified the following major features of gender sensitive journalism: provision of information about, and opportunities for deliberation, of 'women's issues' which are not limited to the private sphere; increased and diversified participation of female sources across the board; and provision of diverse media

representations of women in which they can recognize their historically specific experiences. In addition, gender sensitive journalism seeks to avoid the widespread forms of sexism in the media such as: gender segregation across genres along the line of public private division; limiting and derogatory representations of women; and particular forms of sexist treatment of female sources and agents, such as highlighting their gender, appearance, age, marital status etc.

My project also shows how the following three factors inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in Serbian and Croatian television media: discourses about gender and feminism; professional journalistic values within different types of journalism; and feminist media activism. I found that pro-feminist journalists often successfully negotiated their professional duties with their feminist interests at the level of their day-to-day work. However, gender sensitive journalism was possible only in the programmes and channels that supported the institutional and critical forms of journalism. Furthermore, pro-feminist journalists' agency was more limited at the levels of programme and channel policy. In this regard, Croatian feminist media activists have generally had better opportunities than their Serbian colleagues – with some exceptions – due to the faster institutionalization of gender equality politics after 2000, better opportunities for public service and critical journalism, and more intense feminist media activism.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: GENDER SENSITIVE JOURNALISM AND TELEVISION..</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.2. The Media, Citizenship and the Public Sphere .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2.3. Feminist Cultural Politics and the Media .....</b>	<b>19</b>
2.3.1. Covering ‘women’s issues’ and perspectives .....	20
2.3.2. ‘Realistic’, ‘positive’ and diverse representations of women .....	26
2.3.3. Eliminating sexism from the media .....	30
2.3.4. Implications for gender sensitive journalism and my research .....	34
<b>2.4. Conditions that Advance or Hinder Gender Sensitive Journalism .....</b>	<b>36</b>
2.4.1. Discourses about gender and feminism .....	37
2.4.2. Professional journalistic values and different types of journalism.....	40
2.4.3. Feminist media activism .....	51
<b>2.5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: GENDER, POLITICS AND THE MEDIA IN SERBIA AND CROATIA AFTER 2000 .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3. 1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3. 2. The Serbian and Croatian Political Contexts after 2000 .....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>3.3. Television Scenes in Serbia and Croatia .....</b>	<b>65</b>
3.3.1. Television as a propaganda tool or ‘apolitical’ entertainment (1990-2000).....	65
3.3.2. Towards the public service model and regulated commercial television (2000- ).....	69
<b>3.4. Gender Politics and the Media in Serbia and Croatia .....</b>	<b>76</b>
3.4.1. Women as mothers of the Nation and sexual commodities (1990-2000).....	76
3.4.2. Towards the institutionalization of gender equality politics (2000- ) .....	82
<b>3.5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY: A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE RESEARCH PROCESS .....</b>	<b>102</b>

<b>4.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>102</b>
<b>4.2. Television Programmes .....</b>	<b>103</b>
4.2.1. Criteria for the selection of the medium and the type of television programmes .....	103
4.2.2. Overview of the data and the gathering process.....	106
4.2.3. Data analysis strategy .....	122
<b>4.3. Interviews and Documents .....</b>	<b>127</b>
4.3.1. Selection criteria and the overview of the data .....	127
4.3.2. The method and the research process .....	133
4.3.3. Ethical concerns and my position as a researcher .....	136
4.3.4. Data analysis strategy .....	139
<b>4.4. The Comparison between Serbia and Croatia .....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>4.5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>145</b>

## **CHAPTER 5: SEXIST DISCOURSES ABOUT FEMININITY AND TELEVISION JOURNALISM ..... 146**

<b>5.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>5.2. Sexist Discourses and ‘Women’s Issues’, Participation and Representations .....</b>	<b>148</b>
5.2.1. Daytime talk shows: Sanya and Catherine.....	148
5.2.2. Evening talk shows: Latinitsa and Key.....	157
5.2.3. Activist programming: Speck of Respect, B92 Investigates and Fade In .....	166
<b>5.3. Serbian and Croatian Television Programmes Compared.....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>5.4. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>173</b>

## **CHAPTER 6: FEMINIST DISCOURSES ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY AND TELEVISION JOURNALISM ..... 176**

<b>6.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>6.2. Feminist Discourses and ‘Women’s Issues’, Participation and Representations .....</b>	<b>178</b>
6.2.1. Daytime talk shows: Sanya and Catherine.....	178
6.2.2. Evening talk shows: Latinitsa and Key.....	187
6.2.3. Activist programming: Fade In, Speck of Respect and B92 Investigates .....	202
<b>6.3. Serbian and Croatian Programmes Compared .....</b>	<b>212</b>
<b>6.4. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>218</b>

## **CHAPTER 7: JOURNALISTS’ ACCOUNTS OF THEIR WORK: FACTORS THAT ADVANCE OR HINDER GENDER SENSITIVE JOURNALISM... 222**

<b>7.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>7.2. Discourses about Gender and Feminism.....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>7.3. Professional Journalistic Values.....</b>	<b>232</b>
7.3.1. Hierarchy of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ issues .....	233
7.3.2. Novelty and topicality .....	234
7.3.3. Impartiality and balance of views .....	237
7.3.4. Public and audiences’ interests.....	242
7.3.5. Personalization.....	245
7.3.6. Credibility of sources.....	249
<b>7.4. The Agency of Pro-feminist Journalists .....</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>7.5. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>261</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 8: WOMEN’S MEDIA ACTIVISM AND GENDER SENSITIVE JOURNALISM.....</b>	 <b>265</b>
<b>8.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>265</b>
<b>8.2. Women’s NGOs’ Understanding of Gender Sensitive Journalism .....</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>8.3. The Impact of Women’s Media Activism on Television Journalism.....</b>	<b>280</b>
8.3.1. Women’s NGOs and pro-feminist journalism .....	281
8.3.2. Feminist media activists and popular television programmes .....	290
<b>8.4. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>303</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION .....</b>	 <b>305</b>
<b>9.1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>9.2. Gender Sensitive Journalism as a Normative Ideal.....</b>	<b>306</b>
<b>9.3. Gender Sensitivity and the Serbian and Croatian Television Programmes.....</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>9.4. Factors that Advance or Hinder Gender Sensitive Journalism in Serbia and Croatia .....</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>9.5. In Fine .....</b>	<b>334</b>
 <b>APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....</b>	 <b>340</b>
 <b>REFERENCES .....</b>	 <b>342</b>



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- B.a.b.e. – Budi aktivna. Budi emancipirana. [Be active. Be emancipated.]
- DOS – Demokratska opozicija Srbije [Democratic Opposition of Serbia]
- DS – Demokratska stranka [Democratic Party]
- DSS – Demokratska stranka Srbije [Democratic Party of Serbia]
- GMMP – The Global Media Monitoring Project
- HDZ – Hrvatska demokratska zajednica [Croatian Democratic Union]
- HND – Hrvatsko novinarsko društvo [Croatian Journalists' Association]
- HRT – Hrvatska Radio Televizija [Croatian Radio Television]
- NUNS – Nezavisno udruženje novinara Srbije [Serbian Independent Association of Journalists]
- RRA – Radio difuzna agencija Republike Srbije [Serbian Republic Broadcasting Agency]
- RTS – Radio Televizija Srbije [Radio Television of Serbia]
- SDP – Socijaldemokratska partija [Social Democratic Party]
- SPS – Socijalistička partija Srbije [Socialist Party of Serbia]
- UO RTS – Upravni Odbor RTS-a [Managing Board of RTS]
- VEM – Vijeće za elektroničke medije [Croatian Council for Electronic Media]
- VURS – Vladin Ured za ravnopravnost spolova [Croatian Government. Office for Gender Equality]
- WACC – World Association for Christian Communication
- ŽMH – Ženska mreža Hrvatske [Women's Network of Croatia]
- ŽS NUNS-a – Ženska sekcija NUNS-a [Women's Section of NUNS]

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Feminist criticisms of sexist media practices have often been followed by demands for the specific changes that would make the media more egalitarian in terms of gender. Such demands, exemplified by calls for more coverage of ‘women’s issues’ or greater women’s participation as sources, were driven by a set of normative ideas about what gender equality in the media would involve. These ideas were not only formulated and debated in feminist media scholarship, but they informed feminist media activism and journalistic practice of media professionals supportive of women’s movements. Some of these ideas, e.g. that the media are a distorted mirror and that they should provide a more realistic reflection of women’s lives and contributions, were widely dismissed by many feminist scholars as flawed both conceptually and politically (Gill 2007; Rakow 2001; van Zoonen 1994), but have been highly prominent in much of feminist media activism, e.g. in Global Media Monitoring Project (Gallagher 2005, 18). However, not only the notions of what gender equality in the media would look like have been controversial, but also the questions of how such a change could be achieved. In feminist media scholarship, the most common disagreements in this regard concerned the questions about the possibilities for the feminist agency of female and/or feminist journalists in the mainstream media.

The disagreements about the ideal of, and the possibilities for, the feminist change in the mainstream media have been my first reason to explore these concerns in my thesis. However, my interest in these issues has been closely intertwined with my other interest in feminist media research on two particular contexts, that of the contemporary Serbia and Croatia. In the post-

authoritarian period after 2000, Serbia and Croatia present interesting cases for my research concerns, as many legislative and institutional changes have also spurred feminist activist attempts to tackle gender inequality in and through the mainstream media. Women's NGOs forged links with some pro-feminist journalists and feminist perspectives gained more access to the mainstream media generally. These developments provide suitable material for exploring not only feminist ideas about the desirable changes in the media, but also the ways in which they are pursued and the opportunities for them in the mainstream media. Within the mainstream media, I have chosen to focus on television journalism, as television is by far the most popular and influential medium in the two countries.<sup>1</sup>

My thesis, therefore, interrogates the principles and practices of feminist journalism, on the one hand, and the opportunities for it in the mainstream (television) media, on the other hand. It uses the term gender sensitive journalism to refer to the feminist ideal of critical journalism that pursues gender equality in and through the media, as that term is used in feminist media activism to refer to such a journalistic practice. For example, Women's Network of Croatia's award for journalists who advance gender equality was called Award for Gender Sensitive Journalism. In exploring feminist ideas, practices, opportunities and obstacles related to gender sensitive journalism in the particular contexts of post-2000 Serbia and Croatia, my research is driven by the following questions: What is gender sensitive journalism? How are its elements present in, or missing from, the Serbian and Croatian television programmes? What factors advance or hinder gender sensitive journalism in the Serbian and Croatian television media? I explore these questions by analyzing two main sets of data: the selected Serbian and Croatian television programmes and my interviews with their producers and feminist media activists who

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<sup>1</sup> I discuss my choice of the medium, the particular television programmes and their episodes in Section 4.2.

have tried to introduce aspects of gender sensitive journalism into the mainstream media. By examining these questions, my thesis contributes to three areas of scholarship: feminist media studies, journalism studies and the research on contemporary Serbia and Croatia. As I discuss the relevant questions in these areas of scholarship in detail in the Chapters 2 and 3, here I only briefly explain what my thesis aims to achieve with regard to each of them.

My research engages with two specific areas of feminist media studies: debates about feminist cultural politics concerning the media, and research on gender and journalism. Discussions of the ways in which feminists have sought gender equality in the mainstream media have been rather scattered across different areas of feminist media studies. They have been discussed in overviews of the history of the field (Cirksena and Cuklanz 1992; Gill 2007; van Zoonen 1994), studies of feminist media advocacy (Byerly 2004; Byerly and Ross 2006; Gallagher 2001), specialist women's journalism (Arthurs 1994; Coward 1987; Feldman 2000; Mitchell 2000; Werden 1996) and media representations of women (D'Acci 1994; Macdonald 1995; Tuchman 1978a). My research contributes to these discussions by pulling these scattered arguments together and identifying the main controversies, problems and aspects of the feminist ideas about the desirable changes in media representations and treatment of women. As a result of my exploration of this part of feminist media scholarship, I propose a definition of gender sensitive journalism, as an expression of a set of feminist normative ideas about what gender equality in journalism would entail. I also investigate how this set of ideas is pursued in the actual journalistic practice of the Serbian and Croatian pro-feminist journalists, and how it is formulated and promoted by the feminist media advocates in the two countries.

Furthermore, by looking at the actual journalistic practice with regard to gender sensitive journalism, I engage with the question of the possibilities for feminist agency in the mainstream

media, which has been a matter of disagreements in feminist research on gender and journalism. A substantial portion of feminist scholarship on this question has debated whether female journalists practice journalism differently and whether a ‘critical mass’ of women in the media industries would create conditions more favourable for women and their media representation (Beasley 1997; Christmas 1997; De Bruin 2004; Djerf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson 2004; Frankson 2001; Mills 1997; Weaver 1997; van Zoonen 1998a). While the question of female journalists’ relationship to the sexist journalistic practices is a legitimate research concern in its own right, I believe that such a focus is problematic with regard to the question of feminist agency in the mainstream media. As many women are obviously not feminist and some are anti-feminist, a more appropriate question for studying the possibilities for the feminist change in the media concerns the agency of pro-feminist journalists and not merely women.

With regard to this question, feminist scholars have been divided into those who argued that professional, organizational and institutional constraints posed insurmountable obstacles to feminist journalists they studied (e.g. van Zoonen 1989, 1994) and those who acknowledged and explored such constraints but also found that female journalists who were sympathetic to women’s movements often found the ways to pursue their feminist interests in their work (Barker-Plummer 2000; Byerly 2004; Freeman 2000; Mills 1997). My research supports the second view as I show both how different factors limit the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media, but also how pro-feminist journalists negotiate such limitations. In particular, I draw on Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson’s (2004) research. They found that the place of women in the news depended on three main factors: notions about gender, journalistic ideals, and agency of individual women and men. In an extended version of this argument, I approach my research concerns by investigating how discourses about gender and

feminism, the professional values within particular types of journalism, such as committed and neutral, serious and popular, and the agency of feminist media advocates all inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the Serbian and Croatian television media.

By exploring how different types of journalism affect the potential for gender sensitivity in the mainstream television journalism, my thesis also contributes to the critical research of professional journalistic values within journalism studies. In order to uncover a variety of ways in which gender sensitive journalism is enabled or hindered by professional journalistic values, I chose to investigate not only the committed journalism of the Serbian and Croatian pro-feminist journalists, who have mainly worked on different types of news or current affairs programmes, but also the opportunities for feminist approaches in popular television genres, such as talk shows, because they regularly cover gender-related issues and sometimes involve feminist participants. My decision to examine both pro-feminist journalism and the opportunities for feminist approaches in popular television talk shows was also motivated by the disagreements in feminist and other media scholarship over the potential of popular journalism to further citizenship and circulate oppositional perspectives of marginalized groups such as women.

The tabloidization of the media since the mid-eighties has spurred research into tabloid journalism in general (Blumler 1999; Brants 1998; Bonner and McKay 2007; Connell 1992; Gripsrud 1992; Dahlgren and Sparks 1992; Franklin 1997; Harrington 2008; Macdonald 1998, 2000; 2003; Sparks 1992, 2000; Turner 1999; van Zoonen 1993, 2005) and some of its particular forms, such as talk shows, in particular (Aslama 2000; Carpignano et al. 1993; Gamson 1998; Gill 2007; Leurdijk 2000; Livingstone and Lunt 1994; Murdock 2000; Rapping 2000; Shattuc 2005; Squire 1997; Timberg 2000). While some scholars have criticized tabloidization as a demise of serious journalism (Blumler 1999; Franklin 1997; Sparks 1992, 2000), others have

argued that popular journalistic forms, such as talk shows, and entertainment in general, provide more opportunities for the representation of marginalized groups or further political participation and citizenship (Carpignano et al. 1993; Livingstone and Lunt 1994; van Zoonen 2005). Feminist scholars have also been divided over whether talk shows advance feminist perspectives (Shattuc 2005; Squire 1997) or present feminist issues in psychologized and individualized ways (Gill 2007; Rapping 2000). As the programmes in my sample combine elements of different types of journalism, my research contributes to these debates as it also shows how journalists' orientations towards 'serious' and popular journalism affect the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the Serbian and Croatian television media.

Finally, my thesis contributes to feminist media research on Serbia and Croatia. While the Serbian and Croatian feminist scholars have written about media discourses about gender in the context of the nineties (See Section 3.4.2), the post-authoritarian period after 2000, which I focus on, has not received much attention. Feminist studies of this period mainly include small quantitative studies that show marginalization of women and 'women's issues' in the mainstream media (Gallagher, 2005; Isanović 2006; Jemrić 2003a; Jovović 2004; Milivojević 2004; Peščanik 2006; Spears and Seydegart 2000; Vasiljević and Andjelković-Kanzleiter 2008). The rest includes individual papers that cover the following issues: sexism in advertising (Kostić 2002), pornography in tabloid press (Kronja 2006), sexist language use (Savić 2004), press coverage of sex trafficking (Dekić 2004) and violence against women (Jemrić 2003b; Sarnavka and Kunac 2006; Veselinović 2003), and debates about hate speech against women (Minić 2009). My thesis is thus the first full-length study that systematically examines the gendered character of television journalism with regard to the professional journalistic values and feminist media activism in Serbia and Croatia. Also, it is the first to address these issues by examining the

impact of the post-authoritarian political contexts, characteristics of the television scenes and official gender politics on the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in Serbia and Croatia.

In the following three chapters I define the theoretical, historical and methodological frameworks of my project. Chapter 2 engages with the questions of feminist cultural politics and the possibilities for the feminist agency in the mainstream media, in order to identify the main features of gender sensitive journalism and the factors that advance or hinder such a journalistic practice. The chapter begins by situating my concerns with gender sensitive journalism in relation to the broader questions about the role of journalism in society, as discussed in the literature on the relationships between the media, citizenship and the public sphere. It proceeds by discussing the common feminist demands from the media in order to arrive at a definition of gender sensitive journalism, which is a result of my critical engagement with the widespread features of feminist cultural politics with regard to journalism. In the last part of this chapter, I draw on feminist research on gender and journalism and critical analyses of journalistic professional values to identify the ways in which the three main factors – discourses about gender and feminism, professional journalistic values, and feminist media activism – affect the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media.

Chapter 3 situates my project with respect to the significant aspects of the contemporary Serbian and Croatian contexts. It charts the main characteristics of the post-authoritarian political contexts of Serbia and Croatia after 2000, the year when the regimes of Franjo Tudjman and Slobodan Milošević were ousted in the two countries. In the light of these broader contexts, it particularly looks at the developments in the television media scenes and gender politics to identify the ways in which they have advanced or hindered gender sensitive journalism. After situating my research topic contextually, I explain my methodological decisions and provide an



account of the research process in Chapter 4. The first part explains my criteria for the selection of the medium, the types of television programmes, individual programmes and their episodes. It also provides brief descriptions of the selected programmes, the overview of my sample, and a discussion of the ways in which I apply Fairclough's (1992, 1995, 2003) approach to critical discourse analysis in my programme analysis. The second part discusses the other part of my data: my interviews with journalists and feminist media activists, as well as the documents and publications that are related to the selected programmes, channels or feminist media activism. I explain the principles through which I arrived at my sample, discuss the research process and my position as a feminist researcher, and outline my data analysis strategy. Lastly, I explain my reasons for approaching my research questions through a comparison between Serbia and Croatia.

Over the next two chapters, I analyze the selected programmes with regard to their approaches to three areas important to gender sensitive journalism, which I identified in Chapter 2: coverage of 'women's issues', women's participation and representations of women. As I have argued that discourses about gender and feminism exert strong influence on the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism, Chapter 5 looks at the ways in which sexist discourses about femininity inform the programmes approaches to 'women's issues', participation and representations. Chapter 6 examines how feminist discourses about gender inequality influence these three areas of concern to gender sensitive journalism. On the grounds of my analysis, I point out the similarities and differences between the pro-feminist programmes and the talk shows, as well as between the Serbian and Croatian television programmes.

Chapters 7 and 8 explore the production context of the selected programmes by analyzing the interviews with their producers and feminist media activists, as well as the relevant

documents and publications, e.g. women's NGOs manuals for journalists. In Chapter 7, I analyze my interviews with the Serbian and Croatian pro-feminist and talk show journalists to uncover the ways in which their disposition towards discourses about gender and feminism, their dominant orientations with regard to different types of journalism, and the agency of pro-feminist journalists influence the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in their programmes and the television channels where they work. In Chapter 8, I explore the Serbian and Croatian feminist media activists' understandings of gender sensitive journalism on the one hand, and their impact on the mainstream television journalism on the other hand. In both of these chapters, I interpret my findings with regard to the relevant characteristics of the broader Serbian and Croatian contexts, which I outlined in Chapter 3, in order to explain the similarities and differences in the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the two countries. Finally, Chapter 9 sums up and synthesizes my findings, discusses their contributions to the particular fields of scholarship, addresses their possible limitations and proposes the areas of future research.

## **Chapter 2: Gender Sensitive Journalism and Television**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter aims to define gender sensitive journalism and to outline the conditions that foster or hinder such journalistic practices in the mainstream media. It sets out a theoretical framework for my examination of the ways in which elements of gender sensitive journalism are present in, or missing from, the Serbian and Croatian television media and the factors that inform the opportunities for such journalistic practice in them. In discussing these issues, I draw on three bodies of literature. Firstly, I situate gender sensitive journalism with respect to the broader normative ideas about the roles of journalism and the media in society. I argue that gender sensitive journalism should be seen as part of the media's obligations with regard to citizenship. There are four main ways in which the media should enable citizenship and they concern: provision of information and the enabling of citizens' deliberation, participation and representation in the public sphere.

Secondly, I address these broad obligations of the media with regard to the specificities of the media's provision for, and treatment of, women. By drawing on the feminist arguments about the ways in which the media could be made more egalitarian in terms of gender, gender sensitive journalism is defined more specifically as: provision of information and opportunities for deliberation about issues of specific concern to women; greater and more diverse women's participation as sources and subjects; and more diverse representations of women. In addition,

gender sensitive journalism is also defined in negative terms, namely, as the elimination of sexist representations and treatment of women.

Thirdly, I explore the major factors that advance or hinder gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media. Drawing on the feminist and other critical analyses of journalism, I argue that the possibilities for practicing gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media are shaped by three main factors: discourses about gender and feminism, journalistic professional values, and feminist media activism.

## 2.2. The Media, Citizenship and the Public Sphere

The media have commonly been seen as fundamental for citizenship as they are the main forum of the public sphere. They are, therefore, essential for provision of information and the enabling of citizens' deliberation, participation and representation (Curran 1991; Dalhgren 1995; Jones 2006; Murdock, 1992; Nolan 2006; Wahl-Jorgensen 2006). However, as Murdock (1992) argues, in order to fulfill their roles with regard to citizenship, the media need to ensure openness and diversity in their provision for, and treatment of, different social groups. While media diversity has been addressed in different ways,<sup>2</sup> its meaning that interests me here relates to the media representation of the historically marginalized and devalued social groups. In this sense, media diversity has been commonly defined in terms of the elimination of negative stereotypes of these groups; their increased participation as producers and sources across the board; and more space in the media for their perspectives and issues of specific concern to them. The typical examples of this approach to media diversity can be found in journalists' guidelines such as BBC

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<sup>2</sup> According to Hoffmann-Riem (1987), as cited in McQuail (1992, 144) diversity can be sought with respect to: formats and issues; opinions and topics; persons and groups; geographical regions. As McQuail (1992, 143) points out, recently diversity has also been seen increasingly in terms of economic ownership.

*Producers' Guidelines* (2000)<sup>3</sup> or *Reporting Diversity Manual* by Media Diversity Institute (Tuller 2002).

Gender sensitive journalism can be seen as a dimension of media diversity understood as a precondition for the media to fulfill their roles regarding citizenship. It assumes a normative requirement from the media to provide women with information relevant to them; to enable deliberation on issues of concern to them; to foster women's participation in the public sphere; to diversify their representations; and to eliminate derogatory representations and treatment of women. Such an approach to gender sensitive journalism rests on the feminist and radical democratic critiques of the two influential paradigms for understanding the role of the media in society: the liberal understanding of the relationship between the media and citizenship and the civic concept of the public sphere as developed in Habermas's (1989) work.<sup>4</sup> Below, I introduce briefly the liberal and Habermas's approaches to these issues in order to discuss the ways in which their critics have redefined the relationship between the media, citizenship and the public sphere as these criticisms inform my understanding of gender sensitive journalism.

According to Curran (1991, 29), liberalism sees the media's role in society in terms of their contribution to the formal political processes by facilitating vertical political communication between the government and citizens. The media are expected to provide information that helps citizens to make an informed choice at the elections, to offer the public space for debate, and to enable citizens to influence government decisions through the public opinion. Criticizing the liberal approach from a radical democratic perspective, Curran notes that

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<sup>3</sup> The 2000 BBC Producers' guidelines devote attention to representation of ethnic minorities, women, sexual minorities, people with disability and older people. The guidelines were revised in 2005 and the current BBC Editorial guidelines (2005) unfortunately mainly do not cover these concerns.

<sup>4</sup> In naming Habermas's (1989) approach to the public sphere civic, I draw on Weintraub's (1997, 14-16) typology of approaches to the public/private distinction, where Habermas, Hanah Arendt and Alexis de Tocqueville are classified as belonging to the civic or republican tradition. Civic approach to the public sphere is discussed here in terms of Habermas's work, as his concept of the public sphere has been particularly influential in theorizing the role of the media with regard to citizenship.

because liberalism perceives only the conflict between individuals (market) and the state, which requires vertical political communication, it omits to address other societal imbalances of power and does not conceive of the media as the space for horizontal communication between different social groups and power structures. From a radical democratic perspective, as Curran defines it, the media should facilitate negotiation of different individual interests furthered through collective organizations and enable not only communication between individuals and the state, but also communication between different groups and power structures.

Furthermore, the liberal approach to political communication has been criticized on account of its definition of political participation. The question here is whether political participation is defined primarily with respect to formal political organizations, activities and processes or is broadened to include discursive aspects of political engagement as well. In her discussion of discursive aspects of political participation, Benhabib (1998) argues that participation should be seen in more inclusive terms as discursive will formation. In this sense, political participation is seen not only as an activity in the official political realm but also as “an activity that can be realized in the social and cultural spheres as well” (Benhabib 1998, 82). A similar understanding of political participation has been used by media scholars such as Carpignano et al. (1993) and Livingstone and Lunt (1994, 29) who see popular media forms, such as talk shows, as part of discursive and participative democracy in as much as they affect “the negotiation and circulation of meanings in contemporary society.”

In addition to liberalism, another powerful paradigm for understanding the relationship between the media and citizenship has been Habermas’ civic approach to the public sphere. In his seminal work, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), Habermas gives both a historical account of the development of the bourgeois public sphere and the normative

criteria for conceptualizing of the public sphere as the “communicational requirements of a viable democracy” (Dalhgren 1995, 9). Habermas’ concept of the public sphere assumes the space where citizens engage in discussion, deliberation and decision making on the matters of common concern in order to articulate public opinion which should influence and shape state policies and society in general. Such a sphere should be independent both from the state and the market and its functioning should be governed by the following principles: universal accessibility; equality of the participants in the debate (status differences should be bracketed and the arguments should be the sole criteria for decision making); and rationality of the debate. Although his concept of the public sphere has been widely recognized as essential for any theorizing of the relations between democracy, public space and the media,<sup>5</sup> Habermas has been also extensively criticized.

The first important criticism comes from the revisionist historians and it regards Habermas’s idealization of the bourgeois public sphere and his disregard both for its gender- and class-based exclusions and for a number of competing, counter-publics of that time (Curran 1991; Fraser 1997; Landes 1998). Starting from historical accounts of multiple publics competing with the bourgeois public sphere, Fraser (1997, 81) points out that Habermas’s idea of bracketing social differences in the public debate is contrafactual, as it has been widely shown that in any society structured by inequalities different social group develop cultural styles that do not have an equal cultural value.

While I have discussed criticisms specific to the liberal and Habermas’s approach separately so far, there are criticisms of these approaches that are very similar as well. These concern their preference for rational modes of public debate, exclusion of issues belonging to the

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<sup>5</sup> Habermas’s ideas have not only occupied an important place in political and media analysis, but have been used by defenders of public service broadcasting in Europe, and especially in the UK (Atkinson and Raboy 1991; Curran 1991; Dalhgren 1995; Murdock 1992).

private sphere from the realm of public discussion, and the opposition they set up between informational genres as those that serve citizenship and entertainment as a demise of the media's democratic role. Feminist critics (Benhabib 1998; Fraser 1993; Pateman 1988) have raised the question of the ways in which public/private distinction excluded from public discussion the issues of exploitation, domestic violence and sexual abuse, as it conceived of them as private matters, unsuitable for public concern. From a radical democratic perspective, Curran (1991, 33) makes a similar point criticizing the liberal approach, arguing that in order to be democratic in terms of the representation, the media should therefore: report on "all areas where power is exercised over the others," including the private sphere of the market or the family. In addition, the notion of public debate as a rational exchange of arguments has been criticized for its masculine bias, because of the association between rationality and masculinity and of emotional, performative, rhetorical and bodily forms of expression with femininity.

Finally, recent media scholarship on the media and citizenship has involved much work on popular culture and entertainment as resources for citizenship and political participation. As different authors argue, popular culture is unjustifiably marginalized in liberal and Habermasian thinking about the ways in which the media can enhance democratic participation and citizenship. (Carpignano et al. 1990; Brants et al. 1998; Jones 2006; Livingstone and Lunt 1994; van Zoonen 2005). The genres of news and current affairs, which have been traditionally seen as most important for informed citizenship, are criticized as elitist and exclusionary while the entertaining genres of popular culture are shown to allow for a broader democratic participation and diversity (Carpignano et al. 1990). In exploring entertainment as a resource for citizenship, van Zoonen (2005) counters what she calls the 'television malaise' thesis which sees popular culture as a demise of rational debate and citizens' political participation. In contrast to that, she



argues that personalization and dramatization within popular culture inspire viewers to reflect on politics and express judgments and utopian political ideas. Therefore, as these scholars stress, it is important for scholarship on the media and citizenship to “recognize that different media can, and often do, present different narratives about politics” (Jones 2006, 366).

Radical democratic and feminist criticisms of the liberal and Habermas’ account of the media as the public sphere are in accordance with the recent broadening of the concept of citizenship to include its cultural, sexual, intimate or corporate dimensions (Delanty 2000; Isin and Wood 1999; van Zoonen 2005). The concept of cultural citizenship is particularly relevant here, as it has been used increasingly as the basis for the normative requirements from the media in terms of the representation of diverse social groups. The cultural dimension of citizenship is closely tied to the understanding of culture as a site of injustice, as developed within the literature on the politics of recognition. As Fraser (2000, 113-116) points out, cultural marginalization and devaluation are not a ‘free-floating cultural harm’ but a serious violation of justice as institutionalized cultural values prevent members of particular groups from participating in social interaction as equals. Following this understanding, Stevenson (2003) addresses the questions of cultural citizenship as questions of cultural exclusion and inclusion. Cultural citizenship, according to him, assumes demands for inclusion and change of representation of particular marginalized and devalued social groups (16-25). Similarly, as Murdock (1992, 20) points out, full citizenship as “membership in cultural and social formation” would assume that different social groups are able to recognize themselves in the representations provided by the media and contribute to developing and changing them.

As my discussion shows, there are several ways in which the media’s obligations with regard to citizenship are redefined from the perspective of feminist and radical democratic

approaches. Firstly, these approaches address the public sphere from the perspective of power relations and exclusions of underprivileged social groups and argue for redressing social inequalities in and through the media. Secondly, the relationship between the media and citizenship is redefined to include not only political but cultural dimensions as well, which means that the media's obligations are not defined only in terms of political participation but also in relation to cultural representations. Thirdly, the way in which issues of public concern are understood is redefined to include coverage of issues belonging to the private sphere. Fourthly, they have reconsidered the liberal and Habermas's arguments about the appropriate modes of debate in the public sphere, to include emotional and performative modes of participation. And lastly, these critics have emphasized the diversity of media genres that can contribute to citizenship, instead of limiting these to 'hard news'.

My understanding of gender sensitive journalism flows from these critical points about the relationship between the media and citizenship. Gender sensitive journalism aims to challenge gender inequality in the media, but also to contribute to gender equality in society through the use of the media. The first dimension of gender sensitive journalism concerns the elimination of those journalistic practices that marginalize women and circulate sexist discourses about them. The second dimension concerns the ways in which the media should fulfill their requirements with regard to women's citizenship. These requirements concern information, deliberation, participation and representation. The media should, therefore, ensure provision for women in terms of information and deliberation about issues of concern to them; advance their participation in the public sphere; and provide diverse representations of women. In fulfilling these requirements, the media should also address issues that were traditionally seen as private.

I follow this understanding of gender sensitive journalism as a guiding principle in my analysis of the Serbian and Croatian television programmes, in which I aim to show the ways in which gender sensitive journalism is present in, or missing from, the television journalism in the two countries. My analysis is therefore divided into two chapters. Chapter 4 identifies sexist journalistic practices in the Serbian and Croatian television journalism that would need to be eliminated if the media were to fulfill their role with regard to women as citizens. Chapter 5 examines whether and how the selected television programmes do further elements of gender sensitive journalism, e.g. cover issues of concern to women, advance their participation, and provide diverse representations of their experiences.

At this point I have defined elements of gender sensitive journalism only broadly. In the next section, I address the actual meaning of these elements, e.g. what ‘issues of concern to women’ might be. By discussing different feminist approaches to the ways in which media representation and treatment of women could be made more egalitarian, I explore the dimensions and elements of gender sensitive journalism in more detail. Also, thus far I have only discussed briefly the question of the relationship between different types of journalism and citizenship. I have taken the position of feminist and radical democratic scholars who argue that not only traditional journalistic genres, such as hard news, but also entertainment and more popular journalistic genres can serve citizenship. In the last section of this chapter, I come back to this question to discuss the ways in which different types of journalism present opportunities for, or obstacles to, practices of gender sensitive journalism.

## 2.3. Feminist Cultural Politics and the Media

In this section, I discuss the elements of gender sensitive journalism in more detail through interrogating the key feminist ideas about the ways in which the media could be made more egalitarian in terms of gender. Many of these ideas have been present both in feminist media activism and scholarship, as they have often been closely related ever since the late sixties (Gallagher 2001; Van Zoonen 1994).<sup>6</sup> I discuss three widespread feminist proposals for the ways in which the media could be made more egalitarian in terms of gender. Firstly, some feminists have envisioned those changes by suggesting that the media should ensure a greater coverage of issues of particular concern to women and a greater and more diverse women's participation in the media as sources and agents. Secondly, feminists have routinely criticized the media for the narrow and stereotypical range of women's representations and demanded that the media should provide more 'realistic', 'positive' and/or 'diverse' representations of women. Thirdly, feminists have advocated for the elimination of particular sexist practices from the media, e.g. stereotypical and derogatory representations of women or sexist treatment of female sources. In this section, I discuss the particular meanings given to each of these feminist proposals of the desirable changes in the media, the concerns and problems they raise, as well as the ways in which they have been debated in feminist media scholarship. Following this discussion, I look at the implications of these ideas for gender sensitive journalism.

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<sup>6</sup> Feminist media activism and feminist academic research of the media have often been intertwined since the beginning of this type of activism in the late 1960s (Gallagher 2001; Van Zoonen 1994). A substantial part of feminist media activism is consciously or unconsciously based in the theoretical groundwork of liberal or radical feminism. According to Van Zoonen (1994), liberal-feminist criticisms of the media and activism have addressed the subject of stereotypes and gender socialization the most, whereas radical-feminist theory and activism focused on the problem of pornography. These two approaches are criticized by other feminist media scholars, most notably from the post-structuralist perspective, which I discuss later in this section. However, there are also other cases where the same demands from the media have been formulated within feminist academic texts and in feminist media activism, but these ideas cannot be neatly categorized in relation to a certain feminist approach, e.g. demands for more coverage of issues of concern to women.

### 2.3.1. Covering 'women's issues' and perspectives

Calling for more coverage of 'women's issues', more women in the media workforce<sup>7</sup> and their increased participation as sources and subjects of the media has been central to feminist media activism, policy and journalistic practice (Byerly 2004; Coward 1987; Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson 2004; Gallagher 2001). These demands have been integrated into documents such as the 1995 UN Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action or the Serbian National Policy for the Improvement of Women's Status and Advancement of Gender Equality. Beijing Platform, for instance, urges governments to encourage media institutions "to increase the number of programmes for and by women to see to it that women's needs and concerns are properly addressed" (IV. J. 239). It also asks the media to "promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research" (ibid, c). These goals have also been a common feature of both alternative and mainstream women's and feminist programmes (Coward, 1987; Feldman, 2000; Mitchell 2000). For example, *Woman's Hour*, a long-standing BBC Radio 4 women's programme, is described by Coward as a programme that is "offering women's views on current issues and communicating information about issues currently affecting women".

Given the centrality of these demands to feminist normative ideas about gender equality in the media, they are of great concern for my understanding of gender sensitive journalism. In order to examine their role in gender sensitive journalism, in this section I explore the different meanings of the central concepts, such as 'women's issues', and the problems and debates raised

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<sup>7</sup> The issue of advocacy that aims to improve the status of women within media organizations is outside the scope of my thesis. For research into sexism in newsroom cultures and gender specific problems of female media professionals see: Gallego et al. 2004; Dougary 1994; Frohlich 2004; Loach 1987; Melin-Higgins 2004; Steiner 1998.

by the two demands, which centre on the questions of equality and difference, strategies of integration and differentiation.

Firstly, the notion of ‘women’s issues’ begs the question of what ‘women’s issues’ are given the differences in how they would be defined by some of the women’s magazines and feminist groups. Werden (1996, 222) tells an anecdote that is a good example of this. While working for Women’s International News Service (WINGS), Werden asked Swedish journalists what the recent ‘women’s news were in that country. A Swedish reporter suggested to her an item about a new diet as “hot women’s news in Sweden”, but Werden and her colleagues at WINGS had a feminist notion of women’s news in mind. Eventually, they settled for reporting on the recent Swedish law which criminalized the patrons of prostitutes. Surveying feminist texts that mention examples of ‘women’s issues’ (Gallagher 2001; Mills 1997; Norris 1997), one is confronted further with the diversity of issues that are listed under this category: violence against women, women’s work, health issues, sexual harassment, abortion, “fertility research, popularity of women’s colleges, sex education for the young, amniocentesis advances, caring for the elderly at home, harassment of lesbians in Mississippi, and worldwide abuse of women” (Mills 1997, 45).

As these examples reveal, the notion of ‘women’s issues’ is commonly defined in three ways: (1) as traditional ‘feminine’ issues with the main focus on the private sphere; (2) as feminist issues pertaining to different forms of gender inequality; and (3) as ‘female’ issues, i.e. any issues that specifically affect or concern women at a particular time. Of course, same issues can be approached in all three ways. A case in point is the issue of childcare. This has been seen as a traditionally ‘feminine’ concern, but because women *still are* primary carers then coverage of this issue is of a great concern to many women and in that sense falls within the category of

‘female’ issues. But if it is approached through criticism of gender inequality then it also fits the feminist category. Nevertheless, this categorization is still helpful since certain clusters of issues have been historically associated with these different approaches to ‘women’s issues’. For example, traditional women’s genres have commonly defined ‘women’s issues’ in relation to romance, domesticity or appearance, whereas feminist journalism most commonly deals with plural forms of gender inequality.

As gender sensitive journalism aims to redress gender inequality in and through the media, coverage of feminist and female issues is an important part of it. The first is a form of critical journalism that advocates against gender inequality and the second aims to lessen the marginalization of women in the media. An example of ‘female’ issues, as they are defined here, could be numerous health items that address specific issues related to women’s health. By covering women’s health-related issues, the media would serve their female audiences and provide important information to them.

The relationship between traditional notion of ‘women’s issues’ and gender sensitive journalism is more complicated. By defining ‘women’s issues’ as pertaining to the private sphere, this approach perpetuates women’s marginalization in the public sphere and legitimates gender inequality in the household. It is therefore in opposition to gender sensitive journalism as a critical practice. At the same time, the question of whether the traditional women’s genres that define ‘women’s issues’ in this way can be reappropriated for feminist purposes has been an object of much feminist debate (Ang 1996; Khun 1997; Kitzinger 1998; Macdonald 1995; Modleski 1982, 1997; Tuchman 1978). Traditional women’s genres, such as women’s pages in newspapers, women’s magazines, melodrama and soap operas, and ‘soft news’, provide a public space for numerous women’s voices as opposed to women’s marginalization in information

genres and often deal with issues that affect women. That is why their potential to accommodate elements of gender sensitive journalism should be taken into account and examined by feminists.

However, feminists should be cautious about the possibility of these genres to challenge gender inequality because of the ways in which they rest in sexist definitions of femininity as defined through the private sphere. I agree with Macdonald (1995, 71) who criticizes feminist arguments that define soap operas' focus on the private sphere, emotion and interpersonal communication in terms of women's discourse and pleasures, since such arguments ultimately reinforce the status quo. Similarly, Kitzinger (1998, 201) suggests that feminists should be more reserved in their expectations that 'soft news' would serve women's needs better than 'hard news' because of their openness to "issues of greater importance to women – such as childcare, women's health and male violence" (202). She shows how 'soft news' can be appropriated in ways that privilege men's emotions and experiences over women's and points out that women's pages in the newspapers often equate 'women's issues' with family issues.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, it is important to emphasize that gender sensitive journalism would need to provide coverage of issues of particular concern to women without defining 'women's issues' in 'feminine' terms, that is, as pertaining mainly to the private sphere and a traditional women's preserve. To clarify, this is not about individual issues, such as relationships or motherhood, but about the above discussed approach to them and a particular understanding of the concept of 'women's issues'.

Secondly, the demands for coverage of 'women's issues' and greater women's participation involve a combination of the politics of equality and difference, integration and differentiation, but also open debates about which cultural strategies serve women's interests

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<sup>8</sup> See Section 2.4.2. for a discussion of 'hard news' and 'soft news'.



best.<sup>9</sup> In feminist media advocacy or journalism, the emphasis on the specificities of the media's provision for women is commonly combined with advancing women's participation across the board. This kind of combination is already characteristic of many feminist media projects. As Mitchell (2000, 6) observes in relation to feminist interventions in the radio media:

Paradoxically, women want it all – difference and equality. They want specialist programmes that without preaching or proselytising validate their gender and race, class, sexuality and subculture and they want to be well-represented in different genres, in terms of production, management and ownership of all kinds of radio stations.

An example of a similar strategy can be found in the policy of *Woman's Hour*, a BBC Radio 4 women's programme, as its ex-editor Sally Feldman (2000, 69) defined it:

I dubbed this two-track policy Twin Peaks – both 'women's interests' and 'female perspective'. Exclusively women's items which are closely defined and a female perspective illuminating a limitless variety of subjects and ideas.

What is at stake here is combining the politics of equality and difference: attending to women's specific needs and interests while at the same time expanding a pool of usual sources, 'experts', guests to involve more women competent to talk on a range of non-gender specific issues.

However, the politics of integration and the politics of differentiation have also been conflicted around these issues. They were commonly opposed to each other with regard to the question of whether the best way to cover women's issues is through specialist programmes or not. For example, according to Coward's (1987) summary of the libertarian argument behind the rejection of women's programmes in the context of the British television, specialist programmes were seen as representing segregation and inequality, and instead of them it was argued for integrating women's perspectives across the board. Yet the two goals of differentiation and

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<sup>9</sup> Broader feminist debates about politics of equality and difference are concerned with different strategies of cultural and social change, e.g. identity politics or deconstruction of gender differences. For examination of these issues, see: Benhabib 2002; Butler 1992, 1998; Fraser 1997; Kauffman 2001; Kirsch 2003; Pollock 2003; Stevenson 2003.

integration need not be at odds. While I support the view that women's concerns should be integrated across the full programming range, such integration does not have to exclude specialist women's programming which can serve important purposes. Specialist programmes are uniquely placed to ensure: "specialist knowledge in their programme subject areas"; "contacts and trust with minority communities" that were built over period of years; "the commitment to increased access and training"; and "sufficient volume and range of programming" (Cottle, 1997, p. 43).

Finally, a focus on 'women's issues' also opens itself to charges of essentialism and raises questions about accounting for differences among women. Given the differences among women and a variety of ideologies related to womanhood, journalists who cover 'women's issues and perspectives' often face a problem that has been identified as the 'burden of representation'. As Arthurs (1994) and Cottle (1997) point out, producers of specialist programmes, who particularly aim to cover women's or ethnic minority issues, often complain of a situation where a few individuals with very little opportunities have a responsibility to represent and address a group "divided by class, race and sexuality, with divergent cultural tastes and often irreconcilable political differences" (Arthurs 84). Therefore, gender sensitive journalism would also need to be reflexive about the differences among women while covering 'women's issues' and advancing women's participation in the media. However, as Cottle (1997) points out, in discussing the institutional conditions of BBC ethnic minority programming, the more pluralistic view of representation depends on a volume and range of programmes that would allow a balance between different issues and voices. For such diversity to be possible, programme makers would have to work in conditions where the problem of 'burden of representation' could

be tackled through a greater volume and range of content that addresses interests and needs of specific social groups.

### 2.3.2. *'Realistic', 'positive' and diverse representations of women*

Much of feminist cultural politics, expressed primarily in feminist media activism but also in certain strands of feminist media scholarship, has been driven by the criticism of the media as a 'distorted mirror'. This influential approach, which charges the media for not reflecting 'real women' but marginalizing and representing them through stereotypes about femininity, has been one of the lasting feminist definitions of the problem with the media. From the pioneering work of Tuchman (1978a) and her famous charge against the media for the symbolic annihilation of women, to the more recent research in the service of feminist media advocacy such as the Global Media Monitoring Project (Gallagher 2001), the media have been charged with the numerical underrepresentation of women as media sources, subjects and producers, and for the very narrow and stereotypical range of representations of women. The proposed alternative within this model is the numerical increase in the number of women working for, and being represented by, the media, as well as more 'realistic' and 'positive' representations of women (Cirksena and Cuklanz 1992; Gill 2007; van Zoonen 1994). As Gill (2007, 10) points out, this research relies for its critical force on showing discrepancies between the 'reality of women' and their biased representation in the media.

The major flaw of such an approach, as their critics argue, is that it is based in the understanding of the media as a distorted or accurate reflection of reality. These criticisms often, although not solely, come from the perspective of post-structuralist theory. They are founded in quite different starting assumptions and understandings of media representations, meaning, and group identities. Activist criticism of the media as a distorted mirror is seen as problematic here

because it presupposes the existence of a clear and unequivocal reality that the media can then reflect, either correctly or incorrectly (Van Zoonen 1994, 31). From this perspective, representation is not a reflection of reality but a social practice of searching for and assigning meaning to reality, and a practice that is significantly determined by relations of power within society. The media are thus seen as a field of cultural and political struggles between advocates of dominant and marginal definitions of reality (Curran 1991; Hall 1997; Murdock 1992).

Following from this and the poststructuralist notion of identity as fragmentary and historically specific, the point is made that the media representation of women *cannot* be made more accurate or realistic because the media are not mimetic (Rakow 2001, 42). In addition, according to Van Zoonen (1994 31), more realistic representations of women are not possible because there is no historically and geographically stable gender identity as a reference point of such supposedly more realistic representations of women. As she argues, examples of transgressions of female/male differences and the historical specificity of differences between men and women suggest the unsustainability of normative criteria of 'realistic' representations of women and of how the media should represent women in general. Normative regulation of representations of women is seen not only as an impossible project of establishing universal criteria of representation, but also as politically harmful because every fixing of identity leads towards new exclusions, this time within a particular group (Butler 2002). Accordingly, the ideals of more 'realistic' and 'positive' representations of women are criticized as attempts to exchange one set of partial representations with another (Gill 2007, 34) and inaugurate another myth of Woman (Pollock 2003, 90-1).

These criticisms beg the following questions: Are they followed by consideration of different strategies of feminist cultural politics? If yes, what kind of politics do they propose? In

the case of those theoreticians who reject a normative approach to media representation, the focus is shifted from the questions of political interventions to the power of critically re-appropriating dominant meanings and using them for the benefit of marginalized groups suffering from discrimination. Theoreticians such as Van Zoonen (1994), Ang (1996) and Fiske (1987), emphasize the cultural competency of the audience, their agency and their power to negotiate the media text, as well as to resist dominant meanings. Such emphasis on the audience's resistance to media texts and on instability of meanings has raised questions about the possibility of any cultural politics.

As Gill (2007, 13) notes, a notion of meaning as fluid, ambiguous and contradictory has raised the questions like "[...] how, then, to identify representations as sexist or progressive? Was their meaning totally open?" Wayne (1994) makes a similar point when he criticizes the new audience studies for collapsing the meanings of texts into the meanings which audiences give to texts. He argues that some notion of textual effects must be retained for any question of cultural intervention to be possible. Otherwise, "one text or set of texts is conceived of as being as good a starting point for audiences as any other" (52). What follows from both Gill's and Wayne's discussion, is that questions of power and ideology cannot be addressed if any critical attempt to differentiate between discriminatory representations and those that oppose discrimination is rejected under the pretext of meaning fluidity or audiences' agency. Accordingly, Gill stresses that the notion of sexism needs to be revitalized although with regard to the specific forms of sexism that are characteristic of particular historical contexts. In agreement with Gill, I also believe that feminist ideas about the alternative representations of women need not be abandoned altogether but reformulated.

To this end, I draw on D'Acci's (1994) and Gledhill's (1988) work to propose a redefinition of feminist cultural politics, expressed in demands for more 'realistic' or 'positive' representations of women, in ways that incorporate some of the previously discussed criticisms. In her book about *Cagney and Lacey*, D'Acci (1994) finds a certain value for feminism in what the fans of the series praised as a more *realistic* representation of women in a torrent of letters protesting against ending the series. Thus a female viewer writes:

(...) [I]t was about time a programme appeared on television that represents two realistic and human women who are successful as police detectives. They may not be infallible and may not look like Susan Sommers, but many of us don't nor would ever wish to. That's why we prefer seeing a programme that has *people like ourselves* as central characters, who live probable and possible lives (178-179). (Italics mine)

D'Acci's interpretation of the meaning of *real* in representations of women in this case is interesting because it is affirmative even though within a post-structuralist framework, i.e. with a full awareness of the criticism of perceiving the media as a reflection of reality. D'Acci refers to Gledhill (1988) and her understanding of the textual figure of a woman as a space of negotiation between patriarchal meanings and those meanings that are taken from the lived social and historical experiences of certain groups of women today. According to D'Acci, a *realistic* portrayal of women that was so important to the viewers of this series is not just a matrix taken from the women's movement of the time, even though it is that as well. One of the meanings of *real* here consists in recognizing one's own experiences, as women who are contemporaries of the series, in textual negotiations between old and new gender identities and the possibilities that women have in society. Another meaning of *real* that D'Acci sees in this case is a reference point for those programmes that audience recognizes as different from conventional, stereotypical portrayals of women in the media.

From the viewpoint of this analysis, many activist demands for *more realistic* portrayals of women may perhaps be seen as an expression of the need and the right of women to have their own experiences recognized in the public space and to receive something other than the usually narrow-range of media representations of women. Gill (2007, 34) makes a similar point when she says that in the context analyzed by Tuchman in the 1970s, a positive image might have been any in which a woman was not presented as ‘unintelligent, narcissistic, and dependent’ and that calls for such images often implied a desire to see more diversity in the media when women are concerned. Diversity as a goal is highlighted by Macdonald (1995) as well, who argues that calls for more ‘realistic’ and ‘positive’ representation of women can be best reworked as calls for more diverse media representation of women. Gender sensitive journalism would thus aim at furthering diversity in representations of women and pursue ‘realism’ in the sense of recognition of historically specific experiences of different groups of women.

### 2.3.3. *Eliminating sexism from the media*

While both the feminist demands that I discussed so far identify what the media *should do* to be more egalitarian, feminist media activism and scholarship has always been also about what the media *should not do*. The desirable change in media representation of women was also understood in terms of eradicating those representations and treatment of women that enact or legitimate gender discrimination. Feminist demands from the media thus also include proposals of restrictive guidelines, which usually focus on the following forms of sexism: gender stereotypes; sexual objectification and exploitation; sexist language; and differential treatment of female and male sources.

The first of these calls – to avoid gender stereotypes – has been at the centre of feminist media activism and regulation, but it has been more controversial in feminist media scholarship

(Beasley 1997; Cirkseña and Cuklanz 1992; Frankson 2001; Gallagher 2001; Norris 1997; Tuchman 1978a; van Zoonen 1994). The concept of gender or sex-stereotyping is often used without much elaboration of what it means, but when it is defined its meanings seem to cover the following problems. First, it seems to point at a kind of representation that limits a range of appropriate characteristics related to a particular gender. In this way, gender-stereotyping works to confine individuals into conforming to the narrow scope of gender-specific identities, activities, appearance (Norris 1997; Tuchman 1978a). In the case of women, such confinement stems from the public/private division that defines women's concerns as pertaining to the private sphere. Second, the concept of stereotyping is sometimes used in relation to the derogatory representation of women, the promotion of violence against women and a fantasy ideal that may cause low self-esteem in women and men (Frankson 2001). However, research into the stereotypical representation of women is criticized for its simplified approach to signification which neglects various dimensions of media texts. According to Van Zoonen (1994, 16-8), such research is theoretically problematic because it often ignores the specifics of genres, audiences' experiences, the relations between characters in narratives, and other similar issues. Still, she maintains that feminist research on stereotypes was useful to the extent that it has provided material that feminist activists could use to exert pressure on the media.

Sexual objectification and exploitation of women in the media is another problem that has been central to the feminist protests against sexism in the media. Obviously, this problem has been most commonly discussed in relation to pornography, but it was also examined with respect to the possibilities for women's equal participation in the public sphere (Holland 1987, 1998). Some of the arguments of radical, anti-pornography feminists, as well as criticisms of their positions, are relevant for a discussion of sexual objectification and exploitation of women more



generally. Claims that the promotion of women's sexual submission in pornography threatens and hinders women's possibilities for equal rights in various segments of public and private life, as well as silences their speech, can be related to other feminist criticisms of the ways in which sexualization is used to discredit women's activities in the public sphere (Itzin 1992; MacKinnon 1992, van Zoonen 1994). As Holland (1987, 136) points out in discussing female newsreaders, "women's right to speak in public may be easily subverted by drawing attention to their visual appearance." However, radical feminists' attempts to suppress or ban pornography have been met with a range of criticisms, some of which insisted that attempts to pass anti-pornography laws were violations of freedom of speech (Strossene 1995), or that this approach conflates representations of an act with the act itself. In addition, critics pointed out the frequent mixing of feminist anti-pornography arguments with traditional censorship of explicitly sexual material based on Christian and patriarchal morality (McIntosh 1992).

Sexist language in the media has been the third area of feminist intervention. Language specific measures have included calls to stop the usage of masculine pronouns as generic and to allow women to choose their titles (BBC 2000; Beasley 1997; Cameron 1998; Macdonald 1995). But a substantial part of the discussions around regulating language have focused on derogatory terminology and hate speech practices, as in the case of other historically marginalized and devalued social groups. According to a critical race scholar, Matsuda (1993), hate speech is conduct that can seriously undermine the performance of the addressee at work, school etc, i.e. it is conduct that significantly prevents certain social groups from exercising their civil rights and liberties (See also Lederer and Delgado, 1995). Such arguments were often followed by demands to legally sanction hate speech practices and criticisms of such attempts may be instructive on more general issues surrounding the question of regulating offensive speech in the

media. As in the case of anti-pornography activism, the opponents of such laws have protested in the name of freedom of speech and once more emphasized the difference between speech and acts committed out of hatred.

Finally, feminists have advocated against the particular sexist ways in which female sources and (news) subjects are treated by the media. Gendered assumptions, which are brought forward from the broader androcentric culture, routinely inform differential treatment of female and male sources and news subjects (Allan 1998; Gallego et al. 2004). Kitzinger (1998) shows how the framing of female and male sources is informed by “selective privileging of ‘masculine’ vs. ‘feminine’ discourses and ways of knowing (logic vs. emotion, science vs. intuition).” Allan (1998, 132-3) and Gill (2007, 117) list typical sexist ways in which female sources and news subjects are treated by journalists: usage of generic masculine pronouns and nouns; identifying female news subjects by their gender; defining women in their relation to men (‘a wife of...’); focus on physical appearance of women; ridiculing those women who do not conform to standards of feminine appearance; commenting on women’s age etc. Following these criticisms, gender sensitive journalistic codices often include clauses that demand that such treatment of women should be avoided (Beasley 1997; Gallagher 2001; Tuller, 2002).

Eliminating the above-discussed types of sexist practices from the media is an important dimension of gender sensitive journalism. Feminist demands to avoid gender stereotypes, sexist language and sexual exploitation express two broad feminist requirements from the media: the need to avoid gender segregation along the lines of the public/private division and to eradicate representations of women that devalue them. While these notions might be too broad or controversial to be operational at all times, the previously listed ways of treating female sources in sexist ways provide a useful guide for countering sexism in journalism in much more concrete

terms. My analysis of the Serbian and Croatian television programmes sets out to examine the ways in which these forms of sexism are present in Serbian and Croatian television journalism.

#### *2.3.4. Implications for gender sensitive journalism and my research*

My understanding of gender sensitive journalism is an expression of my critical reading and synthesis of the feminist normative ideas about what gender equality in the media would entail, which I have discussed throughout this section. Gender sensitive journalism is a form of critical journalism that aims to redress gender inequality in the media, but also to use the media as a forum to disseminate feminist discourses and campaigns against gender inequality elsewhere in society. It has two dimensions like any critical project that challenges the unequal status of historically marginalized groups in the media: it demands that the media avoid discriminatory practices and suggests ways for the media provision to become more egalitarian in terms of issues, participants and representations. To the extent to which they adopted gender sensitive journalism, the media would serve women as citizens by securing the provision of information, deliberation, participation and representations *of, for* and *by* this particular social group.

More specifically, gender sensitive journalism aims to ensure equal attention to women's and men's needs, interests and achievements. It is characterized by feminist and 'female' approaches to coverage of 'women's issues', that avoid defining them as pertaining mainly to the private sphere as is the case traditional ('feminine') approach to 'women's issues'. As I explained before, this is mainly a matter of approaches to 'women's issues' and not of particular individual issues that fit or do not fit gender sensitive journalism. It also aims to ensure increased and diversified participation of female sources and subjects across a range of non-gender specific media content and provide diverse media representations of women in which they – divided by other forms of inequality and group belonging, such as class, ethnicity or sexuality - can

recognize their historically specific experiences. In an attempt to lessen gender-based discriminatory journalistic practices, gender sensitive journalism also asks journalists to avoid: gender segregation across genres along the line of public private division; limiting and derogatory representations of women; and particular forms of sexist treatment of female sources and agents, such as highlighting their gender, appearance, age, marital status etc.

I have decided to use the term ‘gender sensitive journalism’ – rather than ‘feminist journalism’ – to refer to the journalistic practice I defined above. This is because ‘GSJ’ has become widely used in feminist media advocacy and policy arenas, both globally, as well as locally in Serbia and Croatia, to refer to such journalism. For example, it has been used in UNESCO’s manuals for gender equality in journalism (2001), in the recommendations for the media that follow the 2010 Global Media Monitoring Project (WACC 2010, 26), and by feminist media activists in many countries (UNESCO Website 2004, 2010). In the two countries I focus on, the term has also been widely used by feminist media advocates: Women’s Network of Croatia ran an Award for Gender Sensitive Journalism and the term features in the Serbian National Strategy for Gender Equality (Serbian Government. Sector for Gender Equality 2009).

While neither feminist roots nor focus on women are visible in the term ‘gender sensitive journalism’, it is closely linked to both of these concepts, as it is clear from my definition. It is informed by feminist discourses as it aims to redress gender inequality. It focuses on women rather than on both genders, as women are *the* gender whose unequal status needs to be redressed. The centrality of ‘gender’ in the term and the focus on women in the practice that the term refers to is therefore not contradictory in my view. It is another question to what extent focusing only on changing the media treatment of women without changing men’s participation and representations too can redress gender inequality. For example, in order to redress inequality

in how the public/private divide in the media is gendered, I believe that advancing women's participation in the public sphere would need to be followed by increasing men's participation in the private sphere. While my PhD project largely repeats feminist activists' focus on changing women's status rather than men's status too, I do look at whether and how the selected programmes involve men in discussions concerning the private sphere in my programme analysis (Chapters 5 and 6).

Drawing on my understanding of gender sensitive journalism, my analysis of the Serbian and Croatian television journalism looks at whether, to what extent and how elements of this journalistic practice appear in the selected programmes. I explain in more detail the analytical procedures for analyzing the status of gender sensitive journalism in them in my Chapter 4 that focuses on methodology.

## 2.4. Conditions that Advance or Hinder Gender Sensitive Journalism

In this section I discuss factors that inform journalists' opportunities to practice gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media. In identifying these factors, I draw on Djerf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson's (2004, 101) analysis of the gendered character of Swedish television (news) journalism. According to them, the place of women in the news is formed at "the nexus of three intersecting forces and structures": notions about gender, professional journalistic ideals, and the activism of groups and individuals trying to preserve or alter the existing power relations in journalism. Departing from this insight, I would argue that there are three key factors that should be examined with respect to the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media. Firstly, attempts to further gender sensitivity will depend on the ways in which discourses about gender, but also about feminism, inform day-to-day journalistic decisions about topics and sources. Secondly, they will be greatly influenced by professional journalistic

values and the particular types of journalism. The divisions between types of journalism that are salient for my research include: ‘neutral’ and committed journalism and ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ journalism. Thirdly, the agency of feminist media advocates, both feminist journalists and activists external to the media, also informs the extent to which gender sensitive journalism is practiced within the mainstream media.

While Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson’s study is limited to the Swedish broadcasting, it is applicable to research on other countries and periods of time because of their historical approach, which emphasizes the changeable nature of both gender notions and journalistic ideals:

[...] As the Swedish case suggest, different gender orders and journalistic cultures produce and support different femininities and masculinities in different newsrooms at different times. (Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson 2004, 101)

In my research, I use their broad argument and historical approach, but then examine the three factors with regard to the specificities of the contemporary Serbia and Croatia. My research also differs from theirs as it explores the diversity of gender notions or journalistic cultures synchronically, whereas they show how these influences change over a period of time, i.e. diachronically. My analysis in Chapter 5 to 7 thus shows how different types of journalistic ideals and gender notions can be dominant in different programmes within a single channel and sometimes can coexist in a single programme as well.

#### *2.4.1. Discourses about gender and feminism*

As gender sensitive journalism seeks to redress gender inequality in and through the media, the opportunities to advance this kind of critical journalistic practice will greatly depend on what discourses about gender and feminism are salient in any given historical context. For example, Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson (2004) show how essentialist notions about gender

complementarity characterized Swedish journalism between 1950 and 1965, whereas gender equality campaigns within television industry brought forward a more constructivist approach to gender between 1965 and 1985. Below I discuss different ways in which discourses about gender and feminism influence the extent to which the critical perspectives on gender are possible in the mainstream media.

As critical analyses of journalism show, discourses that are dominant elsewhere in society are generally likely to be privileged in everyday practices of journalists. In trying to appeal to broad audiences as well as to be intelligible to them, the media draw on ‘cultural maps of meaning’ (Hall et al. 1978, 54-5), which they see as shared with their audiences (Allan 1999; Golding and Elliot 1979; Ryan 1991; Schlesinger 1978). Journalists’ assumptions about what wider audiences think about particular topics or sources, or what they are interested in, greatly inform media representations along the lines of “the most broadly held common social values and assumptions, in other words the prevailing consensus” (Golding and Elliot 1979, 208). This is further intensified by competition, where success is defined by the size of the audience and journalists feel they need to get their audiences ‘hooked’ (Schlesinger 1978). Dominant discourses about gender and feminism, which are often sexist in the case of women and negative in the case of feminism, are therefore bound to be very influential in informing journalists’ decisions in the selection of topics, sources and interpretations.

In addition, research into news production, documents amply journalists’ routine reliance on elite and institutional sources (Allan 1999; Atton and Hamilton 2008; Dolan 2005; Fishman 1980; Golding and Elliot 1979; Hall et al. 1978; Ross 2007; Ryan 1991; Sigal 1973). Consequently, the perspectives of marginalized social and political groups are often sidelined. The reliance on routine sources is a result of both professional values and organizational

pressures on journalists. In order to avoid accusations of bias and to maintain credibility, the media rely on ‘accredited’ and ‘authoritative’ sources (Hall et al. 1978). Furthermore, only another bureaucracy can satisfy the needs of news bureaucracy for a consistent supply of raw information (Fishman 1980). Thus, the ability of a source to influence the media agenda will greatly depend on their capacity to provide journalists with a steady stream of background information, analysis and materials that can be easily repackaged as media content. Many activist groups who challenge dominant discourses do not possess sufficient resources to be able to achieve this aim.

Accordingly, the media often frame social movements’ political ideas, goals and activities within hegemonic ideologies (Bradley 1998; Dow 2005; Gamson 2004; Gitlin 1980; Rhode 1997; Simone 2006; Tuchman 1978; van Zoonen 1992). Rhode (1997) provides a useful overview of the typical problems with the media coverage of the women’s movement and feminism. The media often present feminists through caricatures and project feminism as an opposite of femininity. Feminists are commonly presented as “‘unsexed’ harpies with deviant lifestyles and unfounded fantasies of male domination” (13). Feminism, similarly to other social movements, is also subject to polarization where complex issues are treated through a staged conflict between two opposite extremist views. Furthermore, as she notes, the media blur feminist ideas by personalizing them and substituting social transformation for self-transformation of an individual woman. Feminists are also often trivialized and demonized through homophobic references to linkages between feminism and lesbianism (See also Huddy 1997; Costain et al. 1997; Simone 2006).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> In the last two decades, feminist scholars have discussed media representations of feminism in the context of postfeminism, which has been defined in a variety of ways. Postfeminism has been defined: as a backlash against feminism (Faludi 1992; Probyn 1997; Whelehan 1995; Walters 1995), as a new stage (third-wave) of feminism and a critical engagement with the second-wave feminism (Brooks 1997; Lotz 2001); as a combination of feminist and



In my analysis of the ways in which gender sensitive journalism is present or missing in the Serbian and Croatian television journalism, I address these issues in two ways. Firstly, I examine whether and how particular discourses about gender and feminism affect the potential of particular programmes to adopt critical perspectives with regard to ‘women’s issues’, participation and representations. Secondly, as my analysis of the interviews with the Serbian and Croatian journalists shows, journalists’ disposition towards discourses about gender and feminism is one of the important factors that furthers or hinders the advancement of gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media. Namely, it influences journalists’ selection of issues and sources in ways that favour or marginalize feminist definitions of ‘women’s issues’, as well as female and feminist sources.

#### *2.4.2. Professional journalistic values and different types of journalism*

Journalists’ opportunities to practice gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media are also informed by professional values within different types of journalism. There are two major divisions in types of journalism that are salient for my research. Firstly, journalism is divided with respect to whether the role of journalists in society is defined in terms of ‘neutral observers’ or committed advocates. Secondly, journalism is divided into the so-called serious and popular journalism according to the orientation towards the public sphere, democracy and citizenship or the popular appeal. Whether journalists are obliged to follow the norm of objectivity or are able to pursue engaged journalism, and whether their work is defined with

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anti-feminist discourses (Gill 2007; Stacy 1987), and as overcoming of the opposition between feminism and femininity (Moseley and Read 2002). While American media texts that are most commonly analyzed as postfeminist, and certain postfeminist symbols such as Super-Woman, circulate globally, the historical absence of the fully-fledged, grass-roots second wave women’s movement in post-socialist countries makes postfeminism less of a relevant framework for studying representations of feminism in those countries. Furthermore, while post-feminist forms of sexism are often characterized by irony (Gill 2007), sexism in the Serbian and Croatian media is still often expressed in blatant ways. Finally, postfeminism is mainly discussed in relation to mainstream films and television series whereas my project focuses on journalism.

regard to public interest or audiences' interest has different consequences for the place of gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media. This is further informed by the ways in which these different types of journalism, oppositions and hierarchy between them are gendered.

As critical research into journalism shows, there are “two types of journalist, the one interventionist, socially committed and motivated, the other detached and uninvolved, concerned to preserve the objectivity and impartiality of journalism” (Golding and Eliot 1979, 193; see also Allan 1999; Curran 1991; Reese 1990; Schlesinger 1979). Curran (1991, 30) locates the paradigm of objective and impartial journalism with the liberal tradition of understanding the role of the media, and the committed strands of journalism, such as investigative or partisan journalism, with the radical democratic approaches, some of which see the role of the media in terms of a ‘countervailing agency’ seeking to “redress the imbalance of power in society.” Starting from this particular division between types of journalism, the question that is relevant for my research is: What opportunities for practicing gender sensitive journalism do these two types of journalistic practice provide?

Of the two paradigms, the neutral journalism has been dominant in the mainstream media as the research into news production shows (Allan 1999; Golding and Eliot 1979; Schlesinger 1979; Tuchman 1978). Objectivity has been central to professionalization of journalism and has commonly been understood as separation of facts from values (Allan 1999; Deuze 2005; Durham 1998; Golding and Elliot 1979; Schlesinger 1978; Reese 1990). In addition, as Ryan (1991, 177) says, “[w]hen opinions cannot be avoided, the media employ a “balance norm,” the presentation of opposing sides.” In applying this procedure, journalists employ the norm of objectivity as a strategic ritual (Tuchman, 1972, 1978b), which they can invoke in their defense against external criticism for bias.

In effect, objectivity works to maintain the status quo and militates against those strands of journalistic practice which seek to draw attention to social inequalities. Within media organizations, journalists who wish to criticize social inequalities or advocate for social change are deemed as unprofessional. The implication of this for gender sensitive journalism is that the perceived neutrality of journalistic work makes attention to gender seem as a deviation from the basic professional rules (De Bruin 2004; Gallego et al. 2004). Furthermore, claims to objectivity effectively hide social location of both journalists and sources. Consequently, in Allan's (1999, 135) view, 'objective' journalists privilege 'masculine' at the expense of 'feminine' truth claims in awarding them 'credibility' and 'expertise'.

The ways in which the norm of objectivity is applied through securing 'balance of views' is highly ideological as it depends on journalists' notions of social consensus (Hall et al. 1978; Hallin 1986; Reese 1990; Schlesinger 1978). What is possible in terms of practicing gender sensitive journalism will thus depend on where different discourses on gender are located with regard to the perceived social consensus. Given that gender in/equality is not an issue around which there is consensus in most societies, this means that it is likely to be treated as a matter of legitimate controversy in the mainstream media. This poses the question of the boundaries of the legitimate discourse about gender and whether the principle of balance of views means that sexist perspectives on this issue or sources who deny gender inequality are also included in the debate in the name of balance of views.

Media coverage of social inequalities is informed not only by the norm of objectivity, but by other professional values of the mainstream journalism. Critical analysis of news production has documented the ways in which news values, working criteria used in the selection and presentation of the available material, are ideological in the ways they inform such coverage

(Allan 1999; Gitlin 1980; Golding and Elliot 1979; Hall et al. 1978; Schlesinger 1978; Ryan 1991). Drawing on the influential work of Galtung and Ruge (1973), Allan (1999, 62-3) lists the following news values: conflict, relevance, timeliness, simplification, personalization, unexpectedness, continuity, reference to elite nations and persons, cultural proximity, and negativity. As Golding and Elliot (1979) and Gitlin (1980) argue, some of these values lead to an overt focus on individual events, personalities and visible conflict, while the background analysis of social and historical conditions and structures underlying the conflict is missing. This often prevents social movements to communicate their interpretations of social conflicts. By informing media coverage of social inequalities in these ways, these values also pose constraints for practicing gender sensitive journalism.

Conversely, gender sensitive journalism fits well with the paradigm of committed journalism, exemplified in many different critical strands of journalistic practice such as investigative (Ettema and Glasser 2007), public (Haas and Steiner 2001, 2006; Woodstock 2002), emancipatory (Shah 1996), alternative (Atton 2002, 2003; Atton and Hamilton 2008; Fenton 2007) and radical journalism (Downing et al. 2001). What many critical journalistic practices have in common is that they aim to “expose wrongdoing, correct injustice and subject to critical public scrutiny the exercise of power,” as Curran (1991, 30) says speaking of radical democratic approaches to journalism. Accordingly, critical journalists draw attention to social inequalities, advocate for social change in favour of the oppressed groups, broaden access to the public sphere for the groups that are marginalized, and maintain close links with social movements or organizations that struggle against inequality (Atton 2002; Shah 1996). While committed journalists are often related to alternative media, there are also committed journalists who attempt to practice this kind of journalism within the mainstream media. Whether they are

able to pursue such goals depends on the extent to which they can stretch the professional values of ‘neutral’ journalism and on the extent to which particular mainstream media allow more critical forms of journalism. I come back to this question about critical journalists’ agency and opportunities within the mainstream media at the end of this section when I discuss feminist media activism.

In order to account for how these different journalistic paradigms advance or hinder gender sensitive journalism, my choice of Serbian and Croatian television programmes includes both programmes which fall under the category of committed journalism and those that apply the principles of ‘neutral’ journalism. Namely, I have selected the programmes that advocate for the causes of women’s NGOs, but also those that often approach feminist issues by staging debates between two opposite sides. In analyzing the programmes, I then examine the different ways in which the norm of objectivity is applied in these programmes in discussions about ‘women’s issues’. Furthermore, I discuss these issues in my analysis of the interviews with journalists, where I examine the ways in which Serbian and Croatian journalists justify their selection of issues and sources by invoking different journalistic professional values.

The second division within journalism, which is relevant for my research, concerns the difference between ‘serious’ and ‘popular’ journalism – a division that is strongly gendered. Van Zoonen’s (1998b, 126-8) categorization of journalism according to goals and gender offers a useful analytical framework here. She approaches journalism in its totality and stresses that popular journalistic forms belong to journalism as much as ‘hard news’ do, which have traditionally been seen as the only proper kind of journalism. In terms of goals, media organizations may privilege institutional or audience goals. In the first case, organizations follow the idea that journalism should contribute to the workings of the public sphere and democracy

and they try to achieve prestige and credibility that is afforded to this kind of journalism. In the second case, orientation towards audiences means that ‘interest’ is privileged over ‘importance’ and professional success is defined in terms of the size of the audience and the profit. These goals intersect with orientations to femininity and masculinity to form four sub-domains of journalism: the ‘institutional masculine’ which is commonly equated with hard news; the ‘audience masculine’ that includes crime, sport, and sex related media; the ‘audience feminine’ which is exemplified by women’s magazines, but can be found in many tabloid forms as well; and the ‘institutional feminine’ which would assume feminist media.

Related arguments about the ways in which journalism is gendered are made by many other feminist media scholars, such as Gallego et al. (2004), Melin-Higgins (2004), Allan (1998) and Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson (2004), who stress the hierarchical overlap between feminine and masculine, on the one hand, and ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ news, on the other hand. According to Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson (2004, 81), ‘hard’ news deals with “politics, business news, union issues, war, but sometimes also science, technology, crime, sports”. ‘Soft’ news are usually associated with “social, consumer issues, health care, education, child care, environment, housing,” sometimes also “human interest, culture and entertainment.” As Gallego et al. (2004, 56) point out, ‘hard’ issues are deemed more newsworthy and professionally prestigious than soft issues because of the privilege given to activities that occur in the public sphere. As women’s lives are traditionally associated with the private sphere, that makes them generally less newsworthy for ‘hard’ news (Allan 1998, 134). While the effect of that is the marginalization of ‘women’s issues’ and female sources in the masculine ‘hard’ news, the other consequence of this division is depreciation of those popular forms of journalism that do provide space for women’s participation. As Holland (1998, 21-2) notes writing about the tabloid press in

the UK, 'soft' news and entertainment address have been associated with femininity since the early days of the development of the popular press. The devaluation of the tabloid press, for its emphasis on visual content and entertainment, has thus overlapped with the depreciation of 'feminine' address and interests (ibid.).

However, the division between 'serious' and popular journalism has become more blurred since the mid-eighties. As Van Zoonen (1998b) notes, journalism has generally become much more audience-oriented. While there are many journalistic texts whose sole aim is to attract the biggest possible audience, there are few with only institutional goals. Discussions of this trend have been very prominent in media studies since the start of the nineties and have often centered around the thesis that the pervasive tabloidization of serious journalism is undermining the public sphere and democracy (Blumler 1999; Bonner and McKay 2007; Brants 1998; Dahlgren and Sparks 1992; Gill 2007; Franklin 1997; Jones 2006; Macdonald 1998, 2000, 2003; Sparks 1992, 2000; Turner 1999; van Zoonen 2005). A range of pejorative terms, such as 'newszak', infotainment, 'bonk journalism', tabloid journalism, have been used to describe the impact of commercialization and an increase of entertainment elements in journalism. Other commonly noted characteristics of tabloid journalism include: personalization; a focus on subjectivity and celebrity culture; 'human interest' modes of presentation; privileging ordinary people over experts; and orientation toward more 'soft' issues (Gill 2007; Macdonald 2003).

While some critics have seen the effects of these changes in terms of the demise of different forms of institutional journalism (Blumler 1999; Franklin 1997; Sparks 1992, 2000), others have claimed that tabloid forms, and especially talk shows, provide opportunities to members of marginalized groups and ordinary people to participate in the public sphere (Jones 2006; Livingstone and Lunt 1994; van Zoonen 2005). As Carpignano et al. (1993) argue, talk

shows are politically effective because they enable new forms of political representation of otherwise marginalized groups, which rest more in circulation of discursive practices than in traditional political action through formal organizations. Talk shows have also received a lot of attention from feminist scholars because of their woman-centered approach: orientation towards female audience, greater participation of female experts and ‘ordinary women’, a big number of female hosts, and a focus on ‘women’s issues’ (Aslama 2000; Gill 2007; Leurdijk 2000; Macdonald 2003; Rapping 2000; Shattuc 2005; Squire 1997). They have been especially mentioned for their contribution to the enhanced public awareness of women’s movement concerns with domestic violence, sexual abuse, incest etc.

The debates about the potential of popular journalism to foster the circulation of oppositional discourses and the perspectives of marginalized groups have particularly focused on personalization of political and social issues, evident in human-interest modes of presentation and talk shows. Researchers who emphasize talk shows’ contributions to the women’s participation in the public sphere, point out that these programmes provide space for feminist perspectives through a redefinition of the relationship between public and private in linking personal experiences and social injustices (Livingstone and Lunt 1994; Shattuc 2005). However, scholars critical of the tabloid use of personalization argue that it leads to depoliticization. Sparks (1992) notes that tabloid press obliterates the political through explaining social relations and events in terms of transparent personal experience. Feminist scholars have also pointed to the ways in which talk shows voyeuristically exploit participants’ accounts of personal experiences, turn the feminist principle ‘personal is political’ on its head (Gill 2007) and present social problems and political agendas in terms of therapeutic discourse about addictions and recovery (Rapping 2000).



While these criticisms reveal important problems with personalization, it is also necessary to look into how personalization can contribute to highlighting problems of social inequalities. Harrington (2008), thus, proposes that personalization and other features of popular journalism should be looked in terms of their ends not the means. Similarly, Macdonald (1998) identifies the conditions under which personalization can bring forward personal experience as a form of knowledge and names this type of personalization ‘testimony’. For a personalized account of a social issue to work as a testimony, the movement between subjectivity and broader social and political circumstances would have to be made textually visible. She identifies several journalistic strategies for establishing this link: ironic juxtaposition of personal experience and political evidence; collective memory work; reflexivity that highlights the specific location of the narrating voice; and addressing the political event from the perspective of personal experience.

These debates about the tabloidization of ‘serious’ journalism have been waged against the backdrop of the gradual demise of public service media in Europe in the last two decades. In the European countries, public service broadcasting has been traditionally seen as essential for the provision of institutional journalism oriented towards the public sphere, democracy and citizenship, whereas a purely commercial broadcasting system has been seen as incapable of providing resources for citizenship (Atkinson 1997; Curran 1991; Juneau 1997; McDonnell 1991; Murdock 1992; Raboy 1997). However, multiplication of channels due to cable, satellite and digital technologies, subsequent increased competition for audiences, powerful commercial lobbies and neo-liberal governments, all led to a media environment characterized by a continuous pressure to cut the public expenditure on the public service media, commercialise them and deny them a special role in providing public service which market cannot deliver. From the liberal perspective, it has been argued that commercial media systems such as the American

provide for diversity through numerous niche markets, which target highly profiled audiences and thus provide much more diversity in their output than the European public service media (Skovmand and Schroder 1992).

Media scholars supportive of public service broadcasting have questioned this proposition by pointing out that an exclusively market oriented media system very often leads to uniformity in programming, both in an ideological and a cultural sense. This occurs not only because the media sponsored by advertising tend to create programmes that can attract mainly those parts of the audiences that can be of interest to the advertisers, but also because the competition between the media pushes them to standardize programmes as similar to each other (Curran 1991; Murdock 1992). According to proponents of public service broadcasting, this type of television media can better ensure media diversity. Thus, defenders of the BBC have contrasted democratic principles of universality of access and equity in communication to inequality of purchasing power of consumers. According to them, the biggest danger of media commercialization and fragmentation of audiences is that certain audiences will be left behind (Juneau 1997, 11). It is here that media diversity comes into play as a part of the justification of publicly funded broadcasting. As Murdock notes, a multiplicity of channels does not guarantee variety and diversity in terms of content and audiences addressed. In his view, publicly funded broadcasting is necessary to ensure that minority needs and interests are served as well and that certain groups of people are not deprived of their democratic rights of information and communication.

My selection of the relevant Serbian and Croatian television programmes and my analysis of the ways in which professional journalistic values influence journalists' choices of topics and sources is informed by the particular arguments raised in the above-discussed debates. Drawing

on Van Zoonen's (1998b) typology of feminine and masculine sub-domains of journalism and other feminist research on gendered character of journalism, I have selected the programmes that fit the categories of institutional feminine and audience feminine. These types of programmes were selected since they are likely to involve elements of gender sensitive journalism, such as coverage of 'women's issues' and fostering women's participation. Feminine institutional journalism is represented by the programmes produced by feminist journalists, often in collaboration with women's NGOs. Feminine audience journalism is represented by the daytime talk shows, which are largely conceptualized as televised women's magazines.

In addition, I have selected a hybrid genre, which mixes institutional and audience, 'feminine' and 'masculine' properties: the evening talk shows, which combine 'masculine' current affairs with 'feminine' human interest. This type of programme was chosen because it crisscrosses the public-private division and therefore includes both episodes that provide coverage of 'women's issues', but also those that follow the institutional masculine paradigm and therefore marginalize female participants. It is therefore suitable for an analysis of the ways in which the trends of tabloidization have opened institutional masculine genres to women's concerns, but also of the ways in which women have been traditionally marginalized within such genres.

The programmes were also chosen to account for the differences in the ways in which the public service and commercial broadcasting present opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. While the two popular daytime talk shows are shown on the commercial television channels, the two popular evening talk shows are broadcast on the public service channels. The feminist programmes, which I found in my research, were all broadcast on the public service channel in Croatia, while they were shown both on the public service channel and on a

commercial channel in Serbia. In Chapter 4, where I discuss the methodological aspects of my research, I provide more information about the particular programmes that I selected. Finally, I address the issue of the differences between ‘serious’ and popular journalism in my analysis of the selected programmes and my interviews with their producers to uncover the ways in they inform the coverage of women’s issues, participation and representations.

#### *2.4.3. Feminist media activism*

Feminist media activism is the third important factor that can influence the mainstream media to adopt some elements of gender sensitive journalism. Feminist media activism is very diverse and a model developed by Byerly and Ross (2006) offers a useful way of categorizing these activities according to four most common ‘paths’ women activists take. According to their research, there are four major ways in which women approach media activism. They named these four ‘paths’: ‘politics to media’, ‘media profession to politics’, ‘advocate change agent’ and ‘women’s media enterprises’. In the first case, women engaged in feminist activism come to learn media related skills in order to publicize a particular stance on women-related issues or to enable other women to speak. The second ‘path’ refers to women who are media professionals and who, as insiders, try to increase coverage of ‘women’s issues’ or to advance women’s status in the media industry. The third category includes those feminist activists whose work focuses on making the mainstream media and journalism more egalitarian in terms of gender. The fourth one entails development of women’s alternative media. In terms of my research, the second and the third paths are most relevant as they involve those activities that aim to change journalism in the mainstream media so that it becomes more gender sensitive. In Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, I therefore examine how pro-feminist journalists and external feminist media activism affect the potential for gender sensitive journalism in the particular television channels.

The extent to which female and/or feminist journalists can advance women's status in the media has mainly been debated with regard to two questions: whether a 'critical mass' of female journalists can change the media and whether feminist journalists can bypass professional, organizational and institutional constraints within the mainstream media in pursuing their activist ends. Feminist attempts to improve media representation of women have often been led by a belief that when women reached a 'critical mass' that would change media content as well, e.g. in terms of story selection and reporting approaches (de Bruin and Ross, 2004; Frankson, 2001; Beasley, 1997). This claim is supported by those studies which show how women journalists did influence media content to change news definitions and include more women's perspectives (Mills, 1997; Christmas, 1997). In her research, Mills found that greater presence of women in the workforce and in decision-making positions could change journalistic culture in several different ways: create better working conditions for women journalists; change and broaden definitions of news to include topics such as violence against women, gender discrimination or child care; broaden a range of sources to include more women.

However, other researchers stress that gender is not the only or the most powerful factor that affects women's approaches to journalism and that women journalists often do not identify themselves in terms of their gender. In his survey of American journalists' professional values, Weaver (1997, p. 37) found that newsroom culture is a much stronger influence on journalists than gender, which led him to conclude that "the culture of newsrooms, the structure of news work, and the traditions of journalism should change for content to be different". De Bruin (2004) also found that gender identity was commonly minimized among female journalists and the professional and organizational identities were emphasized instead. According to her, such 'hierarchy of identities' allowed women to gain greater social benefits and suppress painful

experiences of discrimination. Also, the women in de Bruin's study often used their professional identity as a shield of protection against discrimination.

The ways in which female journalists position themselves in terms of their gender and with regard to gender-related issues are strongly influenced by sexism in newsroom cultures, which has been documented amply by feminist researchers (Allan, 1998; Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson, 2004; Dougary, 1994; Gallego et al, 2004; Frohlich, 2004; Kitzinger, 1998; Melin-Higgins, 2004; Ross, 2004; Steiner, 1998; van Zoonen, 1998). Female journalists are often affected by the gendered hierarchy of 'hard' and 'soft' news that make female journalists more likely to populate less prestigious journalistic genres, which I have discussed in the previous section. This can in turn have consequences for the prominence of 'women's issues' as even if they are covered they are commonly relegated to women's or lifestyle pages. Attention to such 'non-prestigious' issues can also be detrimental to female journalists' professional advancement.

In addition, the notion of a journalist as a gender-neutral individual (Gallego 2004) and sexism in the workplace militate against their active engagement with gender issues. Steiner's (1998) historical study of gendered aspects of workplace power in the newsroom shows contradictions imposed on women between their femininity and gender-neutral professionalism. She shows the paradox that early female journalists were facing: if they refused to be feminine at the workplace they were seen as deviant, and if they behaved in a feminine way they were professionally marginalized. Dougary's (1994) accounts of professional experiences of media women in Britain testify to gender specific problems of contemporary female employees: being judged first as women and then as professionals; having to deal with sexist comments and stereotypical ways of representing women; being excluded from the informal professional socializing; having difficulties in balancing work in the media with their private life and

children; and having problems in getting their ideas through to the male superiors (See also: Loach, 1987).

All these aspects create what Melin-Higgins describes as masculine journalistic doxa – an emphasis on “strong objectivity approach”, “hunt for news”, “end justifies means”, and “glorification of the tough part of the job”. In organizational terms, the journalistic doxa is retained in a variety of ways through: gatekeepers who guard entrance to the profession and ‘old boys’ networks’; the routines such as editorial meetings where jobs are allocated; newsroom culture which is sexist; and exclusion of women from informal gatherings, e.g. pub (Gallego et al, 2004; Melin-Higgins, 2004). In the context of sexist newsroom culture and masculine professional bias, women journalists employ different strategies in accommodating themselves to that environment. Melin-Higgins (2004) discusses three of such strategies, each of which relates differently to the journalistic doxa. She calls the first strategy ‘female ghetto’ – accepting the traditional role of ‘woman journalist’ who is confined to topics suitable for ‘women’s pages’. The second strategy – wanting to be ‘one of the boys’ and cover ‘hard’ stories – is more threatening but still keeps in place the masculine bias in definitions of newsworthiness. Only the third strategy – ‘one of the girls’ – where female journalists attempt to challenge professional values and reaffirm ‘feminine’ subjects, challenges the journalistic doxa.

That the agency of those women who choose the third strategy should not be undermined, is evidenced by studies of media coverage of women’s movements’. As Barker-Plummer notes (2000), those women journalists who were sympathetic to the goals of the second-wave women’s movement in the US often maneuvered the flexibility of news definitions to stretch them and include feminism as a newsworthy story. However, although targeting women reporters granted women’s organizations access to the media, the success of such strategy was also implicated in

gender hierarchy within the media organization since men reporters were more likely to have their stories in the front pages (Barker-Plummer, 2000).

Therefore, the scope for feminist agency of the journalists in the third category has been a question that has divided scholars. In her study of feminist journalists working for the mainstream media, van Zoonen (1994) found that their colleagues' attitudes, ideas about audience, and social and political contexts posed insurmountable obstacles to their feminist ideas. In time, these journalists conformed to the newsroom policies, which meant that anti-feminist and gendered aspects of journalistic practice became a 'normal' routine. However, other feminist researchers, such as Barker-Plummer (2000), Bayerly (2004), Freeman (2000) and Mills (1997) have argued that those women sympathetic to the women's movement often used exactly their professional identity and values to argue for a greater coverage of women's and feminist issues. Journalists who were supportive of the feminist agenda did not necessarily see themselves as feminists, but they pressed for coverage of feminism giving professional reasons, e.g. that feminism is a 'good story'.

In the process, they had to negotiate their sympathies for women's movements' goals and their loyalty to professional journalistic norms. Gallego et al. (2004, 60) capture this dynamic when they say that journalists are allowed to:

[...] disclose their social concerns in accordance with their own personal values as long as they comply with the assumptions that form the basis of the journalistic profession (objective reality, distance from the facts, nonrecognition of ideological preferences); this mechanism allows different groups and sources to identify the journalists who are most likely to portray their claims or problems. This is a possible point of entry for gender-related subjects or themes that would otherwise not be given coverage.

In certain conditions, the efforts of feminist journalists to advance the coverage of 'women's issues' and women's participation have been more successful. Byerly (2004, 234)



points out that activism by women journalists is most likely to have impact when women are organized and with a strong external feminist movement in place. According to Mills (1997 44), increased coverage of ‘women’s issues’ in the cases she studied was possible due to the combination of committed women reporters and the emergence of legal and political issues that they could cover. Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson (2004, 96) stress that the support from management for feminist journalists’ gender equality policies in the Swedish media was of paramount importance. What is also visible from their study is that feminist journalists’ activism in the Swedish television media in the mid-eighties, was relatively successful because of the broader journalistic culture of the time which was marked by critical approaches to journalism. Consequently, in the case of those media that support critical types of journalism, feminist media activism is more likely to have impact.

Furthermore, feminist and other critical journalists also exploit the potential for criticism within mainstream journalism. This is possible because the norm of objectivity or the notion of journalism as the fourth estate and public service, often require journalists to include critical perspectives in their coverage of social problems as well. As Gitlin notes (1980), the core principles of journalism, such as balance and objectivity, simultaneously allow for incorporation of oppositional movements’ political views and frame social movements in such a way as to muffle, blur and domesticate their challenge to the dominant ideology. Furthermore, the notion of journalism as a public service presents another potential resource for critical journalists. This notion is tied to an important part of the mythology about journalism presented in the idea about journalists as tribunes of the people (Golding and Elliot 1979), who “comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable” (Ryan 1990, 174). As part of the public service is to cover issues that are

important to different groups in the audience (Schlesinger 1978), critical journalists can draw on this notion in their attempts to increase coverage relevant to marginalized social groups.

In addition to pro-feminism oriented journalists within the mainstream media, external feminist media activists who belong to Byerly and Ross's (2006) third category, 'the feminist change agent', also exert pressure on the media to be more gender sensitive. According to Gallagher (2001), feminist media advocacy has experienced a boom after the UN Fourth Global Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, where the media was recognized as one of the critical fields of importance for equality of the sexes. In the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (UN 1995), Chapter IV.J. about women and the media states a series of recommendations about: increasing representations of women in the media and decision making positions; work on training women for the media professions and enabling women to have greater access to the media; repressing sexist media contents and stereotypical representation of women; encouraging the production of programmes addressing subjects of particular importance for women; encouraging balanced and diverse representation of women in the media; promoting awareness of the problems of gender discrimination and gender equality in general. These recommendations were forwarded to national governments, the media and the civil sector, and training for media professionals, professional codes and adequate legislation were listed as mechanisms for their realization.

The Beijing Platform for Action and the conference 'Women Empowering Communication' in Bangkok, that preceded it, stimulated the globalization of women's media activism, the networking of activist groups and the standardization of their projects. Contemporary feminist media activism is thus characterized by a combination of the following activities: observing, i.e. monitoring the media; educating media professionals for gender-

sensitive journalism as well as the broader audience in the field of media literacy; advocacy, lobbying and dialogue with the media about concrete problems and possible changes; and establishing codices and guidelines for gender sensitive journalism. The most significant action that stemmed from the Bangkok conference was the Global Media Monitoring Project. This project consisted of monitoring representations of women in the news in all the media during one day and has been carried out three times already (MediaWatch 1995; Spears and Seydegart 2000; Gallagher 2005) through the coordinated work of women's organizations in over seventy countries. In this global monitoring, the Croatian women's NGOs took part from as early as 2000, and Serbian women's NGOs joined the project in 2005 (Gallagher 2005). In Chapter 8, I examine whether and how feminist media activists contributed to the advancement of gender sensitive journalism in the Serbian and Croatian media.

## 2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I defined gender sensitive journalism drawing on the literature about the relationships between the media and citizenship and feminist debates about the ways in which the media could be made more egalitarian in terms of gender. Gender sensitive journalism is understood in my research in terms of the following elements: the provision of information and opportunities for deliberation about issues of specific concern to women in ways that do not define 'women's issues' as pertaining mainly to the private sphere; broadening women's participation in the media across the board; providing diverse representations of women, their lives and experiences; and elimination of sexist journalistic practices, such as gender segregation along the lines of the public/private division, derogatory representations of women and unequal treatment of female sources and subjects of media coverage. Departing from feminist and other

critical analyses of journalism, I also identified those factors that most strongly inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism within the mainstream media. These factors include: discourses about gender and feminism, professional journalistic values of different types of journalism, and feminist media activism. My research departs from these two arguments to look at the ways in which the identified elements of gender sensitive journalism are present in, or missing from, Serbian and Croatian television journalism, as well as the ways in which the above-mentioned three key factors advance or hinder the opportunities for practicing gender sensitive journalism.

## **Chapter 3: Gender, Politics and the Media in Serbia and Croatia after 2000**

### **3. 1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I outline and compare the significant aspects of the political contexts, television media scenes and gender politics in the two countries in order to explore their impact on the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. I start by presenting a brief overview of the most relevant features of the Serbian and Croatian political contexts after 2000, the year when authoritarian regimes were ousted in both countries. I then proceed with a discussion of the Serbian and Croatian television scenes and gender politics in the same period. However, as the wars, nationalism and authoritarian regimes influenced both the television sector and gender politics profoundly in the nineties, the two sections that deal with these areas first introduce their major characteristics in the nineties so that it should be possible to explain how the developments after 2000 show both continuity and discontinuity with the politics of the previous decade.

### **3. 2. The Serbian and Croatian Political Contexts after 2000**

The year 2000 was a turning point both in Serbia and Croatia as the authoritarian and nationalist regimes that ruled the two countries in the nineties were ousted then. Franjo Tudjman, the President of Croatia in the nineties, died in December 1999 and HDZ,<sup>11</sup> his party that ruled

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<sup>11</sup> Croatian Democratic Union

Croatia since 1990, lost in the elections in January 2000 to a coalition led by SDP.<sup>12</sup> In Serbia, mass protests in October 2000 forced Slobodan Milošević to acknowledge his defeat in the September presidential elections. In the following parliamentary elections in December 2000, Milošević's regime was defeated again and DOS,<sup>13</sup> a coalition of eighteen parties, formed the first properly democratic post-socialist Serbian government. The new governments<sup>14</sup> were confronted with the legacies of the Tudjman's and Milošević's regimes: their role in the war crimes in ex-Yugoslav wars, their nationalism, authoritarian rule and criminal economy. A detailed exploration of the ways in which the Serbian and Croatian post-2000 governments dealt with the legacies and problems they inherited from the nineties is outside the scope of my thesis. However, this topic is relevant to my study to the extent that some aspects of this legacy have shaped the overall course of events in the two countries after 2000, as well as the media and gender politics.

In the post-2000 context a major political conflict in both countries has been over their collaboration with the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia in The Hague. The new governments have been exposed both to the internal pressures by the nationalist groups and parties not to extradite the accused of the war crimes and to the international pressures to collaborate with the Hague Tribunal. The main pressure in favour of the collaboration has come from the EU, which has conditioned Serbia's and Croatia's integration processes on their

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<sup>12</sup> Socialist Democratic Party

<sup>13</sup> Democratic Opposition of Serbia

<sup>14</sup> In Croatia, the following governments were in power after 2000: (1) a coalition government led by Socialist Democratic Party (SDP) (2000-2003); (2) a coalition government led by Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) (2003-2008); (3) a coalition government led by HDZ (2008-). However, the composition of the first and the third coalition governments was reconstructed during their time in the office, as some parties left the first coalition and as Ivo Sanader, the Prime Minister from HDZ (2003-2008) withdrew from politics in the second case. In Serbia, the following governments were in power after 2000: (1) DOS coalition government (2001-2004); (2) a coalition government led by Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) (2004-2007); a coalition government led by DSS (2007-2008); a coalition government led by Democratic Party (DS) (2008-). (Soberg 2006; Stojanović 2009; Croatian Government Website 2007).

collaboration with The Hague Tribunal. For instance, in 2002 Great Britain and Holland refused to ratify the Stabilization and Association Agreement (SAA) with Croatia because of its refusal to extradite the accused generals to The Hague. SAA was eventually ratified in February 2005 after Croatia's cooperation with the Hague Tribunal was evaluated positively. Later in 2005, however, the EU postponed the start of accession negotiations with Croatia over its failure to arrest Ante Gotovina, a Croatian general accused of war crimes. As in the previous case, the negotiations started only after Croatia extradited Gotovina to The Hague in December 2005 (Ramet and Soberg 2008; Wichmann 2007).

Similarly, in 2001, the EU conditioned the financial help to Serbia by the extradition of Slobodan Milošević to The Hague and granted it after the government of Zoran Djindjić, extradited Milošević in June 2001 (Wichmann 2007). However, in March 2003, the first post-2000 government's attempts to confront the criminal legacy of the Serbian regime from the nineties were halted by the assassination of Zoran Djindjić, the Prime Minister. He was killed by members of the state security services (The Unit for Special Operations, JSO), closely related to organized crime rings, who feared that they might be extradited to The Hague, as they were active in paramilitary formations during ex-Yugoslav wars (Stojanović 2009). Serbia was eventually issued a positive Feasibility Study after a number of accused generals surrendered in 2005, but the SAA has not been ratified yet due to Serbia's failure to arrest the two remaining fugitives, Ratko Mladić and Goran Hadzić (Wichmann 2007).

While grappling with some similar problems, the post-2000 Serbia and Croatia have differed greatly in terms of the pace of their rapprochement to the EU as well as their political stability. The difference in the relationships between the two countries and the EU predates the year 2000. Because of its aggression against the newly acknowledged independent states Croatia

and Bosnia and Herzegovina which seceded from the former Yugoslavia, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro)<sup>15</sup> was under UN embargo between 1992 and 2000. This, in turn, meant that, unlike Croatia, Serbia was isolated and excluded from any processes of integration with the EU until the change of the regime in 2000. For example, while the European Parliament's Delegation for South Eastern Europe had annual meetings with the Croatian Parliament throughout the nineties, it suspended meetings with the FRY Parliament until 2001. FRY was the only country in South Eastern Europe which was excluded from the various EU political initiatives for the region in the nineties (Wichmann 2007).

After 2000, the different starting positions with regard to the EU contributed to the different pace of the integration processes. Croatia was issued a positive Feasibility Study in 2000, signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2001 (which was ratified in 2005), became a candidate country in 2004 and started negotiations in 2006 (*ibid.*). Serbia, however, received a positive Feasibility Study in 2005 and signed the Stabilization and Association Agreement in 2008, but SAA has not been ratified yet because Holland objects the ratification before the two fugitives from The Hague Tribunal are found and extradited. At the end of 2009, Serbia submitted its application for the status of a candidate country (B92 2005, 2008a, 2009c).

The different trajectories of Serbia and Croatia with regard to the EU integration have also been affected by the different internal political dynamic in the two countries after 2000. Despite the deep political divisions over the stance towards the recent past, Croatia has enjoyed a

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<sup>15</sup> Serbia and Montenegro, as the two remaining republics of the Federal Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia that disintegrated in wars 1991-1995, formed Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1992. In 2003, the two republics renegotiated their relations and the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro was created. However, in 2006, Montenegro organized a referendum about its independence and as 55.4% citizens supported the independence, it became an independent state. At that point, the Republic of Serbia, that was also created with the secession of Montenegro, consisted of Serbia proper and two provinces, northern Vojvodina and southern Kosovo and Metohija. Kosovo seceded and became an independent state in 2008, but most parliamentary parties in Serbia reject its independence and consider Kosovo still a territory of Serbia. The open questions of state borders have been a major source of political instability and crises since 2000 in Serbia.



relative political stability as it achieved its goal to establish the independent national state after the war (1991-1995), and as the majority of (ethnic) Croats have supported this goal as the referendum in May 1991 confirmed (Soberg 2006; Wichmann 2007). Furthermore, the major political parties have seen the integration with the EU as their political priority after 2000, contributing to the continuity in politics over different governments.<sup>16</sup>

The political situation in Serbia, on the other hand, has been much less stable since 2000. The mixture of nationalist political forces, war crime and organized crime rings inherited from the previous regime posed a great threat to the first democratic government and its reforms, as the assassination of Zoran Djindjić in 2003 tragically confirmed. The assassination threw the country into a crisis followed by a state of emergency in which the government led a major operation against organized crime. In addition to the backlash from the criminal and nationalist forces in the society against the first democratic government, the post-2000 Serbian politics has continued to be dominated by political conflicts over the questions of state borders and national sovereignty. These were triggered by the prospects of the secession of Montenegro and Kosovo and their later independence in 2006 and 2008, respectively.

Unlike in Croatia where the parties across the political spectrum agreed on the two key issues – the independent state of Croatia and integration to the EU – Serbian parties have been divided around the collaboration with The Hague Tribunal, Kosovo's independence and the integration with the EU. The disputes over the extradition of the Serbian indictees to the Hague Tribunal and the question of the integration into the EU after most of its member states acknowledged Kosovo as an independent state have divided the Serbian political parties into the pro-EU bloc led by the Democratic Party (DS) and the anti-EU nationalist bloc led by the

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<sup>16</sup> This is not to say that Croatia has not faced many challenges after 2000. Ramet and Soberg (2008) identify corruption and xenophobia as major obstacles to democratization of Croatia since its independence to the present day, and add the legacy of the Tudjman's era as another obstacle after 2000.

Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and the Serbian Radical Party (SRS). This division led to break ups in the governments and frequent elections before the governments would reach the ends of their mandates, slowing down and halting many political processes, including the establishment of state institutions that focus on gender equality. In consequence, Serbia's and Croatia's different relationships with the EU and differences in their political stability have also produced differences in the media and gender-related politics in the two countries after 2000.

### 3.3. Television Scenes in Serbia and Croatia

“No other data becomes outdated so quickly as the overviews of the Croatian mass media, so it is a very thankless task to provide such overviews,” complained Stjepan Malović (2004, 91; my translation), a Croatian journalist and media analyst, in yet another piece about the changes in the Croatian media. The same could be said about the Serbian television scene: during my PhD studies, earlier drafts of this chapter became quickly outdated as television channels disappeared or changed ownership or legal status. My intention in this section is to identify the most important developments in the Serbian and Croatian public and commercial television sector after 2000 so that I can explain how the characteristics of the two television scenes open or foreclose opportunities for gender-sensitive journalism later in this chapter. But first, I need to briefly outline the state of the television scenes in the nineties as that was the starting point for their post-2000 transformations.

#### *3.3.1. Television as a propaganda tool or ‘apolitical’ entertainment (1990-2000)*

In the nineties, state television was instrumentalized by the authoritarian and nationalist parties in power, Tudjman's HDZ and Milošević's SPS, to serve two objectives: to fight the

media war and to act as the governing parties' organs (Thompson 2000). Both the Serbian and the Croatian regimes seized control over their respective state broadcasting companies, Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) and Croatian Radio Television (HRT), through legislative changes that enabled the appointment of top personnel by the governments in the two countries, but also through the purges of the 'disloyal' journalists and those of 'unsuitable' nationality, Serbs in Croatia and non-Serbs in Serbia. According to the trade unions in the state television channels in the two countries, around 970 staff were removed from their jobs in the Croatian state television, and around 1000 staff were dismissed from the Serbian state television in the early nineties (Bjelica 1997; Kurspahić 2003; Nezavisni sindikat RTB 1993; Thompson 2000). During the wars in Croatia (1991-1995) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995), HRT and RTS news were characterized by ethnic hate speech, unverified allegations or outright lies, exclusively one-sided perspectives and nationalist propaganda (Thompson 2000). Throughout the nineties they were utilized by the governing parties in their fight to preserve their rule by curtailing the access of the oppositional parties to the news programmes, by attacking the independent media and opposition leaders, and by manipulating the coverage of election campaigns (Baranović 1995; Bjelica 1997; Ivanović 1998; Malović 1997; Milivojević and Matić 1993; Milošević 2005; Mucalo 2004; Peruško Čulek 1999a; Veljanovski 1996, 2005).

As a result of the state interventions, the Serbian and Croatian journalists divided into regime and independent journalists. Independent journalists worked for the print media, such as *Feral Tribune* or *Novi List* in Croatia, and *Vreme* and *Borba* in Serbia. The two key independent electronic media were Radio 101 in Zagreb and B92 Radio in Belgrade. As for television, the only Croatian non-regime local television station, TV Rijeka, was not granted a license by the Croatian government in 1990. In Serbia, a local Belgrade television station NTV Studio B which

was open to oppositional parties managed to survive throughout the nineties and it covered 38% of the population in 1998 (Thompson 2000). The division between regime and independent journalists also led to a break up in the Journalists' Association of Serbia. The independent journalists formed the Independent Journalists' Association of Serbia (NUNS) and their colleagues in Vojvodina, the Serbian northern province, formed their independent association as well, The Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina (NDNV) (Bjelica 1997).

Both Serbian and Croatian independent media were subject to attacks by the regime media and various pressures by the governments, including discriminatory taxation, harassment of journalists, libel suits, attempts to take away or not grant licenses for broadcasting (Bjelica 1997; Ivanović 1998; Thompson 2000). In Serbia, the regime was more repressive to the extent that independent journalists were more often victims of violence by the state-run paramilitary and intelligence groups and organizations. Also, between 1998 and the political changes in 2000, the Serbian independent media suffered under an extremely repressive Public Information Act under which many of them had to pay enormous penalties, which contributed further to their financial instability (Milošević 2005).<sup>17</sup>

The governments' grip over most of the media as well as regulatory bodies, affected the opportunities for the development of private television. In Croatia, several local commercial television channels appeared in the early nineties, but they either operated with the licenses issued under the former Yugoslav laws (which were not recognized by the new independent state of Croatia) or operated without any licenses. The HDZ government postponed regulating the sector until 1994 and used this lack of legality to grant the right to broadcast according to their political preferences (Thompson 2000). In 1994, the Telecommunications Act was adopted that

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<sup>17</sup> According to Milošević (2005), the state 'collected' more than 1.5 m E in penalties from the media in the period in which the Law was in force, between Oct 1998 and the political changes in 2000.

legislated the allocation of frequencies for the private stations, but the law enabled the government to control the licensing procedure. By the end of the decade, the number of regional and local commercial television channels was 14 (Peruško 2005). Still, the government made it impossible for any private television channel with national coverage to appear, as the costs of such a venture would have been exorbitant under the new legislation (Matković 1995, 1997). Until 2000, Croatia did not have a private television channel with national coverage. The closest to that was the production company *Mreža* (Network) which dispatched its programmes to a network of local stations since 1997 (Matković 1997; Peruško Čulek 1999a).

In Serbia, the private television sector appeared as “a result of a combination of arbitrary political decisions and some chaotic developments” (Milivojević 2005, 1328). A minority of stations, such as the oppositional channel NTV Studio B, held licenses issued by the Federal Broadcasting Authority which lost control over the frequencies in 1991 to the Serbian government (Thompson 2000). Many more local stations started operating without any licenses, and some signed temporary contracts with the state broadcaster RTS to use its transmitters for broadcasting (Milivojević 2005). In the second half of the nineties, the Federal Ministry of Telecommunications demanded that the stations apply for licenses on a couple of occasions, but the conditions made it impossible for many stations to apply for the licenses, due to the difficulties to obtain necessary documents or high fees. This chaotic situation led to a boom in the local television sector, as municipalities, the new businessmen and political groups started opening television channels with no or with temporary licenses. There were as many as 400 private broadcasters in 1998 (Thompson 2000) and many more appeared after that.

In 1994, TV Pink and BKTv appeared, the two commercial television channels that covered most of the Serbian territory. They were allowed to operate without proper licenses after

they signed contracts with RTS for the use of its transmitters. Both were owned by businessmen close to the Milošević's regime at the time. TV Pink was owned by Željko Mitrović, a member of JUL party<sup>18</sup> which was an ally of SPS, and BKTv was owned by the family Karić, the 'new rich' of Milošević's Serbia. These stations were allowed to operate, as their programming policy did not endanger RTS or the regime (Milivojević 2005). TV Pink did not broadcast news and its main focus was music, whereas BKTv's news with rare exceptions did not pose any threat to the government.

### *3.3.2. Towards the public service model and regulated commercial television (2000- )*

After the political changes in 2000, the new Serbian and Croatian governments were pressured by the journalistic professional organizations, NGOs and international organizations, such as OSCE<sup>19</sup> and the Council of Europe, to reform the media legislation and transform the electronic media in ways that would break with the authoritarian practices of the nineties (Milivojević 2005; Peruško 2005). As a result, a set of new media laws was adopted between 2000 and 2004 in Serbia and Croatia.<sup>20</sup> The new legislation defined: the procedures and deadlines for the transformation of the state television into public service; the establishment and functioning of independent regulatory bodies for the electronic media; and the procedures for the allocation of frequencies to commercial television channels. However, in both countries the media laws have been frequently changed before they were fully implemented, which often created confusion and led to the disrespect for the law (Malović 2004; Milivojević 2005).

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<sup>18</sup> The Yugoslav United Left

<sup>19</sup> The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

<sup>20</sup> Serbian post-2000 media laws are: Broadcasting Act (2002, 2004, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2009); Public Information Law (2003, 2003, 2009); Telecommunications Law (2003), Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance (2004). Croatian post-2000 media laws are: Law on Croatian Radio-Television (2001, 2003); Law on the Media (2003, 2004); Law on Electronic Media (2003, 2007, 2008, 2009); Law on Telecommunications (2003).

The transformation of the Croatian state television HRT into a public service broadcaster began after the new Law on Croatian Radio Television was passed in 2001. The new law enabled organizations within civil society to shape and oversee the programme policy through their membership in the HRT Council, but the Management Board, whose members were selected by the Parliament, controlled the finances of HRT. This division of labour led to the constant internal disagreements and finally to an internal crisis where the two governing bodies pulled the channel in different directions (Peruško 2005; Popović 2004; Stantić et al. 2003), which slowed down the pace of the transformation of the channel.

As a result of the crisis, the law was changed in 2003 and a new governance structure was established. Programme production was integrated within the Management, whereas the Programme Council was put in charge of supervising programming, but also of appointing all the members of the Management except for the Workers' Council representative (Peruško 2005). Also, whereas before various NGOs elected their candidates for the Council, the 2003 law stipulated that the 11 members of the Council can be proposed by various organizations within civil society but must be elected by the Parliament. Many critics saw this as a step back towards a greater political control over HRT. As Malović (2004, 130) points out, technically anybody can be a member of the Council but in reality somebody can become a candidate only if the parliamentary parties propose them. The result has been that the Council is composed of 6 members supported by the ruling parties and 5 supported by the opposition. Still, with these changes, HRT transformed its governance structure in line with its new legal status as public service broadcaster.

In Serbia, the transformation of RTS into a public service broadcaster has been stalled for much longer than in Croatia because of a number of irregularities in handling this process and

the poor implementation of the new Broadcasting Act (2002). The new law envisioned the establishment of the Republic Broadcasting Agency (RRA), an independent regulatory body in charge of the allocation of frequencies to commercial television channels, but also responsible for the transformation of RTS. However, procedural irregularities, arbitrary decisions, frequent changes of the Broadcasting Act and disrespect for its provisions have plagued the establishment of the RRA and the ‘transformation’ of RTS from the very start (Milivojević 2005; Veljanovski 2005).

In June 2003, the Parliament violated the electoral procedure in the case of two members of the first RRA Council and then the Council itself elected another member who did not match the criteria defined by the Broadcasting Act (2002).<sup>21</sup> As a result, two other appointed members – representatives of the professional organizations and NGOs – resigned. The incomplete and illegal RRA Council could not function properly and its Statute was never approved by the Parliament. The inoperative RRA Council in turn blocked the overall implementation of the Broadcasting Act, including the transformation of RTS and the allocation of commercial broadcasting licenses. Therefore, as of 2002, RTS was in a legal limbo: it was no longer the state television station but neither was it the public service broadcaster (Milivojević 2005). The Government postponed any solution to the crisis for after the early elections in December 2003. In August 2004, the Parliament amended the Broadcasting Act, using that as a pretext for terminating the illegal Council and electing the members of the new Council, eventually established in May 2005. However, two out of three members whose irregular election was the cause of the crisis of the first RRA Council were re-appointed in the new Council. Effectively,

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<sup>21</sup> In months before the election, the Government and Parliament announced publicly their candidates but then changed two candidates on the day of the election, although the Broadcasting Act (2002) stipulates that candidates should be known to the public 30 days before the election. In addition, the candidate who was supposed to represent Kosovo was found not to live in Kosovo but was elected by the Council anyway without any discussion (Milivojević 2005).



this only legalized the previous illegal appointments. In addition, the Broadcasting Act was amended on several occasions in ways that strengthened the influence of the state representatives in the RRA Council and limited the influence of the representatives of the professional organizations and NGOs (*ibid.*).

The unclear legal status of RTS also enabled the Government to directly appoint the Director General of the RTS in 2004. The appointment was justified by the perceived general dissatisfaction with the ways in which RTS reported on the violence against Serbs in Kosovo in March 2004. Furthermore, the Government justified its decision by referring to the Law on Public Enterprises and the Related Areas of Interest according to which the government appoints the management of public enterprises. Effectively, the government ignored the new Broadcasting Law according to which the RRA Council must elect the Director General of RTS after a public tender. In response to this decision, the complete Governing Board of RTS resigned, while the Government appointed the new Board soon afterwards (*ibid.*). Moreover, the new Director General was Aleksandar Tijanić, a Serbian journalist well known for his aggressive and misogynist style in public,<sup>22</sup> without the degree required for the job, and compromised by his role as the Minister of Information in one of Milošević's governments. As Milivojević (1348) observes on this account, the Government "returned RTS to the position of a State broadcaster. With the management appointed by the Government and funding coming from the State budget, RTS becomes both politically and economically dependent on the Government of the day." Similarly to the case of the irregular appointments of two members of the RRA Council, the irregular appointment of the Director General was later 'legalized'. In 2006, the second RRA

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<sup>22</sup> In 2005, a Serbian NGO, Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM) published a book about Tijanic, which documents his aggressive statements, insults and threats directed at his political opponents, over the nineties and after 2000. The book also contains several pages of selected misogynistic statements by Tijanic. He sued the NGO and the process is ongoing.

Council elected members of the Governing Board of RTS, and they subsequently re-elected Tijanić as the Director General with the mandate of four years (Republic Broadcasting Agency 2006; Serbian Radio Television. Managing Board 2006a, b).

As for the commercial television after 2000, Croatia got its first two private stations with national coverage in 2000 and 2004, respectively. The Croatian Government controlled the allocation of the licenses in the nineties, as the politicians from the governing party were also members of the Telecommunications Council which allocated the licenses. After many criticisms, this was changed already in 1999 and the new Law on Telecommunications created the Council for Radio and Television comprised of experts (Tomorad and Mucalo 2004). The Council announced a tender for commercial licenses in 1999 and granted a national license to TV Nova, which started broadcasting in 2000. TV Nova was owned by several Croatian businessmen and was created with “suspicious capital” pointing to HDZ (Matković 2001, 129). After one of its owners was shot the station was sold to the American company CME<sup>23</sup> in 2004 (Malović 2004a; Peruško 2005). The Council announced another tender in 2003 for the privatization of the third channel of the public service broadcaster and granted the license to the German corporation RTL<sup>24</sup>. The channel, RTL, started broadcasting in 2004. The introduction of the commercial stations reduced HRT’s share in advertising and audience (Peruško, 2005). HRT has remained dominant when the ratings of its two channels are taken together, but RTL and TV Nova have seen a steady rise in ratings over years.

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<sup>23</sup> CME is Central European Media Enterprise which is registered in the US and owns several television stations in Eastern and Central Europe (Peruško 2005)

<sup>24</sup> According to Peruško (2005, 464), the structure of the ownership of RTL is the following: “RTL Televizija is 58 per cent owned by the RTL Group, with the remainder owned by major Croatian companies: Agrokor (11.5 per cent), Podravka (11.5 per cent), Atlantic grupa (11.5 per cent) and Splitska banka HVB Split (7.5 per cent). The RTL Group, one of the world’s largest media industries, operates television stations in several other Western and Eastern European countries. The RTL Group is 89 per cent owned by the German global media conglomerate Bertelsmann, and 7 per cent by WAZ.”

The Croatian regulatory authority that allocates the licenses was changed again after the new Law on Electronic Media (2003). The new body, the Council for Electronic Media (VEM), was established in 2004. According to Peruško (2005) the election of the first members of VEM was lawful, although the NGOs monitoring the media sector criticized it as non-transparent. In addition to allocating the licenses, VEM is responsible for monitoring the broadcasters' compliance with the media legislation and their licensing contracts. VEM also founded the Fund for the Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in the Electronic Media in 2003, which should financially support programming for minorities or of special importance for citizenship. In 2007, when the Law on Electronic Media was changed again, the promotion of gender equality was included in the criteria for the allocation of funds, albeit at the bottom of VEM's priorities (Croatian Government. Office for Gender Equality 2008; Council for Electronic Media 2008).

In Serbia, the impeding of the first RRA Council, which I described before, postponed the allocation of licenses for several years, with existing stations continuing to work without licenses. In 2006, the second RRA Council announced a tender for commercial licenses and granted national licenses to six television channels. TV Pink, TV B92, TV FOX, and TV Avala were granted their own frequencies, whereas TV Happy and TV Kosava were granted one frequency which they would share (RRA 2006). Thus, TV Pink survived the change of the regime due to its focus on entertainment.<sup>25</sup> Conversely, BKTv disappeared together with its owner, Bogoljub Karić, who fled Serbia after charges were pressed against him for business crime.<sup>26</sup> B92, which earned its reputation as an oppositional radio station in the nineties,

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<sup>25</sup> TV Pink was the only broadcaster among the companies that paid the one-off tax on extra profit according to the Law on One-time Taxation of Extra Profits or Extra Property Acquired under Special Conditions (2001). The law was a measure against those companies that profited under suspicious circumstances in the nineties, during wars, UN sanctions or due to their ties with Milošević's regime.

<sup>26</sup> In 2004, Karić founded a political party and used his channel for its promotion. In 2006, RRA caused controversies when it shut BKTv temporarily as it charged BKTv with acting unprofessionally and breaching the Broadcasting Act. Following this, RRA did not grant a license to BKTv (Republic Broadcasting Agency 2006).

expanded its broadcasting to television in 2000.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Rupert Murdoch's News International entered the Serbian market with its FOX TV, whereas the other new commercial stations are owned by local businesses.<sup>28</sup> However, FOX TV changed its ownership structure in 2009, as Murdoch withdrew his capital.<sup>29</sup> The main competition for ratings is between RTS1 and TV Pink, followed by TVB92, whereas other stations attract low ratings.

The above discussion shows both the similarities and differences between Serbia and Croatia, as well as elements of continuity and discontinuity with the state of the television sector in the nineties. Firstly, one major change consists in the new legal status of the ex-state television channels as public service broadcasters and the efforts at their transformation that followed from the new status. While the process of their transformation was slow, difficult and sometimes characterized by irregularities, it was still more lawful in Croatia than in Serbia and with less explicit forms of political control, such as the direct appointment of the Director General of RTS by the Government in Serbia in 2004. Still, the questions of political control over the public service broadcasters have been highly contentious in both countries, as well as the arbitrary treatment of media legislation.

Secondly, the developments in the commercial television sector led to the creation of the first private television channels with national coverage in Croatia, whereas the Serbian commercial television scene became a mixture of the broadcasters which operated in the nineties and the new channels. There are two main differences between the commercial scenes in the two countries. In Serbia, the most powerful commercial channel, TV Pink, is owned by a local

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During the same year, criminal charges were pressed against Karić (and several members of his family) for tax evasion and bribery. Karić fled Serbia and the Interpol's warrant was issued against him.

<sup>27</sup> The ownership structure of B92 is the following: 35.36% B92 Trust (11 members of senior B92 staff); Media Development Loan Fund (MDLF Inc.) 14.59%; NCA Media 21.14%; Salink Ltd. / East Capital 21.44%; small shareholders 7.44%. (B92 2009a)

<sup>28</sup> Data about the ownership structure of TV Avala, TV Kosava and TV Happy can be obtained at <http://www.apr.sr.gov.yu/RepsisPublicSite/Search/GeneralEnterpriseSearch.aspx>. Accessed 12 Mar 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Greek TV Antena bought the Serbian FOX TV for 1\$ in 2009 (B92 2009d).

businessman who profited from his links to the Milošević's regime in the nineties. Also, in Serbia, there is a commercial channel, TV B92, which in some parts of its programme seeks to continue its oppositional and engaged journalism from the nineties. Conversely, there are no local owners of the commercial channels in Croatia, and these channels have not been known for investments into critical and investigative journalism.

### 3.4. Gender Politics and the Media in Serbia and Croatia

After 2000, Serbian and Croatian gender politics still bares traces of some of the discourses that were dominant in the nineties, which emerged with nationalism and wars, the religious revival, the transition to the market economy, and multi-party system. But it is also shaped by women's activism and the prospects of EU integrations, which have opened new opportunities to the local feminist activists. In this subsection, I first discuss briefly the main features of gender politics in the nineties. This is necessary in order to explain the ways in which gender politics after 2000 shows both continuity and discontinuity with the politics of the nineties, which I discuss in the second part of this section.

#### *3.4.1. Women as mothers of the Nation and sexual commodities (1990-2000)*

Serbian, Croatian and other feminist scholars have extensively documented and analyzed the role of gender politics within nationalism in the context of the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia (Bracewell 1996; Drezgić 2009; Giles et al. 2004; Ivanović 2005; Iveković 1993; Knežević 2004; Korać 2004; Lilly and Irvine 2002; Lukić 2000; Milić 1994; Nikolić-Ristanović 1996; Papić 2002; Pavlović 1999; Žarkov 2007). Nationalist gender politics in the nineties involved: the pro-natalist demographic politics that held women responsible for the biological

survival or demise of the nation; the nationalist appropriation of mothers' political actions against the war; the utilization of representations of women as victims for the purposes of justifying wars as defensive; and the mass rapes of women as a war strategy, as well as discourses about ethnically motivated rapes in media constructions of the ethnic Self and the Other. As Žarkov (2007) shows, the media war between Serbia and Croatia featured prominently such gendered strategies of national mobilization, legitimating wars, and war propaganda.

Nationalist gender politics was intertwined with religious discourses about gender, as both aimed to limit women's reproductive rights and emphasized women's primary role as mothers of the nation. Both in Serbia and Croatia, the representatives of the clergy advocated against abortion and the ruling political parties, the Croatian HDZ and the Serbian SPS, attempted to restrict abortion rights in the first half of the nineties. These attempts faced fierce protests by feminist groups and the lack of support from the general population, so most planned changes to the abortion law were dropped. In Croatia, the socialist law remained unchanged, but in the following years it became more difficult for women to obtain abortion as many hospitals gave its staff an opportunity to refuse to perform abortion on the grounds of their Catholic pro-life position (Škrabalo et al. 2005; Žarkov 2007). In Serbia, the legislation remained unchanged concerning the abortion in the first ten weeks of pregnancy, whereas some restrictions were imposed with regard to the abortions after ten weeks and in the case of minors (Drezgić 2009).

In Serbia, the media played an important role in the debates about abortion in the context of the ethnic conflicts and the wars. Since the mid-eighties, they circulated nationalist discourses about demography, which emphasized the link between the low birth rate and the danger of the biological destruction of the Serbian nation. They also advanced the idea that the high birth rate of Albanians in Kosovo was a means of biological war against the Serbs and Montenegrins in

Kosovo (Drezgić 2009; Žarkov 2007). However, in the debates about the abortion legislation in the first half of the nineties, the media coverage of this issue involved largely pro-choice views on the matter, as that was the prevailing position in the general population (Drezgić 2009). As the question of legislative changes was settled and the wars in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina ended in 1995, the debates about abortion became marginal in the broader public discourses in Serbia in the second half of the nineties, although anti-abortion discourses remained topical in the Orthodox Church and religious groups' circles (ibid.).

Conversely, the pro-natalist demographic politics remained a highly topical issue in the broad public discourses throughout the nineties in Croatia. It was a prominent aspect of the Croatian ruling party's politics throughout the decade, often devised and promoted in collaboration with the Catholic Church. HDZ promoted the notion of the (Croat) nuclear family as the main pillar of the nation, the cult of motherhood, and often represented the President, Franjo Tuđman, as the wise father of the nation (Pavlović 1999). In 1996, HDZ adopted the "National Programme for Demographic Development", initiated by Tuđman and written in cooperation with the Catholic Church. The Programme

proposed various measures that would recognize women with four and more children as 'Mothers Educators'. They would be recognized as women with the 'highest position' in the state, and given a professional status with salary. It also proposed measures for women with three children, such as prolonged maternity leave, tax reduction, child support, health and social security, as well as several measures for restricting women's choice for abortion although not a direct legal prohibition. The Program was passed by the Croatian Parliament in 1996 and implemented into the Labour Act. (Šipić 2005, 16-17)

As HDZ and the Catholic Church both had a wide access to the media,<sup>30</sup> due to the political control by HDZ but also state and Church ownership of a number of media, conservative

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<sup>30</sup> Currently, the Catholic Church owns a news agency (IKA), a radio station, a publishing house, a well-known weekly *Glas koncila*, numerous magazines and some television production (Malović 2005).

discourses that reduced women's role to motherhood were dominant in the Croatian media in the nineties.

Parallel to the nationalist politics of re-traditionalization of women's roles in society, the emergence of multi-party systems was followed by a sharp drop in women's political participation in Serbia and Croatia (Leinert-Novosel 2001; Milić 1994; Mršević 2004; Šinko 2004). Before 1990, women made 18% MPs in the Croatian and 20% in the Serbian Parliament. After the first multi-party elections in 1990, there were 4.7% female MPs in the Croatian Parliament and 1.6% in the Serbian Parliament. This situation improved marginally in the later part of the decade, as women's participation rose to 8% in Croatia and 5.5% in Serbia. The marginalization of women in the parliaments was a result of several factors: the abandoning of the quotas for women which were in place in socialist Yugoslavia, the newly introduced competition for votes where the political parties perceived women as risky candidates who might win fewer votes, and the masculine character of the dominant nationalist parties.

All these factors led to a significant marginalization of women as political agents in the public sphere generally, as it can be seen from their marginalization in the media. In Croatia, media representations of women were analyzed in three small quantitative studies during the nineties (B.a.b.e. 1997; Leinert-Novosel 1998; Ženska inofteka 1999). All three studies found that women were greatly marginalized in the political coverage in the media. In 1997, the print media mentioned women in only 5% of articles about politics (B.a.b.e, 1997.) and only 7% of sources in television political programmes were women (Leinert-Novosel 1998). There are no similar data about the Serbian media in the nineties, but we can assume that the findings would be similar, with the exception of the media interest in two particular female politicians, Mirjana Marković and Danica Drašković. These two politicians were vilified by the media for their



alleged bad influence on their husbands, Slobodan Milošević and Vuk Drašković, a prominent opposition leader, respectively (Blagojević 2005).

If women's political activity was curtailed by their marginalization in parliaments and the media, it was further limited by the intense anti-feminism. Negative stereotypes about feminists are largely similar to those documented with regard to the Anglo-American media (Section 2.3.1.). Namely, feminists are often represented in the ex-Yugoslav media as unfeminine, ugly, militant, men-hating, sexually deviant, frustrated etc. (Moranjak Bamburać 2006; Dojčinović 2000). However, the specificity of the Serbian and Croatian anti-feminism is its intersection with nationalism. Because women and feminists made the majority in the anti-nationalist and anti-war groups in the two countries, nationalist parties, individuals and groups frequently attacked feminist groups as anti-patriotic traitors. Conversely, the nationalist parties supported pro-regime women's groups in the two countries, some of which were even nationalist feminist groups in Croatia, thus allowing for women's political agency if it served nationalist purposes (Knežević 2004; Lukić 2000; Pavlović 1999; Šipić 2005; Žarkov 2007).

Finally, after 1990, pornographic representations of women became widespread in the Serbian and Croatian mainstream media and the public spaces, particularly with the advent of tabloid media and billboard advertising in the second half of the nineties. In ex-Yugoslavia, pornography was mainly the preserve of specialist erotic magazines. After 1990, in Serbia, commercial television channels started broadcasting pornography in late night hours (Nikolić-Ristanović 2005). However, pornography saturated the mainstream media and public spaces much more in the second half of the nineties, with the advent of tabloids, which regularly included photographs of naked women, and with the rise of billboard advertising where sexualized images of women became the main market strategy. In Croatia, pornographic

representations of women also became widespread in the mainstream public sphere through billboard advertising, tabloids and two political weeklies, *Globus* and *Nacional*, which both regularly featured photographs of naked women along with articles about politics. As Trejić (2002, 11) points out, what distinguishes pornographic representations in Croatia from those in the Western countries – and this goes for Serbia as well – is their pervasiveness in the mainstream media and “the degree of sexual exploitation of women’s bodies that is acceptable in the public sphere.”

In Serbia, the excessive sexualization of women’s bodies met the nationalist agenda of re-traditionalization in the turbo folk music and culture, created by the commercial television channel TV Pink in the nineties. Turbo folk is a term created to describe a new, eclectic music genre that blended folk and electronic music, references to populist folk tradition and visual aesthetics of MTV music videos. But even more, it became a term associated with Milošević-era popular culture, which glamorized and romanticized the new criminal elite (Gordy 1990; Kronja 2000). In terms of its gender politics, turbo folk culture combined commercialization of women’s bodies and repatriarchalization of women as ‘Serbian mothers’. Female turbo folk stars were stylized and represented in excessively sexualized manner, whereas they would present themselves in terms of their roles as girlfriends, wives and mothers (Grujić 2004). The link between TV Pink, its turbo folk culture and Milošević’s regime was most visible in the channel’s creation and promotion of the ideal Serbian couple: a turbo folk singer, Ceca Ražnatović, and an infamous war criminal, Željko Ražnatović Arkan. While they were the most celebrated couple, another type of common couples were those made by female turbo folk stars and the new ‘businessmen’. In that context, even a new term appeared – ‘sponzorusa’ – which is perhaps closest to the term ‘kept woman’ in English. The prominence of this concept in popular

discourses and the media testifies to the increasing commodification of female sexuality in the Serbian gender discourses and reality.

A combination of political marginalization, nationalist re-traditionalization and excessive sexualization of women's bodies thus marked media representations of women in the nineties. Whereas the above discussion shows many similarities between Serbia and Croatia in that decade, it also shows certain differences. While HDZ and the Catholic Church promoted the cult of nationalized motherhood through legislation and the media throughout the nineties in Croatia, similar discourses were prominent in the Serbian media primarily in the context of the wars in the first half of the nineties. Also, while both countries experienced a boom in mainstream media pornography, the trend of excessive sexualization of women was further strengthened by the popular turbo folk culture in Serbia, which was promoted by TV Pink, one of the two nationwide commercial channels that appeared in the mid-nineties.

### *3.4.2. Towards the institutionalization of gender equality politics (2000- )*

In both countries, an intense women's political activism was a part of the struggles and campaigns for democratization leading to the political changes in 2000. In Croatia, Ad hoc Women's Coalition participated in a broad NGO campaign for the democratic changes prior to the January national elections in 2000 when HDZ lost (Kesić 2007). The coalition advocated for greater women's participation in politics and for the development of gender equality mechanisms. In Serbia, female politicians from the oppositional democratic bloc formed the Women's Political Network in 1999, which launched an extensive campaign for the change of the regime (Branković et al. 2007). In addition, women's NGOs' Group for Promotion of Women's Political Rights conducted a door-to-door campaign promoting the democratic changes and women's political participation in the pre-election period. Following the political changes,

Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs and female politicians from the newly elected governments, moved to the next phase of their activism, setting out as the most important goals the adoption of the anti-discriminatory legislation and the creation of the institutions responsible for devising and implementing gender equality policies. However, the subsequent developments in Serbia and Croatia created rather different opportunities for the activists in the two countries in general and with regard to the opportunities for their media activism in particular.

In Croatia, the process of institutionalization of gender equality politics took place mainly between 2000 and 2003, during the time of the first post-2000 coalition government led by the left-wing political party SDP (Kesić 2007; Kušan 2005).<sup>31</sup> Better opportunities for feminist activism were already signaled by the significant rise in women's participation in the new parliament, which reached 22%. Also, women's NGOs had better contacts with female politicians from the new government, some of whom attended NGOs' seminars previously. Women's NGOs took active part in devising laws and policies in the area of gender equality. In 2001, the Parliament adopted the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2001-2005), which aimed at the creation of particular gender equality mechanisms and the adoption of gender equality legislation. Between 2000 and 2004, three state institutions for gender equality were formed: The Parliamentary Gender Equality Committee, the Ombuds-person for gender equality, and the Governmental Office for Gender Equality. In 2003, the Gender Equality Act was adopted and a number of other laws, including the media laws, were changed in line with that law. Other important laws that were passed in that period include: The Law on Protection

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<sup>31</sup> As Kesić (2007) documents, attempts to institutionalize gender equality politics occurred before 2000 under the influence of the UN Fourth World Conference about Women in Beijing, 1995. The Croatian state delegation at the Beijing conference initiated the creation of the Committee for Equality Questions, which was established in 1996. However, the Committee did not have any links with women's NGOs and its National Policy (1997-2000) was poorly devised and never realized. It is important to note, argues Kesić (29), that it was the UN and not the EU documents and processes that had the decisive influence on the institutionalization of gender equality politics in the early period, before 2000, in Croatia.

against Domestic Violence and the Law on Same-sex Civil Unions, while anti-discriminatory provisions were integrated in the labour, criminal and family legislation.

However, while the mainstream state politics accepted gender equality as a value, the problems with the implementation of gender equality legislation, and other new laws relevant to women, became obvious after 2003 (Kesić 2007). Although the Gender Equality Act was passed to satisfy EU requirements from the Stabilization and Association Agreement, in the process of the negotiation over its final draft, many important provisions were excluded which ultimately made it inconsistent both internally and with the relevant EU standards. Most importantly, the law did not have provisions for evaluation of its implementation and its impact on men and women, and in many areas it also did not stipulate sanctions for discrimination against women. In terms of the institutions responsible for its implementation, their work was hampered by several problems: their remit was not clearly defined, they were understaffed and without sufficient financial resources, and often low in hierarchy. According to Kesić (2007, 62), this has been the case with the central institution in this area, the Governmental Office for Gender Equality (VURS), which could not influence other state institutions, the laws or the budget in any substantial way. Due to these problems, many measures from the National Policy (2001-2005) were not implemented (Kušan 2005). Following these criticisms, the new National Policy for the promotion of gender equality 2006-2010 included a measure according to which VURS needs to develop a system of indicators for monitoring the implementation of the policy (Kesić 2007). Also, in 2008, the new Gender Equality Act was passed which stipulated sanctions for discrimination (B92 2008b).

After the decisive period of state gender equality politics between 2000 and 2003, HDZ returned to power, but it did not launch a backlash against the gender equality politics due to its

acceptance of the EU integrations.<sup>32</sup> As some analyses show, the HDZ gender politics during its two terms in power, 2003-2007 and 2007-, is marked by a blend of conservative gender politics and support for some segments of gender equality politics as part of the EU integration politics (Kesić 2007; Šipić 2005). While most legislative changes and policies in the area of gender equality after 2003 dealt with the protection of mothers and pregnant women from discrimination in employment, the government also adopted measures against ‘domestic violence’ (Kesić 2007). The blend of different gender politics has also been visible in the political personas of several right-wing female politicians. As Šipić (2005) argues, Jadranka Kosor,<sup>33</sup> the most prominent HDZ female politician, and several other right-wing female politicians extend mothering as the primary woman’s duty from the private to the public sphere. They present their political engagement in terms of the motherly care for the vulnerable groups in society and draw credibility and respect from their politicized motherhood. On the other hand, their conservative gender politics that emphasizes women’s role as mothers, sometimes meets feminist demands when they push for the policies against violence against women or for the protection of single mothers.

The substantial change in the state gender politics also meant that the position of the Catholic Church changed after 2000. While it largely shaped the gender politics of the ruling party in the nineties, after 2000 it found itself in opposition. According to Škrabalo et al. (2006), because of this the Church even intensified its advocacy in the areas of gender and sexuality politics after 2000. But its advocacy also showed an understanding of the changed situation: that the Church is more in a position to defend and explain the politics it advocates than before. For instance, although the Church advocated against abortion on several occasions after 2000, it has

<sup>32</sup> After Ivo Sanader became the party leader in 2002, HDZ distanced itself from hard-line nationalism and presented itself as a changed, modern conservative party (Šipić, 2005; Soberg, 2006).

<sup>33</sup> She became the Prime Minister in July 2009 when Ivo Sanader, the then PM, withdrew from politics.

not dared to propose legislative changes. Nevertheless, as Škrabalo et al. show, the Church still exerts a powerful influence through its members who sit on various governmental boards and committees, through lobbying for particular policy solutions, and through its general influence on a great portion of Croatian population. For example, the Church was successful in preventing the new legislation on in-vitro fertilization in 2004, whereas its lobbying against the secular sex education programme influenced a significant number of schools to drop the programme in 2005, although it provided essential information about STDs and contraception.

Similarly, as the official state gender politics changed after 2000, the relationship between women's NGOs and the state also changed. As Kesić (2007) observes, from the exclusively oppositional approach to the state, women's NGOs started participating in devising gender equality legislation and policies. Between 2000 and 2003, women's NGOs exerted "a decisive influence on the sensitization of the public sphere for gender issues, and then on the creation of the legislation necessary for the national gender machinery, its installation and adoption of gender sensitive policies" (ibid., 81; my translation). Furthermore, after 2004, when most foreign donators withdrew from Croatia, the state, e.g. VURS, became one of the main donors for women's NGOs together with the EU. However, the shortcomings of the legislation and state institutions of concern to women, eventually divided women's NGOs into those that evaluated its collaboration with the Government largely positively and those which distanced themselves from the institutions, criticizing the lack of transparency in the allocation of funds and their refusal to accept the policy measures proposed by some women's NGOs. According to Kesić (93), after 2004, women's NGOs scene became fragmented, embroiled in many disputes internally and with the leaders of state institutions, which often verged on personal rivalries. Consequently, its influence on the policy processes generally lessened.

However, the Gender Equality legislation created new opportunities for feminist media activism as it forbids discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, disability etc in the media. It also stipulates that the media should advance consciousness about gender equality (Gender Equality Act, Article 16, Paragraphs 1 and 2, 2008). These stipulations were subsequently introduced to the media legislation as well. The most significant attempt to implement these legal provisions was the creation of the Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in the Media in April 2007. This measure was the initiative of the women's NGOs B.a.b.e., which wrote 'women and the media' sections in both national policies and due to whose activism the Committee was eventually created albeit several years overdue.<sup>34</sup>

The Committee's structure was designed in such a way as to create a network of feminist media advocates who were active within women's NGOs, VURS and professional journalistic organizations such as Croatian Journalists' Association (HND) and Croatian Journalists' Union (HNS). Their task was to analyze whether the media act in accordance with the above mentioned laws and to take action when the media breach them (Croatian Government. Office for Gender Equality. The Committee for the Media 2007a). The Committee reacted to specific cases of sexism in the media demanding from the professional journalistic organizations and media-related state institutions to sanction the media in question. In addition, it put pressure on the responsible institutions, such as the Croatian public service broadcaster (HRT) and the Electronic Media Council (VEM), to account for the ways in which they enabled gender sensitive media programming. The Committee won wide media coverage and pushed the problems of media representation of women to the fore. However, it ceased to exist in late 2008, after VURS

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<sup>34</sup> Interviews with Activists 7, 8, 9 and 10.



accused some of its members of issuing problematic statements without consulting with them (Matejčić et al. 2008). While the ultimate fate of the Committee shows the problems in collaboration between the state and the NGOs, its work should still be regarded as an important contribution to feminist media activism, which was enabled due to the new institutional and legislative environment.

Finally, the Croatian media themselves have both continued some of the trends salient in the nineties and changed under the influence of the new political context. As it is visible from the results of several quantitative studies (Gallagher 2005; Isanović 2006; Jemrić, 2003a; Spears and Seydegart 2000), women are still largely marginalized both as sources and protagonists and in terms of the coverage of issues of particular concern to them. Furthermore, on the evidence of women's NGOs' protests against sexism in advertising (Fade In 2007a; Minić 2004b), excessive sexual exploitation of women is still the norm in marketing, but also in the tabloids and some political weeklies. However, the activities of women's NGOs and the new legislation and policies did lead to an increase in media attention to issues of particular concern to women in general, and violence against women in particular. Kesić emphasizes this in her analysis of the problems with the implementation of gender equality politics in Croatia, when she argues that the only area where significant improvement was made is in the visibility of the problem of gender inequality in the media and the heightened general awareness of this problem.

Moreover, there is a clear link between the increased media coverage of some particular 'women's issues' and the preoccupations of state politics. As Kesić argues, the main women-related policy areas during the two HDZ governments have been: domestic violence, maternity rights and the position of women in the labour market. Her account coincides with the assessment of the most commonly covered 'women's issues' by the media according to a

producer of *Zagreb Panorama* (HRT) whom I interviewed for my research (Journalist 7). According to her, domestic violence and discrimination against women in the labour market, often due to pregnancy, were the most covered issues of concern to women. This correspondence underscores the extent to which the media coverage of ‘women’s issues’ is greatly shaped by the activities of the external significant players, in this case primarily the state institutions.

But women’s NGOs and the Catholic Church also exert powerful influences. Women’s NGOs active in the area of feminist media advocacy, such as B.a.b.e., have contributed greatly to the greater coverage of feminist perspectives in the media as a result of their trainings and collaboration with journalists, some of whom work for HRT, the Croatian public service broadcaster. For its part, the Catholic Church has been very active in promoting its initiatives in the area of gender and sexuality, not only in the mainstream media but in its own media as well. Thus, as Škrabalo et al. (2005) note, after 2000 the media have become the primary grounds where these two sides struggle over gender politics, while the state is occasionally pushed to be an unwilling arbiter.

In Serbia, after 2000 women’s NGOs and female politicians pursued similar political agenda as in Croatia, but their opportunities to shape gender politics of the state were more limited and they varied greatly from one government to another. The period between the political changes in October 2000 and the assassination of Zoran Djindjić, the Prime Minister in March 2003 was marked by very intense women’s political activism. While women’s participation in Parliament did not rise as much as in Croatia, it still rose to 11%. Women were also appointed to a number of highly visible positions, for example, Chair and vice-Chair in Parliament, rectors of two universities, Chair of the Supreme Court, Vice-governor of the National Bank, and the editor-in-chief of the news at the state television (Branković et al. 2007).

At the same time, women's NGOs became very active in establishing strong contacts with female politicians, journalists, union activists, businesswomen through organizing conferences and extensive trainings on gender inequality and 'women's issues'. The new collaboration between women's NGOs and female politicians from the ruling democratic parties led to some legislative changes of concern to women. For example, domestic violence was defined as a specific crime in the Criminal Code (2002) and marital rape and sexual harassment were recognized and penalized for the first time (*ibid.*; Drobnjak 2005; Peščanik 2006). Due to these activities and legislative changes, violence against women, sexual harassment and women's political participation gained visibility in the media (Vasiljević 2007). In addition, women's NGOs and female politicians worked towards the adoption of the Gender Equality Act and the creation of state institutions for gender equality. However, this intense activity was halted by the assassination of the Prime Minister and the state of emergency that followed in 2003.<sup>35</sup>

Between 2004 and 2008, the period of the two governments led by Vojislav Koštunica's Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), some of the previously started activities resumed. The Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality was constituted in 2003 and the Governmental Council for Gender Equality was established in 2004 (Pajvančić 2008). Due to their work and the lobbying by women's NGOs, the new Family Act (2005) regulated the problem of violence against women further, the Labour Act was changed to include stipulations against gender discrimination and sexual harassment, and some national policies included sections regarding women's status and gender equality (Branković et al. 2007; Drobnjak 2005; Peščanik 2006). Also, a quota of 30% for the less represented gender was introduced to the law on parliamentary

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<sup>35</sup> The state of emergency lasted between March 12 and April 22 2003.

elections (Act Amending and Modifying the Act on the Election of Deputies 2004), so women's participation in the Parliament rose to 20.4% in 2008 (Čičkarević 2009).

However, the two crucial gender equality initiatives, the adoption of the Gender Equality Act and the national policy regarding gender equality, which were drafted in 2005 and 2006 respectively, were not successful in this period.<sup>36</sup> As in Croatia, women's groups took active part in devising the national policy: 33 women's organizations participated in writing different sections of the policy throughout 2006 (Branković et al. 2007). But these initiatives eventually failed and were marginalized because of the continuous political instability and the general preoccupation of the political establishment with issues such as the collaboration with The Hague Tribunal, the secession and the subsequent independence of Montenegro in 2006, and Kosovo in 2008.

But another important reason for their marginalization was a change in the relationship between the state and the Serbian Orthodox Church after 2000. Drezgić's (2009) analysis of their relationship shows the increase in the convergence between the state and religion in the period of the two governments led by Koštunica's DSS between 2004 and 2008. She argues that while Milošević's regime instrumentalized religion for the purposes of national mobilization in the nineties, it still kept the Church at a distance. Conversely, the relationship between Koštunica's governments and the Church presents a case of the convergence of religion and nationalism. After 2000, Serbian politicians from the new governments generally competed in showing their religious feelings and respect for the Church. Soon after the changes, religious education was introduced to state schools. In 2006, the Law on Religion and Religious Communities was

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<sup>36</sup> The Autonomous Province of Vojvodina has been ahead in the institutionalization of gender equality politics in comparison to the pace of developments at the national level. Some gender equality institutions were created already in 2002 and the Parliament of Vojvodina adopted Declaration and Decision on Gender Equality in 2004. This document was the basis for the Gender Equality Act (2009).

passed that strengthened the institutional influence, economic power and cultural domination of the Serbian Orthodox Church. It is not surprising, therefore, that in 2005 the Gender Equality Act was withdrawn from the parliamentary procedure exactly by one of the DSS ministers, Zoran Lončar, because he objected to the quotas for women in local governments (Branković et al. 2007).<sup>37</sup>

Still, the Church or religious nationalist parties and groups did not try to impose any policies or legislation with regard to women's reproductive rights, as they were primarily preoccupied with the question of Kosovo independence.<sup>38</sup> However, the Church and the right-wing groups have been much more 'vocal' with regard to the issue of sexual orientation and have opposed gay activism and rights through street violence and attempts to influence the policy process. So far, Belgrade gay and lesbian activists were not able to organize Gay Pride because of the violence by the football hooligans and the youth extreme right-wing groups. In 2001, participants of Gay Pride were beaten by these groups and in 2009 they gave up organizing the event after the police told them that it couldn't guarantee their safety at the chosen location (B92 2001, 2009a). In addition, in 2009 the Church tried to prevent the adoption of the Anti-discrimination Act because of the parts that concerned discrimination against gays and lesbians. Because of the intervention by the Church, the law was temporarily withdrawn from the parliamentary procedure and then returned to be adopted without any changes (Drezgić 2009). Although the Church was unsuccessful in this case, the fact that the law was even withdrawn

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<sup>37</sup> This information was also confirmed to me in the interviews with a couple of female politicians who took active part in Gender Equality Law initiatives (Activists 3 and 12).

<sup>38</sup> Drezgić (2009, 25) argues that the reasons for the increased influence of the Church are directly linked to the open questions of state borders and Kosovo: "As long as the Kosovo issue remains unresolved the issue of the state borders remains open and ultimately the nation-state project unfinished. The increased presence of Church and religion in society and politics after 2000 owes much to this fact."

temporarily because a Church representative called someone in the Government shows the dangerous convergence of the state and religion.

After the elections in 2008, DSS lost to Democratic Party (DS), which formed the fourth post-2000 government together with two other parties. With the change of parties in power, the two main gender equality initiatives picked up again: the national policy for gender equality<sup>39</sup> was adopted in February 2009 and the Gender Equality Act was passed in December 2009. The policy also contains the section on women and the media, which defines different measures for the promotion of gender sensitive journalism. However, given that it was adopted relatively recently, it is too early to assess the extent of its implementation. Thus, while in Croatia, feminist media advocates were able to utilize the national policy measures at least partially, this has not been the case yet in Serbia where such activity was made possible only in 2009.

Concerning the Serbian media, the post-2000 quantitative studies of women's presence in the Serbian media show that women are still largely marginalized as sources, news subjects, persons represented in newspapers' photographs or in terms of issues of concern to them (Gallagher 2005; Isanović 2006; Jovović 2004; Milivojević 2004; Peščanik 2006; Vasiljević and Andjelković-Kanzleiter 2009). In addition, after 2000 the greater prominence of female politicians and other professionals active in the public sphere has provoked a new trend in sexualization of women, where sexualization or even fake pornographic images and stories became a means of attacking female political opponents in the tabloid media.<sup>40</sup> However, women's activism and their greater political prominence have had an impact on media

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<sup>39</sup> The full name is: The National Policy for the Improvement of Women's Status and Advancement of Gender Equality (Serbian Government. Sector for Gender Equality 2009).

<sup>40</sup> For example, the Serbian tabloid right wing newspaper *Kurir* printed a story about a fake porn film by an anti-nationalist female politician, accompanied by fake pornographic photos of her (*Kurir*, 2008, 1). Another tabloid made up a story about orgies of a prominent female investigative journalist (Valić Nedeljković 2009).

representations of women after 2000. Feminist media activism, primarily trainings for journalists, has enabled some women's NGOs to establish links with interested media professionals, some of whom went on to become engaged, pro-feminist journalists. Furthermore, the new political initiatives regarding women and gender equality also led to the increase in the media coverage of issues of concern to women (Dekić 2004; Vasiljević 2007). For example, in her analysis of the coverage of March 8<sup>th</sup> between 1998 and 2007, Vasiljević (2007) claims that topics such as women's political participation, sex trafficking, violence against women, sexual harassment, discrimination against women in the labour market got more attention after 2000. The list corresponds to the issues taken up in official politics at various points after 2000. Still, it is another question how these topics are covered. While there is no research on this, Dekić's findings on the coverage of sex trafficking point at problems some of which might be similar in the case of other topics as well: sporadic coverage which is related to particular events and incidents; a lack of analytical approach; sensationalism; and the usage of stereotypical terminology.

### 3.5. Conclusion

Starting from my discussion of the television scenes and gender politics in Serbia and Croatia, I can now identify the major factors that affect the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the two countries after 2000. Certainly, women's media activism and gender equality political and legislative initiatives have had some positive impact on the media. They led to an increase in reporting on issues of concern to women, but also to the creation of pockets of engaged, pro-feminist journalism in the television media. However, the previously discussed differences between the television scenes and gender politics in the two countries have meant

that the Croatian journalists and feminist media advocates have generally had greater chances to further gender sensitive journalism than is the case in Serbia. A closer look at these differences reveals how particular constellations of types of journalism, gender discourses and feminist media activism – the three major factors that I discussed in Section 2.4. – affect opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the particular local contexts of Serbia and Croatia.

In Croatia, HRT, the public broadcaster, is by no means a television channel whose whole output is characterized by gender sensitivity or critical forms of journalism. The recent HRT report (Croatian Radio Television. Programme Board 2009) to the Croatian Parliament on the ways in which it fulfills the legal requirement to promote gender equality shows very mixed levels of understanding for this type of journalism within the channel. While some of the departments list their programmes which cover issues such as different forms of gender discrimination and violence against women, as well as NGO and governmental activities in this area, other departments list any programmes that feature women prominently as contributing to gender equality. Thus, the Cultural Department lists a programme about folklore costumes and wedding customs as an example that there is gender equality in their output, whereas Foreign Programmes Department lists films such as *Pretty Woman* as evidence of their respect for gender equality. As they explain, they provide content that features women in main roles and satisfies ‘women’s interests’. HRT’s report shows a common confusion of the politics of gender equality with the mere presence of women irrespective of the ideological context in which they appear. In other words, it does not differentiate between sexist and feminist definitions of ‘women’s issues’ and concerns (See Section 2.3.1.).

Furthermore, since HDZ returned to power in 2003, HRT has also been at the centre of many controversies related to the issues of censorship and political control. There have been



incidents when the government has attempted to influence news and current affairs programmes, as well as a lot of unrest among journalists about the appointments of some senior staff prominent in the nineties, in the period when journalists' work at HRT was frequently censored. The last several years have thus been marked with frequent controversies over the censorship and disciplinary measures taken against a number of journalists who investigated highly contentious issues such as the legacy of Tudjman's regime, nationalism, war crimes of the Croatian forces or the corruption of the present government (OSCE 2005a, b, 2006a, b, c, 2007a, b)

However, HRT is still a television channel where both journalists who are critical of the legacy of Tudjman's regime and nationalism and those who have supported such politics work together. Also, as a result of women's media activism, there have been a number of prominent female journalists at HRT who pursue pro-feminist journalism. As the transformation into public service television was partly formulated in terms of the greater coverage of NGO activities, this development enabled some of these journalists to include coverage of 'women's issues' within the remit of public service (see Section 7.4). Therefore, HRT has some prominent exponents of critical and pro-feminist journalism, who were able to secure greater space for the coverage of women's NGOs' activities and issues due to the new status of HRT as a public service broadcaster.

At the Serbian public service broadcaster, RTS critical journalism has been less possible as its Director General, Aleksandar Tijanić, represents a politics of continuity with the legacy of Milošević's Serbia in terms of the political control of the public media. Consequently, RTS has not had a few prominent journalists who would investigate the contentious issues such as war crimes of Serbian forces or nationalism. In terms of his gender politics, Tijanić describes his brand of journalism as 'journalism with balls', while he attacked women's NGOs as "cohorts of

vaginas in a destructive attack on everything that acknowledges logic and reason” when they protested against sexism in the media (2004). It is not an overstatement or an inappropriate personalization of the situation in RTS to say that with such leadership it would be highly unlikely to imagine institutional support for gender sensitive journalism, as my further chapters will show. On the other hand, given the dependency of RTS on the governments of the day, the lack of support for critical forms of journalism within RTS also shows that the purpose of this channel is still largely defined with regard to political interests of the ruling parties. To the extent that gender equality is a marginal issue for the political establishment – save for the state institutions that are specifically concerned with this issue – this is replicated in its status for the RTS management.

Serbian journalists interested in critical coverage of gender inequality have had better opportunities for such work at the commercial channel TV B92. Because of its oppositional role in the nineties, B92 has been branded primarily as a channel with strong informative programme. After 2000, its informative programme was conceptualized to include particular elements important for its credibility: quality news, hard talk programme and investigative documentaries.<sup>41</sup> The fact that B92 has had a time slot for in-house investigative documentaries has proved vital in terms of covering issues such as gender based inequality and violence. However, B92 advocacy against violence against women and gender inequality in its informative programming is at odds with the rampant commercialization of its entertainment program, which includes a number of reality shows which have been criticized for their sexist and homophobic content. Also, due to excessive commercialization of TV B92, programmes such as *B92 Investigates* perhaps have an uncertain future.

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<sup>41</sup> Information from my interviews with two B92 journalists (Journalists 3 and 5).

Still, some media attention to ‘women’s issues’ and participation is spurred by the commercial reasons as well. The two corporate giants, German RTL and Rupert Murdoch’s FOX TV, which won the licenses for broadcasting in Croatia and Serbia respectively, started broadcasting daytime talk shows as local versions of the globally known *Oprah Winfrey Show*. Because these programmes belong to a genre that is largely gendered as feminine, they engage with different problems that women face in their lives and thus also occasionally touch upon the issues related to gender inequality. However, this type of programme has been less popular in Serbia than in Croatia. Because of a more competitive television scene in Serbia, TV FOX has generally had much poorer ratings than RTL has had in Croatia. A greater popularity of this type of programme in Croatia than in Serbia has in turn contributed further to the greater prominence of ‘women’s issues’ in the Croatian television media as opposed to the Serbian television.

Finally, as in the case of the differences between television scenes, the described differences in gender politics have produced different opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. The more prominent place of gender politics in Croatia has led to greater opportunities for gender sensitive journalism there than in Serbia for three reasons. Firstly, as there is a strong link between the presence of certain issues in the media and their presence in the official politics, the greater presence of these issues in the Croatian official politics than in the Serbian politics is likely to have resulted in a greater coverage of these issues in the Croatian media than in the Serbian media. Secondly, since the Catholic Church has been more proactive in trying to impose its gender politics to state institutions than is the case with the Orthodox Church in Serbia, this has also led to more intense presence of gender politics in the media as the Church’s initiatives have repeatedly raised protests by women’s and LGBT organizations leading to heated debates in the media.

And thirdly, the bigger opportunities for gender sensitive journalism have also been influenced by a better position of feminist media advocates in Croatia. They have had a more favourable situation within the public service broadcaster, where journalists interested in collaborating with them have held a stronger position than in RTS in Serbia. In addition, unlike in Serbia, some Croatian feminists were also able to utilize, at least partially, measures prescribed by the National Policy for Gender Equality (2006-2010) for the purposes of their media activism. By acting in collaboration with the state institutions for the implementation of gender equality legislation and policies, the Croatian feminist media activists, were able to exert more pressure on the (television) media to comply with their legal obligations than their counterparts in Serbia. The difference in their institutional opportunities is visible when their attempts to pressure the media to further gender sensitive television production and to eliminate particular sexist practices are compared.

In Croatia, feminist media activists could act in collaboration with the state institutions to make the electronic media institutions, such as HRT and VEM, publicly account for the ways in which they fulfill their legal obligations to advance gender equality through the media. For example, after the request by the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality, HRT had to submit a parliamentary report on this issue in 2009, which brought the problems in the channel's understanding of gender sensitive journalism into the public light. The report was heavily criticized by the state institutions for gender equality, as well as female politicians in the Parliament, and laughed at in the press and feminist circles because it occasionally displayed comic levels of unawareness of what HRT's contribution to gender equality might be (Barilar 2009; Broz 2009; Roller 2009; Sobol 2009).

Similarly, in 2008, the Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of Gender Equality Policy exposed VEM for allocating the resources from the Fund for Promotion of Pluralism and Diversity in ways that marginalize the production of programmes about gender inequality (Croatian Government. Office for Gender Equality 2008). The Committee brought to the public attention that VEM valued ‘the promotion of gender equality’ with four points, where forty points were the maximum. In addition, it made VEM act upon its complaint about a particular instance of sexism in a talk show by a local television channel and to issue a warning to the channel in question. While it is difficult to claim that these measures had any tangible impact, they have created a more favourable climate for feminist media activism. The involvement of state institutions in this area of feminist activism gives more publicity to this issue and enables some NGO feminist media activists to put pressure on the media from the position of state institutions, albeit weak ones. Practically, this means that through the state institutions women’s NGOs at least get a chance to be heard by the electronic media institutions such as HRT or VEM.

In Serbia, women’s NGOs were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to pursue feminist media activism in collaboration with, or through, the state institutions. This is visible both with regard to their attempts to further gender sensitive media production and to sanction media for sexism. Unlike in Croatia, the NGOs could not try to use the measures from the national policy for gender equality until now, as the first policy was adopted only in 2009, three years after it was drafted. State activities in this area were thus largely reduced to PR campaigns that promote the idea of gender equality and occasional informal meetings with journalists.<sup>42</sup> The Governmental Council for Gender Equality intervened only once in favour of gender sensitive journalism, when it asked the management of RTS to provide a better time slot for *Speck of*

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<sup>42</sup> Interviews with Activists 3 and 6 and Journalists 1 and 3.

*Respect*, a documentary series about gender inequality, which was initially buried on RTS2 on Sunday 23.30 (Petrović 2005). The series was then moved to an earlier time, but was still never given a stable time slot (AGB Nielsen Serbia Research 2007).

In addition, women's NGOs' attempts to use the new media laws or regulatory institutions to sanction media for their use of sexist and homophobic hate speech were also unsuccessful. The first major initiative of this kind was the lawsuit against TV Pink for hate speech against women, filed by the ad hoc women's NGOs' coalition called the Initiative against Misogyny in the Media (IPMM) in 2003 (Minić 2004b, 2009). The second similar attempt was made by Labris, a lesbian women's NGO, which sent six complaints to the Republic Broadcasting Agency against particular television channels for broadcasts that involved sexist and homophobic hate speech between 2006 and 2009 (Labris and Gayten 2005; Labris 2007a-e). Neither of the two initiatives led to any sanctions against the media in question. TV Pink successfully avoided appearing before the court until the case closed for a procedural mistake on the side of the prosecution.<sup>43</sup> In the second case, RRA ruled that the statements in question did not represent hate speech (Miladinović and Vučković 2009). These failed initiatives are important to mention here as they show the kind of institutional and legal environment in which Serbian women's NGOs operate in, where their activism is greatly hindered not only by the marginalization of gender equality politics, but also by the extremely poor levels of implementation of media laws and policies.

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<sup>43</sup> Personal communication with an activist of IPMM (Note 19).

## Chapter 4: Methodology: A Reconstruction of the Research Process

### 4.1. Introduction

My thesis studies the Serbian and the Croatian television media with respect to gender sensitive journalism and the factors that shape the opportunities for, and obstacles to, the advancement of this journalistic practice. It belongs to critical social research as it seeks to theorize gender sensitive journalism as an alternative journalistic practice that struggles against gender inequality in and through the media, as well as to understand the potential and the limitations of the mainstream media to become more gender sensitive. In pursuing these research interests, my research is guided by the following questions: What is gender sensitive journalism? How are elements of gender sensitive journalism present in, or missing from, the Serbian and Croatian television media? What factors further or hinder the advancement of gender sensitive journalism in the television media in the two countries?

This chapter aims to reconstruct and explain the methodological decisions I made in undertaking this research. My discussion of the research design and process is guided by the requirements posed before qualitative researchers in terms of the ways they need to account for their methodology. To enable readers to evaluate the soundness of their research design and the plausibility of their findings, qualitative researchers are required to justify their decisions in the course of the research process (Arksey and Knight 1999; Holliday 2002; Marshall and Rossman 1989; Wimmer and Dominick 2006). As Wimmer and Dominick (2006, 143-5) point out, a researcher should account for the choice of particular methods, site(s), sample(s), and the process

of data collection. Marshall and Rossman (1989) list other aspects of research that a researcher should elaborate on, one of which I discuss in this chapter: data analysis strategy.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the principles of selection of the medium, programmes and episodes, the process of their gathering, as well as the strategy of their analysis. The second section discusses interview data and documents, which I gathered in order to examine the factors that shape the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the selected television programmes. I explain the principles of the selection of these types of data, provide their overview, and discuss the research process, ethical concerns and the data analysis strategy. Finally, the third section explains why a comparison of Serbia and Croatia is a more insightful and fruitful way to answer my research questions about gender sensitive journalism in the two countries than if I focused on any of the two countries individually.

## 4.2. Television Programmes

### *4.2.1. Criteria for the selection of the medium and the type of television programmes*

I chose to investigate my research questions with regard to the television media – rather than the press, radio or the Internet - because television is the medium that reaches out to the biggest numbers of people. In Serbia, 98% of people watch television for 3h 30 min on average per day, whereas only 30% of people read the newspapers every day (Milivojević 2005). In Croatia, television is also the most consumed medium: 87% of population watches television every day and 92% has a television set (Peruško 2005). Because of its popular appeal, television “has become, for better or worse, the major institution of the public sphere in modern society”



(Dahlgren 1995, x). For this reason, I chose to focus on television, as it is the most powerful medium both in terms of the reproduction of discriminatory discourses about women and the media's role with regard to (women's) citizenship.

My choice of the particular types of television programmes was guided by the need to gather data that would be suitable for the analysis of the ways in which elements of gender sensitive journalism are present, or missing from, the Serbian and Croatian television journalism. My sampling strategy is thus closest to the purposive strategy as it involves those cases that possess certain qualities relevant for the research problem and eliminates those that do not have such properties (Wimmer and Dominick 2006). By choosing the programmes in this way, I considered the informational capacity of the chosen sample. As Marshall and Rossman (1989, 61-72) argue, a researcher should select those 'events, settings, actors and artifacts' that have the greatest potential to give good data and a reasonable variation in the phenomena under study should be ensured in a sample.

In the choice of programmes, I looked for those that exhibited properties relevant to my understanding of gender sensitive journalism, which I discussed at length in Chapter 2 and briefly summarize here. Gender sensitive journalism involves two dimensions. Firstly, it aims to eliminate those practices that reproduce gender inequality in and through the media. Such practices include different forms of sexism: gender segregation along the lines of the public/private division, derogatory representations of women and unequal ways in which female sources or (news) subjects are treated. Secondly, gender sensitive journalism is an expression of the media's obligations with regard to women's citizenship. In this sense, gender sensitive journalism involves: the provision of information and the opportunities for deliberation about issues of particular concern to women; greater inclusion of women as sources and subjects across

the board; and the provision of diverse representations of women which recognize historically specific experiences of different groups of women. I looked for programmes departing from this definition that could provide material for the analysis of journalistic coverage of ‘women’s issues’, approaches to women’s participation, and the representations of women, their lives and experiences.

Drawing on feminist literature about the media coverage of ‘women’s issues’ and women’s participation in the media I identified two particular segments of media production as relevant to my concerns with gender sensitive journalism (See Section 2.4). Firstly, as feminist research demonstrates, there are mainstream media journalists who support women’s movements and advocate against gender inequality through in work and thus pursue some aspects of gender sensitive journalism. Secondly, feminist and other media scholars have argued that genres within popular journalism, such as talk shows, have been more open to women’s participation and issues of concern to women than the genres within institutional journalism, e.g. hard news. Therefore, they also possibly exhibit properties of gender sensitive journalism. Following these two insights, I investigated whether Serbian and Croatian media also had pro-feminist journalism and popular genres that provided space for women’s participation or discussion of ‘women’s issues’. As I found pro-feminist journalists who worked for the mainstream television media and the talk shows, which regularly thematized gender- and women-related issues, I chose those two types of programmes as the appropriate focus for my analysis.

This choice of data also allows me to explore how different types of journalism affect the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. The two main divisions in journalism, according to which my data is divided, are between committed and neutral journalism, and between institutional and popular journalism (ibid.). In my sample, Serbian and Croatian feminist

television journalists seek to practice committed journalism within the mainstream media, whereas the talk shows largely follow the paradigm of neutral journalism by employing the norm of balance of views. Furthermore, feminist journalism in my sample mainly falls into the category of institutional journalism, whereas the selected talk shows largely belong to popular journalism. However, some of the chosen programmes exhibit mixed properties of critical and neutral, or institutional and popular journalism, which I address in the following overview of the individual Serbian and Croatian television programmes I chose to analyze.

#### *4.2.2. Overview of the data and the gathering process*

I traced pro-feminist journalists working for the mainstream television media by consulting women's NGOs. I e-mailed, telephoned, or met with, members of different women's NGOs to inquire whether they collaborated with certain journalists working for television or knew of programmes that advocated against gender inequality. In Serbia, this led me to discover a pro-feminist journalist working for the public service channel (RTS) and two such journalists working for the commercial channel, TV B92. In Croatia, several pro-feminist journalists worked for the public service television channel (HRT), whereas others were actually members of NGOs which had an agreement with the public service channel to broadcast their production. Some of these journalists produced documentaries about various issues related to gender inequality, whereas others worked for the main news, regional or morning news programmes.

In devising my sample, I initially considered all programmes produced by the pro-feminist journalists I found, or by their organizations (in the case of the NGOs Fade In and B.a.b.e.). These included the programmes in the following table:

TV Channel/Country	Type of channel	Pro-feminist journalist	Programme
RTS, Serbia	Public	Pro-feminist journalist 1	<i>Speck of Respect</i> , a documentary series <i>This is Serbia</i> , afternoon regional news magazine
TV B92, Serbia	Commercial	Pro-feminist journalist 2	<i>B92 Investigates</i> , a documentary series (3 episodes)
TV B92, Serbia	Commercial	Pro-feminist journalist 3	<i>B92 Investigates</i> , a documentary series (2 episodes)
HRT, Croatia	Public	Pro-feminist journalist 4	<i>Zagreb Panorama</i> , afternoon local news magazine
HRT, Croatia	Public	Pro-feminist journalist 5	<i>Reporters</i> , documentary series plus studio commentary
HRT, Croatia	Public	Pro-feminist journalist 6	<i>Good Morning Croatia</i> , morning news magazine
HRT & Fade In/B.a.b.e. (NGOs), Croatia	Public	Pro-feminist journalist 7	<i>Good Morning Croatia</i> , morning news magazine <i>Distorted Reflections</i> , documentary <i>Last Time</i> , documentary <i>Zagorka</i> , documentary

Table 1 Overview of the programmes produced by pro-feminist journalists in my total sample

Starting from this pool of programmes,<sup>44</sup> I narrowed down the range of programmes by considering their informational capacity to yield the data relevant to my study of gender sensitive journalism in Serbian and Croatian television media. But I was also limited by what data I could acquire during the time of my fieldwork as some of the relevant production occurred before that period and some journalists were unable to provide me with the recordings.

My final sample of the pro-feminist programmes, which I analyze in my thesis, includes most of the programmes listed in the above table, with the exemption of *Reporters*, *Zagreb Panorama* and *This is Serbia*. I decided not to look at *Reporters* as it is a documentary series that showcases foreign documentaries, and although it includes studio commentary on documentaries it is still less relevant for the study of gender sensitive journalism in Serbia and Croatia as most of it is not local production. Furthermore, after watching a few episodes, I also decided not to record the then running episodes of the three daily news magazines: *Good Morning Croatia*, the morning magazine, and *Zagreb Panorama* and *This is Serbia*, the two regional news magazines. Each episode of the three programmes consists of a number of items on a huge range of topics, so it would have been impossible for me to select the relevant episodes for monitoring on the basis of their titles. Given their daily frequency, looking at them would have meant going through the huge amounts of irrelevant data with an uncertain hope that there will be something of interest to my research. Nevertheless, I did try to acquire relevant samples of these programmes from the journalists themselves, e.g. pro-feminist individual items. While I was successful in obtaining a good selection of items from *Good Morning Croatia*, the two other

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<sup>44</sup> In addition to this list of programmes, in the course of my fieldwork at the Serbian and Croatian public television channels, I found that Youth and Educational programming occasionally included episodes within different running programmes that dealt with gender-related issues. In Croatia, the youth programmes *Conversationroom* (*Parlaonica*) and *Direkt* (*Direct*) were mentioned for their occasional focus on gender relations and sexuality, and in Serbia, the youth programmes *Staircase* (*Stepeniste*) had an episode about gender relations. I decided not to include them in my sample, as these programmes would not fit into any of the main types of journalism I focus on and would, therefore, make my data too heterogeneous in terms of genre.

journalists were unfortunately unable to provide me with a sample of their work from *Zagreb Panorama* and *This is Serbia* respectively.

All other programmes from the table have been included in my sample. In Serbia, my sample includes: *Speck of Respect*, an eight-episode documentary series about gender inequality and women's status and concerns in different areas, which was shown on the Serbian public television channel RTS2 in 2005; and five episodes of the documentary series *B92 Investigates*, which explored violence against women and gender inequality and were shown on the Serbian commercial channel TV B92 in 2006-2007. In Croatia, the sample includes thirty short reports about various issues of concern to women and women's NGOs in Croatia, produced by the NGO Fade In. They were shown on the Croatian public television channel HRT1 as part of their morning news programme *Good Morning Croatia* in the period between 2001 and 2008. In addition, I have also included three Fade In's documentaries about gender- and women-related issues that were also shown on HRT. As a lot of this work was shown on television before the time of my fieldwork, I retrieved most of these programmes from the journalists themselves. The exceptions are some episodes of *B92 Investigates* and the documentary *Zagorka*, which were broadcast during the period of my fieldwork so I recorded them.

The series *Speck of Respect* is a result of its producer's participation in seminars and workshops organized by women's NGOs over a period of several years.<sup>45</sup> It was produced for the public channel RTS and was even conceptualized in collaboration with members of the women's NGO Hora and financed by the European Agency for Reconstruction as part of their Support for Professional Media Development in Serbia. The project proposal for the series stated that it should provide information on women's status and problems in contemporary Serbian society,

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<sup>45</sup> The information about the background of the selected programmes is based on the interviews with their producer/s if it is not stated otherwise.

enable victims of gender discrimination and violence to be heard, promote women's human rights, and further a more gender sensitive media environment (Serbian Radio Television. Programme *This is Serbia* 2004). The application was successful and the journalist produced the series which dealt with gender discrimination in different areas and involved a huge number of women's NGOs' activists. The series was shown on RTS2 between February and August 2005. My sample includes the complete series: eight thirty-minute episodes.

The gender-related documentaries from B92 TV also came out of the interaction between their journalists and women's NGOs. In 2006, a B92 journalist produced *Macho Men and Tomboys* about media representation of women as part of the regional project of the Croatian women's NGO B.a.b.e. called EQVIVA (B.a.b.e. Website 2006).<sup>46</sup> After taking part in EQVIVA, the journalist continued to produce programmes about gender related issues and also initiated the introduction of more gender sensitive language in that channel. Another B92 journalist has dealt with the issue of violence against women in her documentaries *Beatings for Good Morning* and *From One Prison to Another*. Her interest in this topic was raised after she attended an NGO seminar about media reporting on incest. After the seminar and because of the increased public attention to the issue of violence against women due to women's NGOs and new legislation, she decided that this was an urgent problem that demanded more media attention. Both journalists' programmes were produced as part of *B92 Investigates*, a weekly investigative documentary series, which has also dealt with such issues as prostitution, sex trafficking, and women in the army. Apart from gender-related issues, this programme deals with a range of social and political problems and phenomena, including politics, corruption, crime, and war crimes and has been broadcast since the start of 2006. My sample of *B92 Investigates*

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<sup>46</sup> See Section 8.3. for a discussion of the ways in which the Croatian women's NGOs' influence on journalism and feminist media activism in Serbia.

includes five documentaries on topics of women and the media, prostitution and violence against women.

Finally, the Croatian NGO Fade In has produced a number of documentary films, television programmes and promotional materials for other NGOs on issues related to gender, environment, youth, disability, LGBT, asylum seekers etc (Fade In 2007). Fade In has collaborated with the public channel HRT since their start in 2001 by contributing reports to the programme *Good Morning Croatia* which often cover NGO activities. Also, its youth programme *Direct* is broadcast on HRT, and several documentaries of theirs have been shown on the public channel. These included *Distorted Reflections*, a documentary about women and the media which was produced in collaboration with the women's NGO B.a.b.e., *The Last Time*, a documentary about violence against women, and *Zagorka*, a documentary about the first Croatian woman journalist and feminist. My sample of their production includes thirty reports about 'women's issues' made for *Good Morning Croatia* and the three mentioned documentaries.

Regarding the selection of the talk shows, I knew about three popular programmes that regularly covered 'women's' and gender-related issues before I started my research. These programmes included the Croatian evening panel discussion show *Latinitsa* and the daytime talk show *Sanya*, and the Serbian evening panel discussion show *Key*. At the start of my fieldwork, in October 2006, I set out to record and retrieve relevant episodes of these three programmes. But I also watched a greater pool of Serbian and Croatian talk shows for the first five months of my fieldwork in order to acquaint myself with other possibly relevant programmes. My viewing was limited to the three most popular Serbian and Croatian channels (see 3.2.2), all with national coverage: HRT, RTL and TV Nova in Croatia and RTS, TV Pink and TVB92 in Serbia.



On the grounds of this part of my fieldwork research, I categorized the talk shows in Serbia and Croatia into: celebrity talk shows; political panel discussion programmes that largely focus on official politics; panel discussion programmes with a broader range of social and political issues and various degrees of entertainment (hybrid genre known as infotainment); daytime talk shows that often cover traditional ‘women’s issues’ varying from fashion to family; and game talk shows that combine entertainment, discussion of social and political issues and game elements, e.g. audience voting for participants who compete in speech giving. The overview of the shows I observed in this period is presented in the following table:

Type of programme	Individual programmes
Celebrity talk shows	<i>Magazine In</i> (TV Pink, Serbia), <i>Bravo Show</i> (TV Pink, Serbia)
Political panel discussion programmes	<i>Question mark</i> ( <i>Upitnik</i> ) (RTS, Serbia), <i>This Week’s Impression</i> ( <i>Utisak nedelje</i> ), <i>Open</i> ( <i>Otvoreno</i> ) (HRT, Croatia)
Panel discussion programmes covering a wide range of issues – infotainment	<i>Key</i> ( <i>Kljuc</i> ) (RTS, Serbia), <i>Avala Tower</i> ( <i>Avalski toranj</i> ) (RTS, Serbia), <i>Timofejev</i> (TVB92, Serbia), <i>Latinitsa</i> ( <i>Latinica</i> ) (HRT, Croatia), <i>Spot On</i> ( <i>U sridu</i> ) (TV Nova, Croatia)
Daytime talk shows with a partial focus on women	<i>Sanya</i> (Sanja talk show) (RTL, Croatia), <i>Maya</i> (Maja talk show) (HRT, Croatia)
Game talk shows	<i>Pyramid</i> ( <i>Piramida</i> ) (TV Pink, Serbia), <i>Pyramid</i> ( <i>Piramida</i> ) (HRT, Croatia)

Table 2 Overview of talk shows in my total sample

Starting from this group of programmes, the criteria I employed when choosing the individual talk show programmes were: their thematic relevance for gender sensitive journalism; their popularity; their comparability; and their monothematic format.

This part of my fieldwork research confirmed my initial observation that *Latinita*, *Key* and *Sanya* would provide the most suitable data for my research. These programmes had comparatively high incidence of covering women- and gender-related topics and included both feminist and anti-feminist guests. They could therefore provide me with the data for studying how these issues are approached in popular journalistic formats, how much these formats can be appropriated for gender sensitive journalism and what factors in them hinder this type of journalistic practice. They were also monothematic – that is, each episode explores a single issue – which I thought would be beneficial for my sample for two reasons. Firstly, I believed that longer discussions would provide richer data for exploring discourses on gender in popular journalism. Secondly, being able to browse programmes by their title was extremely helpful in getting grasp of what was a massive amount of data.

They were also more popular and/or influential than other programmes in their category. As I explain later in this section, *Latinita* is the longest running talk show programme on the Croatian television on the whole and it has been continuously in the middle of public attention due to numerous political debates and attempts at censorship of the programme. *Sanya* is the only talk show in ex-YU which was actually sold beyond Croatian borders and broadcast on the television channels in Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Finally, *Key* is one of the flagship programmes of RTS and has more viewers than *Timofejev*, a programme in the same category on TV B92 (Josifovic and Senic 2006). Finally, given my comparative approach, I wanted the Croatian and Serbian programmes to be comparable in terms of genre: *Latinita* and *Key* not only belong to the same category, but *Key* was actually modeled according to *Latinita*. Shortly after I decided to focus on these three programmes, I added one more new programme to them as

the Serbian version of *Sanya*, called *Catherine*, started in April 2007. This programme was chosen because it covered the relevant topics, was monothematic and was comparable to *Sanya*.

Other programmes were eliminated because they did not fit one or more of my criteria. *Magazine In* and *Bravo Show* were eliminated because they do not set out to explore social or political issues but focus on celebrity lives and products. They were also not monothematic and were not comparable to any of the other relevant programmes. Serbian political panel shows were all eliminated as they generally had not covered gender-related issues at the time of my fieldwork (neither before it to my knowledge). *Spot on*, *Timofejev* and *Maya* were eliminated as less popular/influential programmes in their categories. Both the Serbian and the Croatian Pyramid were eliminated because they were not monothematic. Finally, while the Croatian political talk show *Open* covered gender-related issues occasionally, I decided not to include it as it was not comparable to any of the Serbian programmes in that category, which did not cover these issues. While this is interesting in itself and therefore the programme could have been included exactly because of that, I needed to make my already vast data manageable for analysis and therefore decided to limit myself to the two types of talk shows, rather than 3. Below, I provide more information on the four talk show programmes I did select for my sample.

The Croatian *Sanya*, broadcast on the commercial channel RTL, and the Serbian *Catherine*, shown on the commercial channel FOX TV, can be seen firstly as televised women's magazines, and secondly as attempts to produce local *Oprah*-like programmes. The daytime talk show *Sanya* was one of RTL's first projects after it acquired a licence to broadcast in Croatia in 2003. *Sanya* went on air in May 2004 and ran five times a week in the afternoons for two seasons. Due to *Sanja*'s success in Croatia and the popular appeal of its host Sanja Dolezal, who used to be a singer in ex-Yugoslavia, RTL later sold the talk show both to Bosnian OBN and

Serbian FOX TV. *Sanya* was broadcast daily for three months on FOX TV at the start of 2007, before *Catherine* appeared in the same slot and ran between April and November 2007. *Sanya*'s team wanted to create a Croatian *Oprah* as a producer told me in an interview, whereas her colleague from the Serbian production house behind *Catherine* saw this project as a "Serbian *Sanya*". Thematically, both programmes are topic-oriented and combine the traditional preserve of women's magazines, e.g. romance, children, and beauty, with those feminist issues that had already become topical among the general public, e.g. violence against women. In addition to gender-related issues, other thematic areas common to these programmes include health, psychology, lifestyle, vulnerable groups, human interest etc., and in the case of *Catherine* also parapsychology and astrology. Both programmes combine 'ordinary people' with experts and celebrities as guests, and both of them are hosted by women who are not professional journalists: *Sanya* is hosted by an ex-music star and *Catherine*'s host is an ex-model.

In contrast to *Sanya* and *Catherine*, the other two programmes, the Croatian *Latinitsa* and the Serbian *Key*, are weekly, evening panel discussion programmes broadcast on public channels and hosted by journalists. Although these two programmes share with *Sanya* and *Catherine* an interest in gender-related issues, health, psychology, vulnerable groups and lifestyle, as well as featuring a combination of 'ordinary people', experts and celebrities as their guests, they are different to the extent that they also deal with politics and the workings of institutions, such as the judiciary, the police, social services. *Latinitsa*, broadcast on the Croatian public channel HRT1 on Mondays at 20:10, and *Key*, shown on the Serbian public channel RTS1 on Mondays at 22:00, are therefore a mixture of traditional current affairs discussion programmes where expert panels discuss 'hard news' and a more personalized, feminized, celebrity-driven, 'soft', daytime

TV style of journalism interested in the stories of ‘ordinary people’ and in a broad range of social and political issues that go far beyond the bubble of party politics.

*Latinita* (HRT) is certainly the longest running discussion programme in Croatia and has always been hugely popular. Its host, Denis Latin, who has received international awards for investigative journalism, started the programme in 1993 after he had already worked in informative programming and as a war reporter in Croatia. *Latinita* was shown on HRT until 1996, which is when its team left the public channel because of the repeated cases of censorship, a practice common in the nineties (See Section 3.3.1). For the next two years the programme was attached to the commercial production house Network which distributed it on a number of local commercial channels. It stopped in 1999, and then returned to HRT in May 2000 after Tudjman died, HDZ lost power and Croatia entered the process of transition from an authoritarian political system to a more democratic one.

Since then, *Latinita* has raised controversies on many occasions, primarily with its episodes that critically touched upon the war crimes committed by the Independent State of Croatia in the Second World War, by the Croatian forces in the ex-Yugoslav wars of the nineties, and the legacy of the then president Franjo Tudjman. The biggest arguments over their work occurred after the episode called *Tudjman’s Legacy* which was aired in December 2005. The next day the Parliament discussed the programme for hours, and the Croatian Public Broadcaster was asked to investigate whether the programme violated ethical and professional norms in that episode. The result of this row was that *Latinita* was suspended for about a month, then brought back, but three members of its staff were given official ‘warnings before the termination of a work contract’ (OSCE 2006a, b). Since then, relationships between *Latinita* and the leadership of HRT have been strenuous and in the summer 2009 the programme was discontinued after

sixteen years of running. The decision was made by Hloverka Novak Srzic, the then editor-in-chief of informative programming, who justified it on the grounds that the host of *Latinitsa*, Denis Latin, discussed the possibility of running as a presidential candidate in the press (*Nacional* 2009; *Slobodna Dalmacija* 2009). Although Latin did not run as a candidate at the elections in 2009, the show has not been continued since then but the negotiations over the future of the programme are ongoing.

The last selected talk show, the Serbian *Key* (RTS), started in May 2004 and has run weekly since then. The programme deals with a range of political, social, psychological and other problems and phenomena and was partly inspired by *Latinitsa*. Its host, Natasa Miljkovic, even went to Croatia to talk to the staff of *Latinitsa* before starting *Key* to hear more about their work. The topics of the programme range from the exploration of Belgrade nightlife, through discussions about medical errors, to polemic about parliamentary elections. However, the two programmes differ in their stance towards national mythology. While *Latinitsa* raises controversy by addressing the issue of Croatian crimes during the Homeland War whose sanctity is the foundation of Croatian national mythology, *Key* does not do the same for the Serbian national myths. The programme has systematically avoided taking a stand on the divisive issues related to the Serbian politics and wars in the nineties by addressing these issues from the perspectives of ‘both sides’. For example, when *Key* discussed the issue of Serbian national identity, it invited a member of a fascist-nationalist youth organization as the ‘other side’ in the debate with anti-nationalist guests (*Key* 2006c). Still, when the programme touched on the Kosovo conflict in the episode *Serbian Children from Kosovo: Life Behind Bars*, there were no Albanian voices in the programme and once again only Serbs were shown as victims.

In order to ensure the sufficient volume of relevant episodes and their diversity, I both recorded these programmes systematically and tried to acquire the older relevant episodes from their producers. My opportunities for gathering relevant episodes of the four programmes differed in each case, depending both on when and for how long they ran and on logistical circumstances of their recording.<sup>47</sup> In the case of *Key*, I recorded twenty two episodes in the period between October 2006 to March 2007, at which point I stopped recording *Key* as the new episodes became available on the website of its host, Natasa Miljkovic. In addition, I already had recorded four episodes discussing topics of concern to women before my fieldwork and retrieved six more such episodes from the host during my research. In the case of *Latinita*, I was able to record twenty episodes from the 2006/2007 season and twenty more from the 2007/2008 season. In addition, the staff of *Latinita* gave me copies of fifteen more episodes on various women- and gender-related issues that were shown after 2000 but before my fieldwork. As far as *Catherine* is concerned, I recorded eighty episodes that were shown in the period between April and November 2007 when the programme was discontinued. Finally, in the case of *Sanya*, which was discontinued before the start of my fieldwork in mid-2006, I was still able to record forty episodes of this programme as it was bought by the Serbian TV FOX and shown on that channel between January and March 2007.

Starting from this wider pool of episodes of the four talk shows, I selected fifteen episodes of each of the talk shows that dealt with diverse women- and gender-related issues. I selected the episodes that clearly deal with issues of concern to women, such as problems of single mothers or female politicians, because I proposed that the coverage of issues of concern to women is an element of gender sensitive journalism. However, as there are also other episodes

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<sup>47</sup> I could record *Latinita* because the cable television package in Serbia includes Croatian public television channel HRT. However, as there were occasional interruptions in the service, I could not record all the episodes in the season 2006/2007. That is why I complemented them by additional episodes from the season 2007/2008.

that deal with gender relations more broadly and in the process circulate different representations of women, I included them as well in my sample for the purposes of analyzing media representations of women. In addition, I selected ten more episodes of each of the talk shows that dealt with a wider range of issues and did not explicitly thematize gender, in order to also be able to analyze women's participation in those episodes that do not focus on issues specifically relevant to them. This was necessary so that I can explore how female participants are treated in a wider range of discussions, some of which focus on hard news and are therefore likely to marginalize and possibly devalue women. Altogether, my analysis of the four talk show programmes considers one hundred episodes. In the Appendix 1 I provide the list of the analyzed talk show episodes and the pro-feminist programmes.

As I explained earlier in this chapter (4.2.1.), I chose the programmes which I described above because they exhibited properties relevant for my exploration of the status of gender sensitive journalism in Serbian and Croatian television media. The feminist programmes I included in my sample were chosen because of their focus on feminist 'women's issues' and exposure they give to women's NGOs as well as female sources more generally. These programmes enable me to study how and to what extent the different elements of gender sensitive journalism are pursued in critical and institutional forms of television journalism, but also what the limitations of the genre focused on the public sphere are. Conversely, the four talk shows I discussed were chosen because they allow me to explore the ways in which 'women's issues', participation and representations are approached through a mixture of feminist, 'female' and 'feminine' approaches in popular television journalism. Therefore, they enable me to examine both whether and how feminist discourses are disseminated through popular forms of journalism, but also the factors that hinder gender sensitive journalism in the television media.



This variety of programmes also allows me to engage with the debate concerning the status of marginalized social groups in institutional and popular journalistic formats, which I have discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2.

I consider all the selected programmes as belonging to different forms of journalism in line with van Zoonen's approach to journalism in its totality, which I discussed in 2.3.2. While the two daytime programmes are not presented by journalists – but by an ex music star and an ex model respectively – the teams behind the programmes consist of journalists, some of whom have previously worked in women's magazines or on magazine television programmes. In van Zoonen's typology these journalists fall within the category of feminine popular journalism. However, all other selected programmes are actually made and presented by journalists with the background in the dominant, institutional strand of journalism, including the two evening talk shows. Where these programmes differ from their counterparts in the UK or the US for example, is that in most of them the roles of the editor, the producer and the presenter are played by the same person. For example, the host of *Latinitsa*, is at the same time the editor in chief of the programme, who steers and oversees the work of three editors who conceptualise and research episodes of the programme. The same is the case with *Key*, but the editor and the presenter also produces the programme there, as the team is much smaller than in the case of *Latinitsa*. Also, the presenters of *B92 Investigates* and *Speck of Respect* are at the same time the producers of those programmes. I shall come back again to this when I discuss my data analysis strategy, as presenters' statements have more significance when they are also the editors.

Finally, the described sample of programmes, which was created following a purposive sampling strategy, has yielded richer data for my research than if I had followed a random sampling strategy. As the Serbian and Croatian media coverage of 'women's issues' has often

resulted from women's NGOs' or female politicians' initiatives that appeared successively after 2000, the coverage also came in waves, as these issues were opened, forgotten and re-opened. Over the years, a number of television programmes that discussed these issues critically or in anti-feminist ways grew and accumulated into a considerable pool of data, which provides rich material both for studying the repeated patterns and diversity in media approaches to 'women's issues', participation and representations. Had I chosen a random sample of the four talk shows and of the varied programmes for which the pro-feminist journalists worked, I would have risked reducing the volume of relevant data.

Firstly, I would have left out some of the most relevant episodes produced within these programmes as that happened before my fieldwork. Secondly, I would have risked getting less relevant data, as I could not have guaranteed that all of these programmes would have focused exactly on those issues that I would be interested in exactly during the time of my fieldwork. As it happened, *Latinitsa*, which explored many feminist issues over the years since 2000, did not actually do much in this field in the season 2006/2007, which was partly due to the perception of some of its staff that they had covered these issues before and that more coverage at that time would have been repetitive. By combining the episodes that I could record during my fieldwork with the episodes on relevant issues that the journalists copied for me, I could ensure both a sufficient volume of the relevant episodes and diversity in terms of the issues they covered. As all of them are situated in the same historical context, whose television media and gender politics I described in Chapter 3, the fact that the dates of their production span the period between 2001 and 2008 provides a more historically grounded sample.

#### 4.2.3. *Data analysis strategy*

My analysis of the television programmes builds on the theory and methodology of critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is one of the approaches within the broader field of discourse analysis, a complex term referring at once to a particular field of inquiry, theory and methods of textual analysis (van Dijk 1988). I have chosen critical discourse analysis as it is in line with my understanding of signification and with the critical aims of my research. The defining feature of CDA is the understanding of language, and other modes of semiosis, as an “irreducible part of social life, dialectically interconnected with other elements of social life” (Fairclough 2003, 2). Furthermore, CDA is an approach that is particularly interested in the ways meaning making processes are part of social and political problems such as oppression and domination (Fairclough 2003). Critical discourse analysts are, therefore, often interested in analyzing language use with respect to sexism, racism or capitalism (van Dijk 1985, 1988; Fairclough 2003).

The most important terms to define with respect to CDA are: text, discourse, and context, as well as the relationships between them. Text is any instance of language in use, and even more broadly, any instance of semiosis including visual and other ways of meaning making. Discourse is a term used in different meanings, but according to Fairclough (2003, 26) it can be understood both in more abstract terms as referring to semiotic processes as part of social life, and more concretely, as a countable noun referring to a group of statements given from a particular perspective on a particular aspect of world. Discourses are realized in the specific linguistic features of particular texts, and interrelated with other elements of context. Context here refers to different elements of social situation in which a particular use of language occurs.

In my analysis of the Serbian and Croatian television programmes I draw primarily on Fairclough's (1992, 1995, 2003) project of critical discourse analysis for social research. Two elements of his approach are of particular importance here: his argument about the three dimensions of discourse and his understanding of the concept of orders of discourse. Fairclough (2003) draws on Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (1978, 1994), according to which language performs three functions: ideational, by representing different aspects of the world; interpersonal, by mediating social relationships; and textual, by connecting parts of texts together, and texts with their contexts (see also Fowler, 1991). In a reformulation of Halliday's understanding of the three functions of language, Fairclough (26) argues that discourse informs social practice in three ways: through discourses as ways of representing parts of the world; through genres as ways of acting and interacting; and through styles as ways of being. In his view, discourses, as groups of statements, are defined by a part of the world they represent and by a particular perspective or point of view from which they represent it, e.g. sexist discourse on gender. Genres are ways of acting and interacting defined by the requirements of particular social situations, e.g. a confession, and styles are enactments of personal and social identities (ibid.).

While Fairclough differentiates between these three dimensions of discourse, he also points out that they internalize each other. As he notes, representational meanings inform social interaction and are inculcated in expressions of identities. Furthermore, these dimensions are elements which are networked in orders of discourse:

An order of discourse is a particular combination or configuration of *genres*, *discourses* and *styles* which constitutes the discursive aspect of a network of social practices. As such, orders of discourse have a relative stability and durability – though they do of course change. (...) We can see orders of discourse in general terms as the social structuring of linguistic variation or difference –

there are always many different possibilities in language, but choice amongst them is socially structured. (ibid., 220)

In my analysis of the television programmes, I explore how the selected programmes draw on the order of gender discourse by defining ‘women’s issues’, participation and representations in sexist and/or feminist terms. The three dimensions of discourse (understood in its first meaning, as a social practice of semiosis) – discourse as ways of representing, genre as ways of acting and interacting, and style as ways of being – provide the framework for my analysis of sexist and feminist approaches to the three areas relevant to gender sensitive journalism: coverage of ‘women’s issues’, approach to women’s participation and representations of women.

In exploring the representational dimension of discourse, I firstly examine how the sexist and feminist gender discourses yield different definitions of ‘women’s issues’. I start by identifying which issues are discussed as ‘women’s issues’. I do that by looking at: explicit journalists’/hosts’ statements about what ‘women’s issues’ are; what issues are largely discussed with women; what issues are women commonly discussed in relation to. In order to identify the instances where ‘women’s issues’ are approached in sexist or gender-sensitive terms, I rely on my understanding of the three ways in which ‘women’s issues’ have been commonly defined: ‘feminine’, ‘female’ and feminist (See 2.3.1).

I identify the coverage of ‘women’s issues’ as sexist if they are defined in ‘feminine’ terms, that is, if women’s issues are defined as primarily about romance, domesticity or appearance either explicitly by hosts/journalists, or because these issues are largely discussed with women, or because women are commonly discussed in relation to them. When programmes approach ‘women’s issues’ with regard to different forms of gender inequality, I identify such a coverage as the one informed by feminist discourses. Lastly, when problems, activities, events or

places that concern mainly or only women are covered, e.g. osteoporosis is a condition that affects more women than men, I identify this coverage in terms of ‘female’ women’s issues. As I argued in Chapter 2, gender-sensitive journalism is characterized by feminist and ‘female’ approaches to ‘women’s issues’, whereas ‘feminine’ approaches perpetuate the status quo of gender segregation along the lines of public/private distinction which results in women’s marginalization in the public sphere and legitimates gender inequality in the private sphere.

I further examine the representational dimension of discourse when looking at the representations of women advanced by different programmes, as evidenced either by explicit statements about women or the choice of particular women whose lives, problems or achievements are the subject of some of the selected programmes. I identify representations of women as sexist if they involve statements that either define women primarily with regard to their responsibilities in the private sphere or if they are derogatory, e.g. if they are dehumanising or vilifying women (see 2.3). In looking for feminist representations of women, I draw on my review of the common representational strategies in feminist journalism (see 2.3). The most common strategies in my sample include: representing women in areas in which they have been traditionally marginalized; representing the achievements of significant female historical, literary, academic or art figures; and representing so called ‘real women’, their lives and especially their problems with gender based violence and discrimination.

In exploring generic dimension of discourse, that is, ways of acting and interacting, I look at women’s participation in the selected programmes and how hosts and journalists treat female participants. As the generic dimension of discourse internalises representational meanings about gender, sexist discourses about femininity that define women in terms of their roles in the private sphere inform women’s participation in different genres, e.g. their effect is women’s

marginalization in ‘hard news’. In analysing this, I examine women’s presence and absence with regard to different issues discussed as well as whether the common sexist ways of treating female participants, which I discussed in Chapter 2, are reproduced or challenged. For example, I identify as sexist treatment of female participants if: their relationships with men and appearance are highlighted in discussions that have nothing to do with that; they are not treated as professionals but as women in work situations; or hosts impose sexist definitions of femininity on them personally, e.g. claim that they are waiting to get married ‘like all women do’ even if they haven’t said that themselves. Feminist approaches to women’s participation are commonly characterized by the reversal and avoidance of these practices (see 2.3). Therefore, I identify as feminist approach to women’s participation if the above mentioned sexist ways of treating female participants are absent and if there is a clear attempt to broaden women’s access to areas in which they are marginalized, e.g. areas related to the public sphere, and provide coverage to feminist activists.

The third dimension of discourse, style or ways of being, is addressed through the analysis of different participants’ stance towards discourses about gender and feminism. Stance towards discourses is an important aspect of who the participants are, as Fairclough argues. By extension, it reveals which identities are promoted or marginalized by the programmes. In examining the stance of participants, I differentiate between different kinds of participants: hosts or presenters on the one hand and guests or sources on the other hand. Given that in all cases except for *Sanya* and *Catherine*, the hosts and presenters are also the editors of the programmes, their statements and whether they challenge or not other participants is significant and revealing of the programmes’ overall approach to gender-related issues. I identify the extent to which a programme’s stance is informed by sexist or feminist discourses by establishing whether the

hosts or journalists endorse or challenge sexist or feminist statements, whether they repeatedly invite guests and sources who endorse sexist or feminist statements, and what the ratio between those two groups of guests is characteristic of a programme, i.e. which group is marginalized. In addition, where appropriate, I also establish the ‘characters’ that are common for particular programmes, in order to explore “culturally most salient identities” (ibid., 161).

### 4.3. Interviews and Documents

In Chapter 2, I proposed that the main factors that inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism include: discourses about gender and feminism, professional values within different types of journalism, and feminist media activism. In order to be able to investigate the impact of these factors in the particular Serbian and Croatian television channels, I also needed to gather data about the production context in which the selected programmes were made. To this end, I conducted interviews with the producers of the selected television programmes and with feminist media activists. I also sought to gather significant documents related to the chosen television channels, programmes and feminist media activism. In this section, I explain the criteria behind the selection of the interviewees and documents; provide the overview of these types of data and the process of their gathering; and discuss my ethical concerns and data analysis strategy.

#### *4.3.1. Selection criteria and the overview of the data*

The main criterion for the selection of the interviewed journalists was their involvement in the production of the particular types of television programmes which I chose to focus on in my thesis. Accordingly, I interviewed Serbian and Croatian television talk show journalists who



worked on the programmes that often dealt with gender- and women-related issues, as well as committed television journalists who were supportive of feminism and women's NGOs in their work. By interviewing these journalists, I sought to find out how they understood and approached different elements of gender sensitive journalism in their work and how different factors influenced their approaches.

In total, I approached seventeen potential interviewees, out of whom fifteen journalists accepted the invitation. Perhaps not accidentally, the only two who did not accept to be interviewed were the host of *Sanya* and the host of *Catherine*, the only two who were not journalists but an ex-music star and an ex-model respectively. Out of the fifteen interviewed journalists, six were from Serbia and nine from Croatia. The difference in their numbers is partly due to the bigger teams working for the chosen programmes in Croatia and partly because Croatian women's NGOs identified a greater number of television journalists who in their experience contributed to gender sensitive journalism. All interviewees were professional journalists and all but one (who was a reporter at *Latinitsa* where I also interviewed higher-ranked staff) exerted a great deal of control over the content of their programmes. Thirteen interviewees were female and two were male; seven worked on pro-feminist programmes and eight worked on talk show programmes.

Most of the interviewed journalists – eleven of them – worked for the selected programmes, which I discussed in Section 4.2.2. The minority of the interviewed journalists – four of them – did not work on these programmes, but I interviewed them as they worked on similar programmes that I was also considering as possible data at the time. However, I did not go on to analyze their programmes either because I couldn't retrieve any of their samples or because I had to make my data manageable for analysis. Nevertheless, as these journalists had

the relevant experience, their insights and accounts still provided me with relevant data. The following two tables (Table 1 and 2) show the distribution of the interviewed pro-feminist and talk show journalists across the two countries, television channels, and the types of programmes:

Country	Channel/Production Organization	Name and Type of Television Programme	Number of Interviewees
Serbia	RTS (Public channel)	<i>Speck of respect (Zrno poštovanja)</i> (documentary series)	1
	TV B92 (Comm. Channel)	<i>B92 Investigates (B92 istražuje)</i> (documentary series)	2
Croatia	HRT (public channel)	<i>Zagreb Panorama (Zagrebačka panorama)</i> (regional news)	1
		<i>Reporters (Reporteri)</i> (documentary series)	1
		<i>Good Morning Croatia (Dobro jutro Hrvatska)</i> (morning magazine)	1
	HRT/NGO Fade In	Reports for <i>Good Morning Croatia</i> ; documentaries <i>The Last Time (Zadnji put)</i> , <i>Zagorka (Zagorka)</i> , <i>Distorted Reflections (Iskrivljeni odrazi)</i>	1

Table 3 Distribution of the interviewed pro-feminist journalists across programmes and television channels

Country	Channel/Production Organization	Name of Television Programme	Number of Interviewees
Serbia	RTS (Public channel)	<i>Key (Ključ)</i>	1
	TVFOX/Adrenalin Production Comp. (Comm. channel)	<i>Catherine (Katarina)</i>	1
	TV PINK/Adrenalin Production Comp. (Comm. channel)	<i>Pyramid (Piramida)</i>	1
Croatia	HRT (Public channel)	<i>Latinitsa (Latinica)</i>	3
		<i>Maya (Maja)</i>	1
	RTL (Comm. channel)	<i>Sanya (Sanja)</i>	1

Table 4 Distribution of the interviewed popular talk show journalists across programmes and television channels

Regarding the interviews with feminist media activists, I first gained an overview of the range of activities within in this field by contacting women's NGOs and by reviewing their past projects as described on their websites. Women's NGOs' media activism is very diverse and includes: PR, media monitoring, official complaints and lawsuits against particular cases of sexism in the media, education for journalists, award for gender sensitive journalism, attempts to act through independent and governmental institutions in order to put pressure on the media to become more gender sensitive, and women's alternative media production. The following table provides an overview of which Serbian and Croatian NGOs engage in these activities:

Activity	Organization
PR	Most women's NGOs engage in some form of public relations, but women's NGOs which focus on different forms of violence against women were perhaps most active in getting media coverage for their concerns, e.g. Autonomous Women's House (Autonomna ženska kuća), Women's Room (Ženska soba), Croatia, and Counseling centre against domestic

	violence (Savetovalište protiv nasilja u porodici), Serbia.
Media monitoring	Women's information centre (Ženska infoteka), B.a.b.e., LORI in Croatia, and Dicens, AWIN, Žindok, Labris in Serbia
Official complaints and lawsuits	LORI and B.a.b.e. in Croatia, and Labris, Initiative against Misogyny in the Media (Inicijativa protiv mizoginije u medijima, IPMM) in Serbia
Education for journalists	LORI and B.a.b.e. in Croatia, and Labris and Sandglass (Peščanik) in Serbia
Award for gender sensitive journalism	Women's Network of Croatia (Ženska mreža Hrvatske)
Acting through independent and governmental institutions	B.a.b.e. and The Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in the Media in Croatia, Labris and IPMM in Serbia
Women's alternative media production	B.a.b.e., Fade In and CESI in Croatia, and Prijepolje Women's Forum (Forum žena Prijepolje) in Serbia

Table 5 Overview of feminist media activism in Serbia and Croatia

Starting from this overview, I selected only those organizations that were involved in activities that aimed to introduce elements of gender sensitive journalism into the mainstream media. Therefore, I did not include those feminist groups or organizations that only monitored the media without follow-up actions, such as Women's information centre (Zenska infoteka), and Dicens, AWIN, Zindok in Serbia, or engaged with media through PR.

The organizations which I selected engaged in activities such as organizing educational programmes for journalists, lodging official complaints against sexism or trying to influence the media through independent and governmental institutions, legislation and media regulation. Because part of their activities were pursued in collaboration with individuals from the governmental institutions for gender equality or journalists' associations, I interviewed them too to get a fuller picture of that part of feminist media advocacy in the two countries. The selected

interviewees came from women's NGOs, governmental institutions for gender equality and professional journalistic organizations. In Serbia, I conducted seven interviews, while in Croatia I interviewed six activists. All of my interviewees were female and all who were approached also accepted to be interviewed. The table below shows their distribution across the two countries and organizations or institutions:

Country	Organization		Number of Interviewees
Serbia	Women's NGO	Labris	2 (joint interview)
		Sandglass (Pešćanik)	1
		Women at Work (Žene na delu)	1
	Governmental Council for Gender Equality		2
	The Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality		1
	Independent Journalists' Association		1
Croatia	Women's NGOs	B.a.b.e.	2
		LORI	1
		Women's Network of Croatia	1
	The Committee for Monitoring and Evaluation of the Implementation of Gender Equality Policy in the Media		2

Table 6 Distribution of interviews with activists across organizations

The interviews with the journalists and activists were also followed by informal conversations on the topics related to gender sensitive journalism and feminist media advocacy with their colleagues and I made field notes about them. Where there was a need, I contacted my interviewees again to ask them about a particular issue whose discussion was missing from the interview.

Finally, the interview data is further complemented with various types of printed materials relevant to my sample and research questions. Thus, the data related to feminist media activism also include women's NGOs' publications and documents related to their activities in this area, such as manuals for journalists, gender sensitive journalistic codices, official complaints, as well as documentation about feminist media activism that is available on their websites. This part of my data also includes some documents of state institutions for gender equality, such as the sections on 'women and the media' within national policies on gender equality, as these sections have been written in collaboration with women's NGOs<sup>48</sup> and as they show their understanding of gender sensitive journalism. I have also sought to gather the relevant documents in relation to the television channels and programmes where they existed and were available. Examples of this type of data include: media and gender-related laws in the two countries, the Croatian public channel's report on the implementation of gender equality policy in its programmes, or the project proposal for the activist documentary series *Speck of Respect*. These and other documents are included as primary sources in my References.

#### 4.3.2. *The method and the research process*

As a research technique, interviews are most appropriate when the aims of the research are to elicit subjects' views, feelings, perspectives, meanings they attach to something, and accounts of their experiences and behavior (Arksey and Knight 1999; Lindlof 1995). As Arksey and Knight (1999, 46) emphasize, researchers should not forget that "interviews do not give information about practice: *they tell us what people believe they do.*" Nevertheless, interviews refer to situations, events, objects, but these references must be verified against other kinds of

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<sup>48</sup> I know this both from other sources such as Kesić (2007) and the Serbian Alternative Report for the CEDAW Committee (Branković et al. 2007), as well as from my own interviews with the activists and from documents I acquired through my research (Serbian Government. Council for Gender Equality 2006a-o).

data (Lindlof 1995). In my research, interviews were meant to provide information about participants' definitions, perspectives, understanding, and accounts of experiences (e.g. understanding of the concept of 'women's issues'), but also about their activities (e.g. routine stages of production process, interviewees' actions, events etc). While interviews were an appropriate method of eliciting the first type of information, I could verify the interviewees' claims about what they did through triangulation with my analysis of other types of data. I could check the credibility of journalists' claims about their work primarily through comparing their claims to my analysis of their programmes, but also through crosschecking different interviewees' accounts and looking at the relevant documents where they were available. In the case of the interviews with feminist media activists, this type of data was triangulated with a number of documents related to their media activism.

Among different techniques of interviewing, I chose the semi-structured interview for two reasons. Semi-structured interviews share with other qualitative interviews the importance of allowing subjects to speak and eliciting their perspectives and experiences in their own words. However, since they are organized around an interview guide that is grounded in the key research questions, they are more suitable for making comparisons between the interviews than unstructured interviews. However, the success of qualitative interviews greatly depends on the quality of rapport and formulation and organization of questions. Arksey and Knight (1999, 101) define rapport as "the degree of understanding, trust and respect that develops between the interviewer and the interviewee." While interviewees' stance towards a researcher may be initially related to the status of a researcher, the project itself and the researcher's knowledge about a topic, successful rapport often depends on researcher's social skills – being able to put people at ease and show patience, interest and empathy.

The questions for my interviews were developed from my main research concerns and their complete list can be found in Appendix 2. In the case of the interviews with journalists, there were five major parts of the interview guide: (1) the introductory general questions about the programme; (2) questions about the selection of, and approach to, women- and gender-related issues; (3) questions about the selection and management of guests/sources both generally in a particular programme and with respect to gender- related issues; (4) questions about the professional and institutional context of the programme, as well as about the production process; and (5) questions about gender and journalism, including gender aspects of practicing journalism and participation in women's NGOs' educational programmes for journalists. In the interviews with feminist media activists, the interview guide covered four areas: (1) their activities within feminist media advocacy; (2) strategies and experiences of advocating for feminist politics in the television media; (3) relationships and collaboration with other relevant organizations and institutions; and (4) understanding of gender sensitive journalism.

I conducted most of my interviews between October 2006 and July 2007, during which time I lived for five months in Belgrade and Zagreb respectively. However, as some of the interviews could not be arranged during that time, I returned to both places later and conducted 2 more interviews in Zagreb in the autumn of 2007, and two more in Belgrade in the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2009. All interviews were conducted in person, except for two which were conducted on the phone and via Skype because these two interviewees did not live in Belgrade or Zagreb. Although I tried to arrange to meet these two interviewees, it did not work out in the end because of our different schedules. The interviews were conducted in settings chosen by the interviewees, including their offices, other premises of their working places, their homes or cafes. The only requirement I made was that I would need a quite place for the



purposes of recording. Duration of most interviews was between 60 and 90 min, with only a couple of interviews which were shorter because the interviewees were very brief in their answers and with several interviews that were longer (the longest was 130 min!) because the interviewees were very detailed in their answers. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed verbatim, but without a detailed account of the non-verbal communication. When I quote the interviews in Chapters 7 and 8, the excerpts are provided in my translation but the original transcripts are available at request.

The informed consent of the interviewees was obtained via e-mail. Each time I needed someone's participation in the research I approached them via e-mail and explained who I am, e.g. where I am a PhD student, what the content of my research is, what part in research I am asking them to take, and what I am interested in concerning their work. In addition, I always attached a brief description of my research that was written in an accessible but still a more formal and academic style. All participants understood and agreed that I could use the data they provided me with for my PhD research. In general, the interviewees were cooperative and especially those who were selected for their activism-related work were interested and supportive.

#### *4.3.3. Ethical concerns and my position as a researcher*

While ethical guidelines vary in how detailed they are there are still several main ethical principles commonly proposed by researchers (Lindlof 1995; Wimmer and Dominick 2006). These principles require researchers to guarantee freedom of choice to research participants, not to harm but to benefit them, show respect to them, and protect their privacy. In feminist and critical ethnography, these main ethical principles are often complemented by an in-depth consideration of power relations between a researcher and the researched. As Watts (2006 385)

notes, doing feminist research may often assume a particular approach to methodology or research process. The specificities of feminist methodology may include a commitment to use research to benefit women's lives or to give greater power to research participants and foreground their interpretations and viewpoints in a researcher's work. De Vault (1996, 32-4) makes a similar point and argues that there are three basic criteria for feminist methodology. The first addresses the problem of women's invisibility in the mainstream science and it seeks to 'excavate women's lives', 'give voice to the women'. The second one is fairly similar to many ethical considerations raised by critical ethnography. It addresses the problem of exploitation of the researched by the researcher and of the hierarchical relationship between the two. Feminist research should, therefore, argues De Vault, attempt to minimize the exploitation of the researched in the research process. The third relates to the links between feminist academic practice and feminist movement. As she points out, feminist methodology is characterized by the commitment to social change and action beneficial to women.

In my research, I have been concerned with the ethical dimensions of my work with regard to the questions of: harm, benefit, the extent of the identification of participants and my position as a researcher. The principle to do no harm concerns the consequences that involvement in research may have for participants. As Watts (2006, 386) observes, harm is a complex and contested notion which can range "from the threat to personal safety and damage to reputation" to "causing offence and distress, and applies both to researcher and participants." As I set out to explore journalists' approaches to gender sensitive journalism, which also meant that I would criticize some of their professional practices which their statements reveal, I made efforts to protect my interviewees. I protected them by ensuring their informed consent and anonymity and by interpreting their statements not with regard to them individually but in

relation to broader social and cultural factors. Thus, in my analysis of the interviews, I identify interviewees only with relation to the programme or organization where they work. Also, I try to show how their approaches to the elements of gender sensitive journalism are not reducible to them as individuals but are shaped by broader discourses, professional norms and institutional structures.

The principle of benefiting participants commonly assumes an attempt on the part of a researcher to find a way to be helpful to the participants, as they have invested their time and other efforts into a researcher's study. Many interviewees helped me do my research not only by agreeing to an interview, but also by giving me phone numbers of other relevant actors, recordings of the programmes etc. During my fieldwork, only one journalist asked me to do something for her, namely, to be interviewed briefly for her programme, which I accepted. I did not have an opportunity to do something similar for other interviewees, but I did feel that most of the interviewed journalists and activists found the interviews interesting as they dealt with issues that were important to them. In particular, a few pro-feminist journalists were happy to discuss gender sensitive journalism, as they felt isolated in their professional environments. The exceptions to this were only a couple of talk show journalists, who were very helpful as interviewees but still not personally interested in gender sensitive journalism. Hopefully my finished work could be of use to some pro-feminist journalists and feminist media activists. In this sense, my research follows feminist methodology as it seeks to be useful to feminist activism.

In terms of my feminist position in the course of my fieldwork research, I negotiated the balance between informing the research participants about the nature of my research and not showing my position in the interviews so that I would not interfere with their contributions. To a

certain extent, my position could have been visible from the brief description of my project which I sent to my interviewees, as I explained that I am interested in the attempts to introduce gender sensitive journalism into the mainstream television media. Pro-feminist journalists and feminist media activists most likely saw my project as feminist. However, I believe that some talk show journalists saw it in ‘more neutral’ terms as a research on media representation of women, which was beneficial for both the interviewees and me as an interviewer as it removed the possibility of tensions in the interviews arising from my feminist and some of the interviewees’ anti-feminist positions.

#### *4.3.4. Data analysis strategy*

My analysis of the interview data and documents draws on data analysis strategies developed within qualitative research in the social sciences (Deacon et al. 1999; Dey 1993; Grbich 2007; Holliday 2007; Kvale 1996; Lindlof 1995; H. Rubin and I. Rubin 2005; Wimmer and Dominick 2006; Wolcott 2001). Data analysis in qualitative research is commonly described as a process that runs parallel to data gathering (Lindlof 1995; Wimmer and Dominick 2006). Throughout the fieldwork research, a qualitative researcher tries to uncover similarities and differences in the data, notice and fill in gaps in the data, and devise preliminary categories.

Sorting the data into categories is a central feature of the process of qualitative data analysis. According to Lindlof (1995), the first step in this process is to code the data according to the more evident categories, such as dates, sources, places, activities etc. The second step is more ideational and researcher should look for concepts, themes, beliefs, practices, and relationships (220). In looking for concepts, researcher should distinguish between first order concepts, i.e. those used by research participants, and second order concepts, i.e. those brought

into a study by a researcher. Categories need to be grounded both in the conceptual apparatus of the research and in the data:

Creating categories is both a conceptual and empirical challenge; categories must be ‘grounded’ conceptually and empirically. That means that they must relate to an appropriate analytic context, and be rooted in relevant empirical material. (Dey 1993, 96)

After coding the data, the next step is to group all parts of the data in the same category – both within an interview and across interviews – and combine these excerpts in a single file. At this stage of analysis, a researcher seeks to uncover the overall meaning of categories and the nuances, similarities, and differences in the ways they are defined or used (H. Rubin and I. Rubin 2005).

In the stage of writing up, a researcher should strike a balance between description of the data and analysis. According to Holliday (2007, 89-90), there are three main parts of the writing process: the argument, data excerpts and the discursive commentary. The argument conveys the results of the data analysis, data excerpts serve as evidence in support of the argument, and the discursive commentary explains how data excerpts relate to the argument. Furthermore, a qualitative researcher needs to be reflexive about the extent to which the presentation and analysis of the findings is organized according to the initial questions brought to a study or according to themes that emerged from the data. Finally, a researcher considers the broader implications of her findings and links these to the bodies of literature and theories that a research study engages with.

During my fieldwork, I transcribed the interviews shortly after I conducted them. In the early stages of my fieldwork, this was especially significant. While transcribing, I could reflect on the quality and relevance of my own questions and gradually refine them and structure them

better. I could also notice the issues brought in by my interviewees and change my questions to include any significant topics mentioned by them. For example, I noticed early on that some interviewees discussed the issue of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ approaches to the coverage of ‘women’s issues’, so I included a question about it in the subsequent interviews. Since it took me a while to refine the questions and the structure of the interview guide, this meant that the first few interviews I conducted needed to be inspected for gaps. I identified the gaps, contacted those interviewees again and noted their answers to the questions that were missing in their initial interviews.

In the process of sorting the interview data and documents into categories, I started with broad categories that followed my main research questions, that is, the main themes in the interview guides. After I read through my data several times, I grouped all the excerpts that I found relevant to each of these broad categories. In the case of the interviews with journalists, the broad categories included: women- and gender-related themes; guests/sources; the production context; and gender and journalism. In the case of the interviews with feminist media activists, the broad categories included: their activities within feminist media activism; their experiences of advocating for feminist politics in the mainstream media; relationships with other relevant organizations and institutions; and understanding of gender sensitive journalism. These broad categories were further sorted out by following the particular questions within these sections of the interviews. The next step was to reduce the data by summarizing data excerpts from the individual interviews within each of the sub-categories. This left me with a more manageable data set which I investigated in order to find similarities, differences and patterns in my interviewees’ answers to my questions.

At this point, I also differentiated between those parts of my data that were essential to my research questions and those that were related but still outside the scope of my research. In the interviews, my focus was slightly broader than my research questions as I wanted to make sure not to miss some possibly relevant data. Some of these broader issues, such as journalists' gendered experiences at the workplace, PR activities of women's NGOs, or the stages and cycles in the production of television programmes, did help me to get a better overall sense of my interviewees, their programmes or activities but ultimately remained external to my focus in this research. For example, I decided that the issue of the gendered experiences of journalists is outside of the scope of my research. My research does not investigate gendered relations between journalists – e.g. gender hierarchy in the newsroom – but looks at how they approach aspects of gender sensitive journalism.

In the stage of writing up, my analysis of the interview data and documents was organized largely according to my main research questions. Thus, Chapter 7 where I analyze the interviews with journalists, looks at their approaches to women- and gender-related issues and women's participation, as well as how their approaches are informed by their disposition towards discourses about gender and feminism, professional journalistic values and the institutional support or lack of support for different types of journalism. Chapter 8, that focuses on women's NGOs' feminist media activism, examines activists' understanding of elements of gender sensitive journalism and different activities through which they try to introduce these elements into the mainstream media. While my analysis is organized around the questions that I formulated on the basis of my engagement with the relevant literature, this approach is combined with the attention to the issues that were emphasized or introduced by the interviewees.

#### 4.4. The Comparison between Serbia and Croatia

As comparativists often argue, the comparative methods are useful in uncovering both the more general patterns and the specificities of the particular cases that are highlighted only when compared to one another. The comparison moves both in direction of generalizing and attention to the particular. Concerning generalizing, as Marc Bloch argued already in 1929, comparative research can unmask the 'local pseudo causes' as it discovers how the more general processes shape local events. Concerning the particular, as Braembussche (1989) and Lorenz (1995) point out, a case can be typical or unique only in comparison to something else. Also, through comparison, we can uncover variations within similar phenomena and understand individual cases better. Comparative methods are, thus, usually categorized according to the prevailing interest in generalization on the grounds of similarities or specification on the grounds of differences, but many comparative studies combine both logics. My comparative study falls within the last category.

It is my contention that a comparative study of qualities and the status of gender sensitive journalism in television media in Serbia and Croatia provides a more insightful approach than if I focused only on Serbia or only on Croatia. The existence of feminist initiatives aiming at developing gender sensitive journalism in both countries makes Serbia and Croatia individually suitable for investigation of my overall research interest in gender sensitive journalism and factors that shape the opportunities for such practice. However, their comparison provides me with a better insight into my research questions for three reasons.

Firstly, a comparison enables me to go beyond the seeming 'uniqueness' of the local contexts of Serbia and Croatia respectively. It provides me with a broader context that situates the Serbian and Croatian television media scenes and gender politics with regard to broader



regional or international processes, such as nationalism and authoritarianism in ex-Yugoslav context or women's media and political activism spurred by the UN Beijing Conference and EU integration processes. Secondly, a comparison also helps me to uncover the variations and specificities in the similar phenomena in Serbia and Croatia. For example, while pro-natalist policy was promoted within nationalist and religious discourses in both countries in the nineties, their comparison shows the difference between the instrumentalization of religion by the atheist regime of Milosevic in Serbia and the convergence of religion and nationalism in the case of Tudjman's regime in Croatia. In consequence, the Croatian HDZ has promoted the cult of motherhood both in the nineties and after 2000, which has influenced the media discourses about gender significantly, whereas a similar discourse has been largely limited to the religious groups and circles in Serbia and less present in the broader public discourses (See Section 3.3.). A comparison brings this difference to the fore, which might have otherwise stayed unnoticed because of the presumed similarities in the processes of re-traditionalization in the two countries in the nineties.

Thirdly, a comparison helps me to study how different constellations of the particular factors, which I identified as significant for the development of gender sensitive journalism, produce different outcomes in terms of gender sensitivity of the television media in the two countries. As I argued in Chapter 2, discourses about gender and feminism, professional journalistic paradigms and feminist media activism are the three important factors that shape the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. In Chapter 3 I showed what differences exist in terms of each of these three factors in Serbia and Croatia and suggested how they affect the gender sensitivity of television media. While the four analytical chapters find many similarities between the Serbian and Croatian television programmes, journalists and feminist media

activists, they also show how the different characteristics of the three specified factors lead to different television production in terms of gender sensitive journalism in the two countries (See Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8).

#### 4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained my choices of the data with regard to my research questions, provided an overview of my data and the reconstruction of the research process, and discussed my data analysis strategies. In order to examine the ways in which elements of gender sensitive journalism are present in, or missing from, Serbian and Croatian television journalism, I selected those television programmes that possess relevant properties in terms of this question. These programmes include popular talk shows that often thematize women- and gender-related issues and programmes produced by pro-feminist journalists. In addition, I gathered other types of data, related to the production context of the chosen programmes, in order to be able to investigate factors that inform the opportunities for practicing gender sensitive journalism in the television media in the two countries. This data set included interviews with journalists who mostly worked on the programmes in my data, interviews with feminist media activists who aimed to introduce elements of gender sensitive journalism to the mainstream media, and documents that were relevant to the cases I examine. My analysis of television programmes is informed by Fairclough's (1992, 1995, 2003) approach to critical discourse analysis, whereas my analysis of the interview data and documents follows the principles of data analysis developed within qualitative social research.

## **Chapter 5: Sexist Discourses about Femininity and Television**

### **Journalism**

#### **5.1. Introduction**

As discourses about gender and feminism are an important factor that shapes the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism, this chapter examines sexist discourses about femininity as a major obstacle to feminist interventions in the mainstream television. When feminist media advocates try to increase media coverage of ‘women’s issues’ or women’s participation, they do not intervene in an empty, blank space, but in a media discourse where ‘women’s issues’ or women’s participation and representations are already largely informed by sexist discourses about gender in general, and femininity in particular. That is why my inquiry into how elements of gender sensitive journalism are introduced to some of the selected Serbian and Croatian television programmes needs to start from an examination of the ways in which sexist discourses already inform television journalists’ approaches to ‘women’s issues’, participation and representations. Also, this part of my analysis is necessary because gender sensitive journalism is defined not only in positive terms, e.g. as a greater coverage of ‘women’s issues’, but also in negative terms: as a demand for eradication of sexism in the media (See Sections 2.2. and 2.3.). Therefore, this chapter seeks to identify the main forms of sexism in the selected Serbian and Croatian programmes that need to be tackled critically if the mainstream television media are to be made more gender sensitive.

In Chapter 2, I defined sexism in terms of gender segregation along the lines of public/private division, derogatory representations of women and specific forms of discriminatory treatment of female sources, guests and news subjects. All these forms are present in my sample and are mainly expressed in particular definitions of femininity and in an unequal treatment of female participants in media discussions. Sexist definitions of femininity in these programmes either affirm motherhood, heterosexual romance, beauty and sexually attractive looks as the most important ‘qualities’ of femininity, or disqualify women as equal participants in the public sphere because of their femininity defined in such a way.

Here, a distinction should be made between different kinds of sexist definitions of femininity in the analyzed programmes. These appear as common sense assumptions about women as defined through their roles in the private sphere; as explicit agenda on gender issues coming from religious or conservative political perspectives; and as derogatory statements about women as inferior to men. Sexist treatment of female participants in the programmes largely involves gender segregation in terms of thematic areas along the public/private division; disqualifying female participants through derogatory statements; imposing subject positions on them which define them primarily in terms of their role in the private sphere or in relation to their sexuality; and usage of generic masculine nouns when talking about women

As I explained in Chapter 4, my analysis of the programmes follows Fairclough’s (2003) approach to CDA that distinguishes between discourse, genre and style, which are respectively linked to representation, inter-action, and identities. Analysis of representation pertains here to definitions of femininity from sexist perspectives. Representational meanings are articulated in explicit statements about women, but also in meanings given to ‘women’s issues’, forms of women’s participation and their treatment as sources. My examination of representational

meanings thus overlaps with my analysis of interaction and identities, which looks at the sexist treatment of female participants, diverse participants' stance towards sexist perspectives, and common 'characters' that are linked to sexist definitions of femininity in the programmes.

Participants' stance towards sexist perspectives is significant here as it concerns the ways in which the programmes are positioned towards sexist discourses. For the purposes of analyzing this question, a distinction should be made between different kinds of participants. While talk shows include hosts, guests and sometimes reporters and audience members, activist informative programmes include journalists (narrators and interviewers) and sources. Having these distinctions in mind, I would argue that there are three positions towards sexist discourses in my sample of programmes. Firstly, they are often cited and challenged by feminist participants and sometimes journalists as examples of ideology that informs and legitimates gender inequality. Secondly, sexist discourses are often invoked by guests who are invited to the programmes to act as an opposition to feminism due to the journalistic value of balance and impartiality or just for the sake of entertainment. And thirdly, sometimes the programmes themselves endorse sexist discourses on 'women's issues' or gender-related themes through hosts' or journalists' statements. In this chapter, I discuss only the ways in which guests or journalists endorse sexist discourses.

## 5.2. Sexist Discourses and 'Women's Issues', Participation and Representations

### 5.2.1. *Daytime talk shows: Sanya and Catherine*

In *Sanya*, sexist discourses inform 'women's issues', participation and representations in three ways. Firstly, while the programme exhibits a mixture of approaches to 'women's issues as

‘feminine’, ‘female’, and feminist, the dominant approach to ‘women’s issues’ in *Sanya* is sexist, as they are largely addressed with regard to the private sphere. This is not formulated explicitly in my sample, but many episodes that involve very high numbers of women or that thematize women’s problems and experiences are those on ‘feminine’ ‘women’s issues’, such as marriage, sexuality, childcare, and beauty. For example, in the episodes *Did Beating Come from Heaven?* (*Sanya* 2007i), which debates the corporeal punishment of children, and *The Secret of Beauty* (2007e), female guests make 76.9% and 81.8% respectively. Secondly, the programme generally has high levels of women’s participation as women make as much as 55.5% in ten selected episodes that do not explicitly thematize women’s or gender-related issues. However, these episodes largely address issues such as lifestyle, psychological problems or social pathology and do not discuss issues traditionally associated with the public sphere, e.g. politics or economy. The programme reproduces gender segregation in the media by linking high levels of women’s participation to the exclusion of issues that refer to the public sphere. Finally, *Sanya*’s articulation of sexist discourses about women is most visible in the explicit sexist statements about women that can be found in the selected episodes.

Discussions in *Sanya* abound with statements such as, “It is natural for women to take care of their beauty,” “I sometimes spend too much on shopping like any normal woman,” “Of course [I think about the wedding] like any other girl,” which generalize, naturalize and normalize particular definitions of femininity that define women primarily in relation to bodily beauty, consumption or marriage. The overall sexist notion of ‘women’s issues’, interests and desires, is combined with a pluralistic conception of many episodes which are structured as a jigsaw of diverse, quickly aired, and sometimes opposite perspectives on a variety of topics. In dealing with gender, many of its episodes quickly move from sexism to feminism, from a

Catholic perspective to the perspective of *Playboy*, seeking confrontation and avoiding any kind of closure and resolution.

While many gender-related and ‘women’s issues’ are addressed through a mixture of oppositional perspectives, this is not the case in *Sanya*’s affirmation of motherhood, marriage and family as the most important values and accomplishments of women. Defining women as primarily mothers and celebrating family life is pervasive in the programme as it is endorsed by a range of participants and on numerous occasions: by the host, by guests who are members and believers of the Catholic Church, and through the personal stories of ‘ordinary people’ and celebrities. The following statements are representative of this kind of discourse:

A male singer, guest: We can talk about gender equality as much as we want to, but there are certainly different roles. In the first part of life, the mother is the basis of everything the children will learn. These are great efforts that many men wouldn’t be capable of, I admire them. (2007w, *Parenthood – Friendship*)

...

The host (appears in a wedding dress): Finally, I’m in white. This programme will be a dress rehearsal of that which all girls dream about: of course, the dream wedding. (2007g, *Wedding: A Dress Rehearsal*)

There are many similar examples where the host and guests express their commitment to motherhood and family: the host describes her programme as a ‘family programme’; asks her studio audience for applause for all the pregnant women; and successful professional women often conclude their story about their career by saying that motherhood is still most important to them. This particular form of sexism that defines women’s concerns in terms of their roles in the private sphere is further endorsed through the preponderance of a particular kind of ‘characters’ in *Sanya*, as the programme regularly invites women in their capacity as mothers. But this aspect of the programme is also about endorsing family life more generally as *Sanya* occasionally also includes fathers, advocates of family life and whole families with many children.

Common sense sexist assumptions about femininity and women's issues as pertaining to the private sphere are further reinforced by a strong presence of Catholic Church perspective in this programme. Representatives of the Catholic Church and Catholic groups and organizations, or guests who identify themselves as Catholic believers, are common in episodes that deal with women- and gender-related issues. Sometimes, they appear as the opposition to feminist participants or to guests who defend pornography or plastic surgery, but they also appear in non-confrontational episodes that celebrate weddings or family life. For example, an episode about weddings presents a story of a Christian couple and two other episodes introduce exemplary women, who are mothers of several children and also Catholic believers (2007g, 2007i, 2007o).

However, this 'family programme' has its more frivolous sides as well. As a 'lifestyle' programme it addresses its participants and viewers as consumers in episodes on topics such as shopping and beauty. Similarly to women's magazines, episodes about beauty also discuss beauty products and treatments and, therefore, work as commercials for the beauty industry. Furthermore, the frivolous and entertaining side of the show is often present in the host's jokes or questions about sexuality. While sexuality is sometimes addressed from very diverse perspectives, occasionally the topic is also exploited in sexist ways for the sake of entertainment. An example of this is an episode *Stories from Gynecologists' Surgeries* (2007a). The host started an episode by a series of questions that sexualized the situation of a gynecological check up, asking not about women's health but about sexual attraction between male gynecologists and women patients. By addressing an important aspect of women's health care in terms of sexuality and not in terms of health, this episode exploited and contributed to the common sexist practice of defining women primarily in terms of their sexuality.



The described sexist definitions of femininity primarily fall within the categories of commonsensical assumptions about women and religious or conservative agenda regarding gender issues. The third type, derogatory definitions of women, is rare in this programme and appears only in two cases. Both times, these statements are given space as an opposition to feminist guests or feminist-like accounts of violence against women. In an episode about women's emancipation (2006, *Why Are Men Afraid of Successful Women?*), a male writer compared women to monkeys in terms of their evolutionary level. In an episode about beating in childrearing a male politician told a story whose moral was that women see beating as love. Both statements were given as jokes, a performance that should make the programme more entertaining. Although such derogatory statements were not endorsed by the host, guests who expressed misogynistic or derogatory views about women were still treated by the host and the programme as a legitimate opposition to feminism as they were invited in the first place and subsequently not challenged.

In terms of the ways in which women's participation is informed by sexist discourses, I have already noted the characteristic gender segregation according to the private/public division exemplified by this programme. The programme occasionally tries to make men participate in discussions about traditional 'women's issues', and so men are invited to talk about their experiences regarding beauty care, plastic surgery, shopping, and parenthood. However, the results of this attempt are ambivalent since the invited male guests are always in the minority in comparison to the number of women talking about these issues, and those who are there often only reaffirm sexist notions of masculinity: they are bread-winners whose wives take care of children or they distance themselves from the feminine idea of beauty.

While the programme reproduces sexist discourses by linking women's participation to issues related to the private sphere, derogatory treatment of female guests is relatively rare and once again limited to the anti-feminist guests. In a quarrel-like situation in the episode about women's emancipation, the already mentioned writer kept interrupting a feminist guest with insulting comments about women and feminists in general and about her personally. Eventually, he said to her that he would be "impotent when it comes to her." Needless to say, the host did not react to this, allowing one of her guests to harass another guest in this way.

Finally, given the feminine character of the programme where women make a majority, it is not uncommon to hear praises of women coming both from the host and guests in *Sanya*. For example, the host suggests that women are more rational with the money than men and on another occasion a guest praises women for being more active in the old age than men. Also, other common forms of sexist treatment of female participants - usage of generic masculine nouns to refer to women's professions and highlighting women's gender and their appearance - are relatively rare in *Sanya*. Women's professions are mainly introduced in their feminine forms<sup>49</sup> and the host's gender has been highlighted only on one occasion, when a male participant jokingly courted her.

The Serbian daytime talk show *Catherine* (TV FOX, Serbia) is generically similar to *Sanya* and therefore shows interest in topics such as motherhood, relationships and beauty. Katarina Rebrača, an ex-model and its host, defines 'women's issues' in the following way:

I always deal with women's themes [...] Diets, life in a partnership, make up, various women's interests, shopping, snoring, weddings...But there will be other

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<sup>49</sup> For example, masculine forms of nouns for professionals such as 'journalist', 'politician' or 'doctor' are: 'novinar', 'političar' and 'doktor' in Serbian and Croatian. Feminine forms for nouns for these professionals are: 'novinarka' and 'političarka' in Serbian and Croatian; 'doktorica' in Serbian and 'doktorica' in Croatian. Serbian and Croatian feminist demands to adopt usage of feminine forms when talking about women are comparable with feminist demands in English-speaking countries to change the masculine nouns such as 'firemen' or 'policemen' into gender-neutral nouns such as 'fire fighters' or 'police officers'.

more serious topics as well, such as breast cancer...We'll deal with female unemployment, adoption, domestic violence... (Rebrača 2007, 10)

As in *Sanya*, the approach to women's issues is dominantly 'feminine', involving traditional understanding of women's issues as pertaining to topics such as relationships, weddings, beauty, shopping, but both shows also include 'female' and feminist issues, which I discuss in the next chapter. Similarly, this programme also encourages women's participation: women make 71% in episodes on 'women's issues', and 52.3% in episodes that do not discuss concerns specific to women or explicitly gendered subjects. However, *Catherine* differs from *Sanya* in two ways. The programme does not treat women's and gender-related issues in a polarized way and therefore it does not deliberately include guests with sexist perspectives as an opposition to feminism. Also, sexist definitions of femininity are not articulated from the perspective of religious gender politics but are based in common sense assumptions about femininity.

The programme abounds with statements that define motherhood or beauty as most important concerns for all women. The host often addresses her audience like this:

"Please, applause for the women who gave birth!"

"Women, give birth!"

"Giving birth is the most beautiful and most dramatic experience in women's lives."

"It is important to say that menopausal women should not give up their struggle against cellulite. Toned skin is the reward for the effort."

Motherhood is also mentioned as a kind of an added value on women: one more reason against violence or gender discrimination, as if violence and discrimination somehow become even less excusable if victims are mothers. The host, therefore, expresses her shock that a man who abused his wife could have called the mother of his children a whore. She suggests to women who are abused by their partners that they should defend themselves, if not for themselves then for the

sake of their children. And she appeals to employers who do not want to employ women with children to give them a job because mothers will not sleep in order to earn the money for their family. However, while *Catherine* emphasizes motherhood as the most significant experience of women this is not further reinforced through articulation with religious gender politics which endorses heterosexual family life in general as it is often the case in *Sanya*.

In terms of sexism in participants' interaction, the programme shows both similarities and differences with *Sanya*. *Catherine* repeats gender segregation familiar from *Sanya*. For example, in an episode *Preparing for Parenthood* (*Catherine* 2007i), although the host occasionally criticizes fathers who do not take part equally in parenthood, by inviting five women and no men to talk about the topic of childrearing, childcare is still left as a female domain of interest. Equally, as a programme with high numbers of women, it does not discuss issues belonging to 'hard news'. But in this 'feminine' space, praises of women are common. For example, older women are praised for being more independent than men or women are generally described as a biologically stronger sex.

However, unlike in *Sanya*, the programme does not include participants who express derogatory statements about women, whether in terms of definitions of femininity or those directed at female guests. This is because polarization of different perspectives is relatively rare in *Catherine* and discussions rather take a form of an exploration of a problem or are guided to resemble a candid chat among friends about personal experiences. Finally, another difference in treatment of female participants concerns gender and language. In *Catherine*, women's professions are mainly introduced through generic masculine nouns thus reinforcing masculinity as an invisible norm.

Although participants' interaction does not involve statements which disqualify female participants, one particular episode is still an interesting example of the gendered hierarchy in the public sphere. While most episodes of *Catherine* include both women and men, occasionally some include only men and some only women.<sup>50</sup> In one of the episodes with men only, gender of both the host and her guests was more explicitly at issue. In the episode *Tolerance in the Media* (2007n), Rebraca's guests were three male journalists and a male writer. First, the host refers to such composition of guests at the start of the episode:

I am honoured today to have four men in the studio. Usually I have half-half, but the four of you are the best experts for the topic that we will discuss.

After such a greeting, a male journalist continues this gendered conversation by greeting his host with the following line: "I have to say that it is a pleasure to be a guest in this programme, I have been in many television shows, but I never had such a pretty host." The discussion that proceeds is gendered in one more way, as this is the only episode in my sample of this programme where participants keep talking even when the host starts talking herself or when other participants are talking. The host therefore comments on this: "The four of you are dangerous but I won't let you take away my programme."

Eventually, after some time of such a discussion, the host herself makes a comment that refers to sexist disqualifications of women although none of the participants expressed such statements themselves:

The host: I am a woman but I'm smart, I consider myself...

A guest (a male journalist): But you're not a blond...

The host: I'm not a blond, so I'm even cleverer in the company of four men...

A guest (a male journalist): Absolutely.

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<sup>50</sup> Out of twenty five episodes in my sample, sixteen included both men and women, four only men and five only women. Episodes with men only dealt with the topics of racism, tolerance in the media, self-contemplation and 'Peter Pan Syndrome'. Episodes with women only concerned topics such as unemployment of middle-aged women, preparations for parenthood, violence against women, refugees, and balance between work and childcare.

Although none of the male participants provoked directly such a defensive comment from her, as an ex-model gone television host in a discussion with four male journalists, the host was clearly anxious about her status as a media professional in comparison to them, to say the least. Her status was threatened not only by her identity of a ‘beautiful woman’ and her current job in a low-valued entertainment chat show, but also by the inconsiderate, loud and arrogant type of communication exemplified by her male guests – journalists and a writer. This episode is exemplary both of the gendered hierarchy between masculine ‘serious’ journalism and feminine entertainment, and of the ways in which women are commonly addressed as women rather than in their professional capacity.

#### 5.2.2. *Evening talk shows: Latinitsa and Key*

The evening talk show *Latinitsa* (HRT, Croatia) bridges public/private division as the issues it covers range from war crimes and political corruption to love and cosmetics. In terms of its approach to ‘women’s issues’, *Latinitsa* often addresses them in feminist terms, as pertaining to gender inequality (See Chapter 6). Still, sexist discourses are also present in the selected episodes in the ways in which some episodes approach ‘women’s issues’ and participation and through explicit sexist statements about women by some participants in the programme.

Although *Latinitsa* has repeatedly covered ‘women’s issues’ as feminist, issues such as work-life dilemma, beauty and marriage-related issues are still discussed largely with women, thus re-coding these issues as ‘feminine’. But the episodes on these issues differ from similar episodes of *Sanya* or *Catherine* as they deliberately include a more diverse range of ‘characters’. A couple of such episodes include the following range of guests: men who talk about how they take care of their looks and fitness; a woman who left her job and decided to commit her life to

motherhood; a woman who is fully committed to her career and therefore does not want to have children; women who have both a career and children; a man who has decided to put his career on the back burner until his children are a little older; a woman who does not want to marry her partner; a woman who lives with her children and whose two ex-partners participate in childcare with her etc (*Latinita* 2004b, 2004d). *Latinita* also goes further than *Sanya* in the inclusion of men into discussions that have traditionally been seen as women's concern. In a couple of episodes, the programme explores men's relation to their gender identity and looks into all the things men now do to look good (2004d, 2007b). It features men who talk about their experiences with issues, such as parenting or beauty care, without distancing themselves from these traditionally feminine preoccupations.

The same sexist discourses about femininity as pertaining to the private sphere inform women's participation in those episodes that do not have gender or 'women's issues' as their explicit focus. Although *Latinita* is an infotainment programme, its roots are in serious political discussion programmes and that affects the ways in which participation is gendered. Thus men make 70.1% participants in ten episodes that do not deal with 'women's' or gender-related issues. The episodes that deal with 'hard news' are particularly characterized by a substantial discrepancy between men's and women's participation. For example, *Media and Mafia* (2008a) has 17 male and 4 female guests and sources, *The Church and Business* (2008e) has 19 men and 2 women, *They Too Defended Croatia* (2008b) has 33 men and 1 woman, and *Who and How Sells State Property?* (2008f) features 13 men and 3 women. These and similar episodes of *Latinita* are equally characterized by gender segregation along the lines of public/private division as *Sanya* and *Catherine* are, only in a reverse way. While *Sanya* and *Catherine*

encourage women's participation in discussions about the private sphere, *Latinita* marginalizes women in discussions about the public sphere.

In terms of sexism in participants' interaction, female participants are disqualified by other participants primarily in those episodes that are staged as confrontations of opposite views. Such composition of guests in the studio sometimes leads to heated debates and even to quarrels, in as much as participants raise their tone, talk at the same time and very occasionally even insult each other. These disagreements are always about public issues and not about family conflicts as in talk shows such as *Jerry Springer Show*. Some of the programmes about gender inequality and violence against women – although not all – were constructed in such a way. That mixture of guests sometimes led to situations where feminist guests were disqualified in sexist ways by their opposition in the studio. For example, an advocate of family life attacked a feminist guest by referring to her private life and saying that 'she lives in sin'. Still, many episodes, including other episodes about gender issues, combine participants in different ways and involve guests who either explore a problem jointly or present diverse rather than opposed views and experiences.

Lastly, sexist discourses about femininity are invoked through explicit statements about women, as an opposition to feminism in episodes about different forms of gender based violence and discrimination. Anti-feminist guests usually repeat the statement familiar from *Sanya* or *Catherine*: that it is more natural for women to take care of the children. Like in *Sanya*, some of them are identified as believers, Catholic Church representatives, conservatives or advocates of high birth rate. But sexist definitions of femininity in my sample of *Latinita* involve other elements as well. In a discussion about gender discrimination, two pro-family male guests express their admiration for women, who are, according to them, more honest than men and



whose nobility and emotionality men can never achieve. Such affirmation of feminine qualities is followed, however, by the attack directed at feminist guests in the studio.

A pro-family male guest:

You would want to be equal with men in all the areas in which he failed. And you want to belong to the immoral society of the world created by men. You want to be as corrupt as men. Starting from my mother, my sister, and including my ex-wife, I am used to women who want to be good and not to be a part of the immoral world. (2002a, *Gender Inequality*)

As an evening talk show that is a crossover between more traditional current affairs discussion programmes and daytime talk shows, *Latinita* approaches gender-related issues as public concerns. Consequently, sexist discourses that relegate women into the private sphere and accompanying celebration of women as mothers and morally superior beings show their other side as well: rejection of equal women's participation in the public sphere. Thus, the above mentioned statement is followed by criticisms of female politicians who instead of dealing with women's problems are said to focus on areas 'unnatural' for them, e.g. defence. However, participants who hold such views are in a minority in this programme and are often situated within a context of a critique of gender discrimination, which I explore in more detail in the next chapter.

A similar far ranging set of topics characteristic of *Latinita* is also present in *Key*, an evening talk show programme broadcast on the Serbian public channel RTS1. *Key* has also dealt with many 'women's' and gender-related issues and my sample includes episodes on the socialization of girls in Serbia, marriage, 'kept women', prostitution, women in politics, artificial insemination etc. While the programme has addressed women's issues in feminist terms in the episode *Can a Woman Be Einstein?* (Key 2005a),<sup>51</sup> a dominant approach in the sampled episodes that focus on women is sexist, as women are discussed primarily with regard to their sexuality,

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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 6 for a discussion of feminist perspectives in the selected programmes.

beauty or in relation to men. Sexist discourses that qualify femininity in these terms are most obviously present in explicit statements about women, which are more often derogatory in this programme than in the previous talk shows. However, they are not articulated from a perspective of any explicit political or religious agenda as in the Croatian programmes. In addition, they also inform women's participation and the treatment of female participants.

A recurrent 'women's issue' in *Key* concerns commodified female sexuality. This topic appears in several episodes such as those on prostitution, a pop-star's porn scandal, 'kept women' or 'the body as a business'. In different guises, the female 'character' that *Key* is interested in emerges: the woman whose body and sexuality are her assets. This character appears as a prostitute, a 'kept woman' who exchanges her beauty for a man's money, a pop-star whose pornographic recording has been circulated on the Internet, a woman whose bodily skills and looks are her profession as with ballet dancers or fashion models, and a woman who is present in the public arena only because of her beautiful body. The programme involves guests with varied perspectives, who approach these female 'characters' in different ways depending on contexts: as victims, as free sexual entrepreneurs, as immoral exploiters of men, as skillful advertisers of themselves or as undeserving of public space. Although there is a plurality of perspectives in these discussions, the preponderance of discussions about women in terms of their commodified sexuality makes bodily and sexual properties of women the most visible aspect of femininity.

Sexist definitions of femininity also take form of discussing women in terms of their relation to men. The clearest example of this can be found in the episode *Women's Side of Politics: Useful or Harmful* (2005b). The host, Nataša Miljković, addressed the topic of women

in politics by focusing on the wives of male politicians, some of whom are politicians themselves:

The host: Can we also divide our women, those who are present in politics or practice politics...So, wives of politicians...and then, among them we have one kind and another, can we make a difference?

The wives of politicians were then divided by a male political analyst in the studio into those who are supportive of their husbands and those who “illegally grab a part of their husband’s power.” Applied to Serbia, such approach led to examples of good and bad wives. A ‘bad wife’, Mirjana Marković, who was a politician and the wife of Slobodan Milošević, was not only mentioned as evidence that “historically women had a bad influence on Serbian politics” but also pointed out as responsible for some of the disastrous political moves of her husband.

Contrary to this, Ružica Djindjić, who was not a politician and was married to the assassinated Serbian PM Zoran Djindjić, was held as a symbol of the wives who supported their politician husbands, as a tolerant woman who acted as a bridge between different factions of the party, and as someone who saw politics as a sacrifice. This episode is a classic example of sexist discourse of femininity which defines woman so strongly in terms of their relation to men that even in the public sphere they are not seen as agents in themselves but as an accessory to a man. It contrasts angelical femininity, “which could be corrupted by politics” as the host said of Ružica Djindjić, to the bad, transgressive femininity with which most of the other women mentioned were qualified. The host’s rhetoric regarding these women is highly contradictory inasmuch as she qualifies them at the same time as women who speak openly and bravely, but also as aggressive, extreme, and illegitimate.

Negative and derogatory statements about women such as these have been present in some other episodes as well. An example which provoked a complaint by a lesbian NGO Labris

was an episode about love where a male anthropologist said that love for him is “when he takes an average Serbian cow and makes her into a goddess” (2007f, *What is Love Today?*). The programme has a similar record concerning homophobic statements as well.<sup>52</sup> In an episode about gay rights, members of LGBT NGOs were confronted by an opposition whose statements qualified gays and lesbians as aggressors and heterosexuals as victims; defined violence against LGBT people as a response to their violence; and compared homosexuality to pedophilia or zoophilia (2005e, *Homosexuality: European Package of Tolerance*). The host does not distance herself from such statements neither when they are said in the programme nor later on since she invited the guests who expressed such views again to her programme. As these episodes show, the programme accepts derogatory statements about women or gays and lesbians as a legitimate oppositional view in a discussion.

In addition, sexist discourses are present in *Key* in marginalization of women and in the ways in which participants interact as well. In ten episodes that do not focus explicitly on women or gender-related issues, men make 67.1% participants, which is a similar level of marginalization of women as in *Latinitsa*. Once again, episodes that deal with ‘hard news’ and broader issues related to the public sphere, such as post-electoral party negotiations, a lack of accountability of politicians and civil servants or verbal violence in political communication, have even fewer female participants: 14.2% in the first case and 25% in the second two.

In terms of participants’ interaction, male guests often address the host in gendered ways. Male participants compliment the host on her beauty and charm or make other references to her

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<sup>52</sup> As gender sensitive journalism should address issues that concern diverse groups of women, I have sought to find examples of this in my sample. Therefore, when the sampled episodes address concerns of particular groups of women, I address that in my analysis. However, as not all of the sampled programmes include such episodes, this issue is not discussed with respect to all programmes. This is not to say that these programmes have never addressed issues relevant to these particular groups of women, but that they do not cover them in the episodes that were available to me.

looks. For example, in an episode that discussed defamation, a guest used statements about her beauty as examples for his point about a hypothetical situation of defamation. Furthermore, she is the only host of the four talk shows whose questions are sometimes explicitly rejected by the guests and in one case in a sexist way as well. Having insisted on asking politicians about the candidates for prime minister's position after the elections, a following exchange ensued between her and a male politician:

The host: Does that mean that the prime minister doesn't have to be...

Male politician: It means what I said, *honey*, and your viewers will interpret that as they want to and can. (2007c, *Serbia after the Election: What to Do with a Victory?*)

While sexist belittling is clearly used here as a means of keeping the control of the conversation, the host herself treats other women guests in sexist ways as well.

She addresses them routinely using masculine forms of nouns for professions; in two episodes asks provocative questions about their relationship to particular men in contexts that are derogatory for them; in another couple of episodes insists on placing them in sexist subject positions; and in one episode privileges male participants over female ones. Examples of the first kind of sexist treatment are episodes in which women are questioned about their private lives. In an episode called *Public Women, Public People* (2005d), a woman who is a dancer, actress and a writer was asked about her relationship to a male politician and it was implied that she is publicly known more for that reason than for what she does:

The host: Do you think you achieved more by talking [about your private life] or by doing things?

The female guest: I am an actress who won an award.

The host: How many people know about that?

The female guest: Very few.

The host: And how many people know about your relationships?

The female guest: Also very few.

The host: And what about Zeljko Simic?

The female guest: That never happened, the media made that up...  
The host: And what have you done to end up being offered as one of the four answers in a quiz question 'What is a lover'?

In a second example of this kind, a woman psychiatrist was asked why she is critical of 'kept women' when she *also* married an older, respectable professor of psychiatry.

Examples of the second kind of sexist treatment of female guests can be found in episodes where female participants' looks or desire to get married are emphasized. Thus, the host greets the girls in the episode about socialization of girls in Serbia by saying: "I am sure that I never had prettier and more charming guests than you tonight" (2006a). Or in an episode about marriage, although her two female guests told her that they do not long to get married, the host suggests a little while later that what they say about their desires may not be true: "My guests say they are not waiting for a wedding ring, but they would still want this to happen to them, isn't that right?" (2004c). Furthermore, an example of differential treatment of women and men can be found in different treatment of boys and girls in two separate episodes on growing up in Serbia. An episode with girls was constantly interrupted by the excerpts from the previous episode with boys and the host used boys' statements as a reference point to address girls' comments, saying things like: "What are the main problems [in Serbia], we will see later what the boys said, they identified them precisely..." (2006a).

Although, it could be argued that *Sanya* and *Catherine* also position their female participants, and all women for that matter, in sexist ways, by privileging their identity as mothers, the difference between these programmes and *Key* is that mothers are affirmed in the first two programmes whereas the subject positions thrown at women in *Key* are sometimes derogatory or suggesting inferiority in comparison to men. Sexist perspectives are thus endorsed by the programme through such treatment of female participants, but also by the emphasis placed

on (commodified) female sexuality and women's relation to men in a number of episodes that focus on women. Lastly, *Key* treats sexist discourses as a legitimate position in discussions about women, e.g. the episode about women in politics treats a claim that women have been a harmful influence on the Serbian politics as a legitimate point of view.

### 5.2.3. Activist programming: *Speck of Respect*, *B92 Investigates* and *Fade In*

Activism-oriented programmes are largely informed by feminist discourses in their approaches to women's issues, participation and representations. As I discuss this in Chapter 6, I only briefly comment on the ways in which sexist discourses appear in this group of programmes here. The activist documentaries and reports in my sample feature statements that draw on sexist discourses as objects of feminist criticism or for the purposes of illustrating such perspectives on women. Thus, these programmes either do not include sources who hold sexist views, or they include them for these two purposes. *Speck of Respect* (RTS, Serbia) is an example of the first case since there are only a couple of cases when sources that do not hold feminist views are included, whereas *B92 Investigates* (TV B92, Serbia) and NGO *Fade In*'s production for HRT (Croatia) vary in this regard. Still, sexist statements do not have the status of an equally legitimate oppositional view in these programmes. They are included within a framework which is critical of gender discrimination, and such a framework is created in several combined ways: there is a strong commitment of a narrator to the truthfulness of statements about gender discrimination, the narrator and majority of sources are critical of gender discrimination, and women's NGOs are central subjects of a report or a programme.

An example of an incorporation of sexist perspective within a critical framework was the statements given by a prominent female Serbian journalist in a B92 documentary *Macho Men and Tom Boys* (*B92 Investigates* 2006c). While the whole programme aimed at drawing attention

to the problem of gender inequality in general and in the media in particular, this journalist was one of the few interviewees who did not agree with this agenda. Asked about gender discrimination in journalism, the journalist not only disputed that such a problem existed but said that she always had more men in her programme because women were not so convincing on serious issues. She also added that women's appearance and way of talking were always excessive and that everything turned into a hen-house when there were more than three women present.<sup>53</sup>

However, her and similar statements were edited to be interspersed with critical comments of the interviewed feminist guests, as in this brief excerpt:

A feminist academic 1: Unfortunately, many successful women send a horribly discouraging message to other women: There is no discrimination. Here, look at me, I made it! How come that didn't stop me, why does it bother you?

The journalist: I do not believe that someone is held back only because of being a woman.

A feminist academic 1: The best pupils of patriarchy are often successful girls and women.

A feminist academic 2: The patriarchal model is subconscious.

Placed in such a way, the statement that denies gender discrimination is presented as an example of the practice criticized by the feminist interviewees. As I already noted, feminist sources' critique is further reinforced by the overall critical approach of the programme, also exemplified through narrator's statements that support feminist perspective.

These programmes do not involve either sexist interaction between participants or sexist treatment of female participants by the journalists. The only aspect of sexist treatment of participants that seems to have occasionally escaped journalists' attention concerns the ways in

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<sup>53</sup> After the episode was aired, B92 Internet forum was flooded by critical comments of viewers who were amazed by the fact that this prominent journalist holds such sexist opinions. In the context of a programme critical of gender discrimination, the journalist's sexist statements were received by many viewers as yet another evidence of the pervasiveness of sexism in society.



which language is gendered. While the Croatian *Fade In*'s informative features and documentaries all rather systematically use feminine forms for women's professions, Serbian *Speck of Respect* and *B92 Investigates* documentaries vary in this regard. Interestingly, even within single episodes of *Speck of Respect* or across different episodes of *B92 Investigates*, both masculine and feminine forms for women's professions are used. While this sometimes has to do with how aware journalists were of this aspect of their work at the time when they made the programme, at other times it is an effect of the ways in which their female interviewees would like to present themselves as some women insist on being addressed by masculine forms and others, often with a feminist stance, insist on being addressed by feminine forms of nouns for professions.

### 5.3. Serbian and Croatian Television Programmes Compared

In this section, I discuss only talk shows, as the activist programmes either do not include sexist discourses or include them as illustrations and object of criticism, which I discuss in my next chapter. The three tables below summarize my findings concerning the distribution of the particular forms of sexism I discussed in my sample of talk shows.

Statements about women	Percentage of episodes that feature traditional definitions of femininity in terms of domesticity and appearance	Source: Host	Source: Guest	
		<i>Sanya</i> – 26.6% <i>Catherine</i> – 26.6% <i>Key</i> – 33.3%	Challenged by host / narrator	Not challenged by host / narrator
			<i>Latinitsa</i> – 26.6%	<i>Sanya</i> - 46.6% <i>Catherine</i> – 33.3% <i>Key</i> – 13.3%

	Percentage of episodes that feature derogatory statements, i.e. women as inferior or vilified	<i>Key</i> – 13.3%		<i>Sanya</i> - 13.3% <i>Latinitsa</i> – 13.3% <i>Key</i> – 26.6%
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Table 7 Distribution of sexist statements about women in women- and gender-related episodes of the four talk shows

Sexist treatment of female participants	Source: Host	Source: Guest	
	<i>Key</i> – 26.6%	Challenged by host / narrator	Not challenged by host / narrator
			<i>Key</i> – 6.6% <i>Sanya</i> – 6.6% <i>Latinitsa</i> – 6.6% <i>Catherine</i> – 6.6%

Table 8 Distribution of sexist statements directed at female guests in the total sample of the selected talk shows

Women's participation	Episodes on women- and gender-related issues	<i>Sanya</i> – 68% <i>Catherine</i> – 71.4% <i>Latinitsa</i> – 58% <i>Key</i> – 55.4%
	Episodes on non-women and gender-related issues	<i>Sanya</i> – 55.5% <i>Catherine</i> – 52.3% <i>Latinitsa</i> – 29.9% <i>Key</i> – 32.9%

Table 9 Distribution of female participants in the selected women- and gender-related episodes and in the non-gender related episodes of the four talk shows

My analysis of talk shows identifies both similarities and differences with regard to sexist discourses in the Serbian and Croatian popular television journalism. Sexist discourses about femininity as defined through the private sphere are invoked not only in explicit statements about women, but inform women's overrepresentation in the two daytime talk shows and their under-

representation in the two evening talk shows, especially in the episodes that deal with ‘hard news’. Such discourses also shape talk shows’ choice of topics that are discussed as ‘women’s issues’. Sometimes, as in the case of *Catherine*, issues such as diets, relationships, childcare are mentioned explicitly as *typical* ‘women’s issues’. In the cases of *Sanya*, *Latinitsa* and *Key*, certain issues are feminized either because they are discussed mainly with women or because women are mainly discussed in relation to them. In the case of the two Croatian talk shows and Serbian *Catherine*, when ‘women’s issues’ are defined in sexist ways, it is largely in relation to the topics such as motherhood, marriage, childcare or beauty. The Serbian talk show *Key* is somewhat different in this regard, as in addition to these traditional ‘women’s issues’, it recurrently emphasizes women’s commodified sexuality and their relation to men as highly visible aspects of femininity.

Whether women are predominantly defined as mothers or as commodities and accessories to men, they are excluded from the public sphere as a result. ‘Women’s programmes’, such as *Sanya* and *Catherine*, abstain from discussing politics, with some notable exceptions which I discuss in the next chapter. And in *Latinitsa* and *Key*, which cross public/private division, some participants explicitly advance views that militate against women’s participation in the public sphere. The difference between the two programmes is in the main reasons behind antipathy towards, or obliteration of, women’s agency in the public sphere: motherhood in *Latinitsa* and sexualization or treatment of women in terms of their marital/relationship status in *Key*. Another difference between them is that while such views are expressed by anti-feminist guests in *Latinitsa*, they are a structural part of the ways in which the host of *Key* addressed issues such as women in politics or ‘public women’. Thus, they are mainly a minoritarian position in *Latinitsa*, but often a prominent one in *Key*.

This difference is further linked to different ways in which derogatory discourses about women appear in the examined Serbian and Croatian talk shows. Partly, generic properties of these programmes, which often structure discussions as confrontations, result in duels between feminist and anti-feminist guests, who are mainly responsible for derogatory statements about women. Accordingly, the only talk show that does not include confrontational discussions, Serbian *Catherine*, also does not feature participants who advance derogatory discourses about women. In addition, different sexist discourses have different consequences for the ways in which derogatory statements are present in the four talk shows. Sexist discourses that focus on women's roles as mothers are generally affirmative of women, as long as they comply with their *main* role. Accordingly, *Sanya* and *Catherine*, which emphasize women's roles as mothers, are generally full of praises of women.

In this kind of sexist discourse, derogatory statements about women are directed primarily at those women who *breach* the norm of motherhood. That is why, in *Sanya* or *Latinita*, most derogatory statements about women, or directed at particular female participants, are given in debates with feminist guests. For example, in an episode of *Latinita* about violence against women, a male anti-feminist guest generally praises women as morally superior, but accordingly attacks a feminist guest as a woman who lives in sin. Nevertheless, I believe that in the episodes of *Sanya*, *Latinita* or *Catherine*, which feature fewer derogatory statements about women than *Key*, sexist affirmation of women as mothers functions as a kind of a 'buffer zone' against derogatory sexist discourses about women. In the case of *Key*, where women are often defined through their looks or relationships to men, sexist statements about women are more often derogatory as the 'buffer' of the cult of motherhood is missing and sexism has more misogynistic undertones.

Also, the cult of motherhood is further strengthened in the Croatian programmes through its overlap with the gender politics of the Catholic Church. The most glaring difference between the Croatian and Serbian programmes, therefore, is that sexist discourses in the Croatian programmes are articulated from the perspective of conservative, pro-natalist, religious perspective, whereas in the examined Serbian programmes they are not connected to any particular political agenda. Due to the general greater prominence of religious gender politics in Croatia than in Serbia, the Catholic cult of motherhood has a hegemonic position within anti-feminist and sexist discourses. This is not to say that Croatian women are not sexualized in ways that militate against their participation in the public sphere. After all, in the most infamous incident of that kind in Croatia, a right wing MP told a Croatian female MP that she is more suitable for ‘carnal pleasures’, than to be a *Wiseman*, during a parliamentary session (Matić and Pulić 2001). But I do believe that the hegemonic sexist cult of motherhood has marginalized this type of argument against women’s agency in the public sphere in my sample of programmes.

These differences can be further interpreted with regard to the specificities of the local Serbian and Croatian contexts. While nationalist and religious pro-natalist discourses and sexualization of women were prominent in the mainstream media in both countries, there have been differences in terms of the intensity and periods in which they were prominent (Section 3.4.). The pro-natalist discourses have been less present in the mainstream media since 1996 in Serbia. After 2000, religion-inspired politics spurred homophobic discourses (and violence), which are accordingly present in *Key*. But religious discourses about women were not widely present in the Serbian mainstream media, which also explains their absence in the Serbian programmes. Conversely, the cult of motherhood has been highly prominent in Croatia as it has been a part of politics of HDZ, which ruled throughout the nineties and came back to power in

2003. Furthermore, in the case of sexualization of women in the Serbian and Croatian media, I argued that this was more intense in Serbia because it was a part of the popular culture of turbo folk, which marked the nineties. As I mentioned in Section 3.4.1., even a new, highly popular term about women appeared in Serbia, i.e. ‘sponzorusa’, that expressed the idea of young women who emphasize their looks and seek rich boyfriends who should ‘sponsor’ them. It is thus not surprising that sexualization of women is more prominent in the Serbian talk show *Key*, which does not emphasize motherhood like other programmes, but devotes a whole episode to ‘sponsorse’ and invokes similar female ‘characters’ in several other episodes as well.

#### 5.4. Conclusion

The identified forms of sexism can be seen in terms of media’s reproduction and legitimization of cultural values that prevent women from being equal in social relations both in the private and in the public sphere, in line with arguments made by Fraser (1997, 2000), which I discussed in Section 2.2. They also curtail media’s capacity to enable citizenship for women, as they work to limit the coverage of issues of concern to women and their participation to the areas traditionally designated as suitable for women. Sexist discourses in the examined programmes perpetuate gender segregation along the lines of public/private division by locating women’s identities, desires, abilities and concerns primarily in the private sphere, and marginalizing them in the public sphere. In this way, the media reproduce cultural values that legitimate the existing gender relations in the private sphere where women are largely responsible for childcare, as well as those assumptions that define women as less capable of, or not interested in, participating fully in the public sphere. In addition, derogatory statements about women or common sexist treatment of female sources such as highlighting their gender, their relation to men, their

appearance, reproduce devaluation of women that informs the ways in which social interaction is gendered. Sexist discourses in these programmes thus enact and legitimate gender inequality and should be treated as a violation of justice and of media's obligations to facilitate citizenship for all social groups.

Feminist attempts to suppress sexism in the media would thus have to tackle its particular forms, many of which are documented in my analysis. Gender sensitive journalism would need to work against the traditional association between femininity and the private sphere and masculinity and the public sphere. More specifically, it would aim to decrease the gender gaps in participation of women in the genres associated with the public sphere and participation of men in the genres oriented towards the private sphere. It would also seek to exploit for its purposes the already existing ways in which private and public, personal and political, are enmeshed in the contemporary media.<sup>54</sup> While these are broad goals, there are more specific forms of sexist treatment of women which can be addressed more concretely. Derogatory statements about women which define them as inferior to men or common forms of sexist treatment of female sources whereby their gender, appearance, sexuality or private life are highlighted and emphasized when they are not relevant to a discussion would need to be seen by journalists as a breach of ethical standards of their profession.

Finally, elements of gender sensitive journalism, such as coverage of 'women's issues', women's greater participation and more diverse representations, will often not make *feminist sense* as they are already given meaning by sexist discourses about femininity. As I pointed out in Chapter 2, 'women's issues' can mean very different things for feminist activists and for many media professionals. For example, the Croatian feminists often demand from the media that they

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<sup>54</sup> I discuss the effects of personalization of political issues in the context of gender sensitive journalism in the next chapter.

should provide greater coverage of the problem of gender inequality. However, when HRT, the Croatian public channel had to account for the ways in which they fulfill their legal obligation to ‘promote an awareness of gender equality’, some departments argued that they promoted gender equality by covering ‘women’s issues’ such as wedding customs and traditional folk costumes. Similarly, while the Croatian women’s NGO B.a.b.e. criticizes marginalization of women in the media, many female participants in their audience research did not think that women were marginalized in the media. The unspoken premise of B.a.b.e.’s claim about women’s marginalization was that they are marginalized in the genres associated with the public sphere. But as it is clear from my analysis of the daytime talk shows, there are genres where women are in a majority and that may well have been what female audience members had in mind when they claimed that women were not marginalized. For elements of gender sensitive journalism to be introduced into the mainstream media, feminist media advocates would actually need to reflectively and explicitly confront the ways in which their demands are already ‘met’ by the media albeit in sexist ways.



## Chapter 6: Feminist Discourses about Gender Inequality and Television Journalism

### 6.1. Introduction

Gender sensitive journalism seeks to counter gender inequality *in* and *through* the media. It aims to achieve this by making media provision for women more egalitarian in terms of issues, participants and representations, but also by using the media as the central forum of the public sphere to disseminate feminist criticisms of gender inequality and arguments for social change. In this chapter I examine whether and how the selected Serbian and Croatian programmes act in these ways. Feminist discourses about gender inequality are present in all of the selected programmes, but are very differently positioned within them. They occupy a dominant position within activist programmes and are generally supported by the talk show *Latinitsa*. The two daytime talk shows, *Sanya* and *Catherine*, include feminist discourses in very mixed ways, whereas *Key* treats feminist and anti-feminist discourses as equally legitimate positions in debates.

There are several ways in which feminist discourses are invoked in the programmes. When journalists, hosts or sources and guests draw on feminist discourses, they primarily focus on the particular ‘feminist’ issues such as gender discrimination or violence against women. These issues are approached critically and through a social and political analysis of the unequal power relations between men and women. In the course of such an analysis, evidence of discrimination and violence is provided in the form of statistical data and/or women’s

testimonies, and commitment is expressed to social change and political action. Sometimes, attention is also given to ‘female’ issues, which are not necessarily politicized but are of specific concern to women (See Section 2.2.1). In my sample, a minority of ‘women’s issues’ falls into this category and they can be illustrated by daytime talk shows’ episodes on women’s health or Fade In’s reports on women’s art exhibitions or shelters for women drug addicts.

Feminist discourses also inform journalists’ approach to women’s participation and representations inasmuch some of them tend to invite more women participants when possible, to use feminine forms for their professions, to further awareness of the need to avoid sexism, to involve feminist guests regularly, cover women’s NGO activities, and affirm both marginalized women and women’s achievements.

However, when the programmes address gender inequality, most of them also feature participants who support anti-feminist discourses. But the programmes differ in their stance towards anti-feminism: while a minority of participants in the activist programmes or *Latinita* takes this position, it is sometimes a legitimate discourse in the programmes such as *Sanya* or *Key*. There are three major ways in which anti-feminist discourses are invoked in attacks against feminist criticisms of gender inequality. Firstly, while gender inequality is treated as a ‘fact’ and injustice in some of the programmes, other programmes address this issue as a debatable feminist claim. Secondly, a major cause of resistance to critiques of gender inequality regards the question of blame and responsibility for such a state. Critical stance towards gender inequality is often understood as unfair to men and met with defence of men in the name of fairness and objectivity. Thirdly, feminist critique of gender inequality is challenged on the grounds that it aspires to make women the same as men, i.e. to take away their femininity from them. This response can be seen in the light of the popular ideas about feminism as antithetical to

femininity, but also in relation to broader debates about the politics of equality and the politics of difference.

Finally, the type of journalism most dominant in different programmes also informs their treatment of feminist discourses. Whether programmes are made from a position of the committed or neutral, popular or institutional journalism has an effect on how the critical stances towards gender inequality are treated in them. In my analysis, two particular journalistic values proved significant for the ways in which journalists' addressed the problem of gender inequality: the professional norm of 'balance of views' and personalization as a means of representing social and political problems. That is why my analysis also looks at how these two journalistic values affect the programmes' approach to the elements of gender sensitive journalism.

## 6.2. Feminist Discourses and 'Women's Issues', Participation and Representations

### 6.2.1. *Daytime talk shows: Sanya and Catherine*

Given that *Sanya* (TV RTL, Croatia) belongs to a genre that is largely gendered as feminine, many of its episodes are characterized by a pro-women stance. Such a stance is expressed in the high participation of women, affirmation of women's achievements and attention to problems that many women encounter. By engaging with problems that women face in their lives, the programme also touches upon different forms of discrimination and violence against women, thus, providing some coverage of 'feminist issues'. However, while the programme is ready to engage critically with some of the displays of structural gender inequality, e.g. discrimination against women in employment or sex trafficking, it is much less responsive

with regard to the overall feminist critique of gender inequality. The programme's take on such a critique is limited both by its privileging of traditional definitions of femininity and by the three specific contentions in relation to feminism that I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

Critical approach to gender discrimination was most explicit in those episodes that dealt with discrimination against pregnant women and mothers in employment. This is the case where 'feminine', 'female' and 'feminist' definitions of 'women's issues' overlap: motherhood is an important feature of the privileged definitions of femininity in the programme; many women do face discrimination because they are mothers; and feminist critique of this form of gender discrimination is accepted by the programme because of its general pro-mothers stance. This problem is also a rare example of politicizing gender relations in *Sanya*. The episodes on these issues give most space to personal experiences, but they include a number of women who tell similar stories (*Sanya* 2007f, 2007l, 2007q). That is why personalization does not result in the presentation of these problems in individual terms. The sheer volume of testimonies given by single mothers whose ex-husbands do not pay alimony or women who were fired because of their pregnancy elevates their problems from the individual to the social level and presents them in terms of sexist gender relations. Furthermore, some of these episodes link these experiences to legal, institutional and political aspects of these problems. In doing so, they invite feminist guests who give information about the NGOs or institutions where single or fired mothers can turn for help, and initiate a critical discussion about the failure of institutions to sanction illegal actions by ex-husbands and employers.

In addition to drawing attention to (mothers) victims of discrimination and violence, the programme also tries to represent women in more 'positive' terms by affirming female success. Affirmation of successful women is a common media response to the problem of gender

inequality, both in anti-feminist approaches that point out successful women as a proof that discrimination does not exist and in popular feminist approaches that affirm successful women to redress their marginalization elsewhere. *Sanya*'s episode about 'successful women' falls within the category of popular feminism because it aims to affirm diverse women - those with careers in politics, business, dance, jewellery, but also a girl from an orphanage who succeeded in becoming a nurse – but does not approach their success as evidence that there is no gender discrimination (2007o). The host, Sanja Doležal, asked these women to discuss not only what success meant to them but also whether they faced obstacles because of their gender. However, while some of these women talked about differential and unequal treatment of women at work, in the household or in male-female relationships, others identified themselves as gender-neutral professionals and denied that gender discrimination hinders women's careers. Because successful professional women often deny gender discrimination, media affirmation of successful women often results in obscuring gender inequality.<sup>55</sup>

When the programme addresses gender inequality more generally, it does so implicitly and in ways that greatly limit the opportunities of feminist guests to express their views. The example for this is the episode which the host introduced as the episode about women's emancipation and equality between men and women. However, the episode was called: *Why Are Men Afraid of Successful Women?* (2006). Throughout the episode, the question of gender inequality was individualized and psychologized by being primarily addressed in terms of problems contemporary men and women have in romantic relationships or in terms of men's fear of powerful women. Furthermore, the episode addressed gender in/equality by staging a confrontation between feminist and anti-feminist participants. Therefore, the question of whether gender inequality exists or not was treated as an open question for a debate between anti-feminist

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<sup>55</sup> See Hochschild, 1974 as cited in Tuchman, 1978a.

and feminist guests. Because anti-feminist perspective was treated as a legitimate position in a discussion, the programme provided anti-feminist guests with an opportunity to express their derogatory views about women and feminists. This episode involved a guest who compared women to chimpanzees and harassed a feminist guest by commenting negatively on her looks.

In other discussions about various aspects of gender inequality, feminist critique is also rejected on the grounds that it unfairly blames men for such a state. For example, in an episode about single mothers whose husbands do not pay alimony (2007f), a young man from the audience objects to the focus on women only:

Why are there no single fathers, whose ex-wives do not pay alimony, you could have found such people to be guests as well...

The host: Yes, there are, but according to statistics there are still more women. We contacted some fathers but they didn't want to come.

Previously in the episode, an NGO activist presented data according to which 83% of their members are single mothers and 17% are single fathers who are actually widowers. Nevertheless, the implicit critical discussion of sexist gender relations that position women as primary child-carers was balanced with a gender-neutral approach that suggested men and women were both responsible for and suffering the problems of single parenthood. That is why throughout the episode the host alternated between talking about *single parents'* and *single mothers'* problems.

There are more similar examples in *Sanya* but this is not characteristic only of this programme. Meeting feminist critique of unequal gender relations with a defence of men as an endangered species is one of the most common points of disagreement with feminist guests present in these discussions. That is why the question of responsibility for women's lower status in society is often left open or problems stemming from gender inequality are treated in gender-

neutral ways. Feminist guests, therefore, stand out as a minority in *Sanya* as they address these issues also in terms of men's privileges and responsibility for violence or discrimination against women.

If the question of men's responsibility for unequal gender relations is one point of contention in these discussions, another argument against feminism concerns the issues of equality and difference. Paradoxically, differences between men and women are both denied and affirmed. When the very existence of gender discrimination is disputed, anti-feminist guests claim that there is no differential treatment of men and women at work for instance. According to these participants, only universal criteria of assessment are applied to men and women in any sphere, e.g. capability is what matters and not gender. At the same time, they attack feminism as the politics of equality which erases differences between the sexes. Feminism is understood as a project of turning women into men and men into women. The meaning of this sexual difference that should be protected from feminism is often unclear but it is sometimes articulated in terms of biological differences, male-female relationships as relationships between the protector and the protected, women's 'natural' role as child-carers or inclination towards some areas and not others (such as the army).

Confronted with such accusations, feminist guests in *Sanya* formulated their own critique of politics of equality but they left unclear what the politics of difference would be. According to one of them, feminism made a mistake by insisting on the politics of equality, which resulted in formal rights but left the inequality inside the household intact. Another feminist guest in that episode added that equal rights are the goal of feminism, but that there is also feminism of difference. A common reply from feminists in these situations is to make a linguistic distinction between two terms used in Serbo-Croatian for gender equality. The first term is 'ravnopravnost'

and it literally means equal-rightness, whereas the second term is ‘jednakost’ and it means equality between sexes, which is often understood as sameness in popular discussions. Feminists, therefore, usually reply that feminism is in favour of equal rights (ravnopravnost), but that it also takes gender differences into account. However, the feminist guests in *Sanya* do not explain the meaning of such a feminist politics of difference.

In terms of the treatment of feminist guests in the episodes about gender inequality, political and NGO advocates of women’s rights have been given substantial space in those episodes about discrimination against pregnant women and problems of single mothers, since protecting mothers from discrimination is ideologically uncontroversial in this programme. Feminist academics, however, have been usually allowed to speak very briefly. Part of the reason for that lies in the programme’s generic characteristics. *Sanya* is a programme that places particular emphasis on personal stories of ordinary people and celebrities and on entertainment. In that context, psychologists are the preferred type of an academic, but the academic manner of talking is generally perceived as rather inappropriate. Also, many episodes of *Sanya* are constructed as a very fast-paced airing of diverse perspectives, where feminism is only one perspective among several. Still, an important reason for marginalizing feminist academics lies also in strong anti-feminist sentiments present in the popular understanding of this political perspective as evidenced in the previous discussion. All these aspects of the programme work to allow only the most basic and superficial explanations of gender relations from feminist perspectives.

Like *Sanya*, the Serbian daytime talk show *Catherine* (TV FOX) is also characterized by a pro-women stance which is expressed in high participation of women, praises of women and attention to different problems women have. Therefore, in addition to its coverage of traditional



‘feminine’ issues, *Catherine* also focuses on ‘female’ and ‘feminist’ issues such as unemployment of middle aged women, violence against women, struggle against breast cancer, self-defence for women or difficulties of working mothers. The programme is also sympathetic to other marginalized groups such as gays and lesbians, Roma or disabled people. However, ‘feminist’ issues are discussed within a genre that is strongly defined in terms of ‘feminine’ concerns exemplified by topics such as astrology, summer romances or cellulite. In such a genre, the potential for feminist critical approach to gender relations is limited because the programme is generically conceptualized as apolitical and because it is largely grounded in traditional definitions of femininity.

Consequently, different aspects of gender relations are often individualized and psychologized and gender inequality is typically discussed as a subject of girls’ chat about problems in their relationships. The host, Katarina Rebrača, addresses her female guests as a woman and as a friend asking them why most men do not take part in childcare and why a man’s career is prioritized over a woman’s. She often explicitly comments on her critical stance in the following way: “I am always criticized that I am against men, but I’m not, I just want to tell them with humor what I think.” But discussion remains apolitical because the programme is generically conceptualized as being outside the politics. In an episode about unemployment of middle aged women (*Catherine* 2007t), the host comments like this on her guest’s statement that tackling women’s unemployment depends on political initiatives: “We do not talk about politics in this programme, but since this concerns women then we will make an exception.” The host allows her guest to finish her point but does not pose a single further question about this topic.

Apolitical character of the programme is visible in other ways as well. There are fewer personal stories about discrimination or violence than in *Sanya*, as well as participants with

either an explicit feminist or anti-feminist agenda. Given that every episode of *Catherine* has at most three guests, topics of gender inequality and violence against women are not discussed by a group of women as in *Sanya* but occasionally a lone woman tells of her experience with these problems. Personalization thus does not work to elevate these experiences to a more social and political level. Also, both feminist guests and those from women's NGOs and institutions are less well represented, and in those episodes on prostitution, a particular case of violence against a woman in a Serbian town and the work-life balance they were completely absent. The link is not established between personal experiences and discussion of social and political context and activism.

Analysis of issues related to gender inequality is rather haphazard and depends on the dispositions of individual experts, most of whom are psychologists. Some of them address issues such as domestic violence or work-life balance by referring to patriarchal society, others analyze them in purely psychological terms as matters of madness, infantilism, irresponsibility, fears etc, while yet another psychologist suggested that 'a disorder' of traditional gender relations may cause jealousy in men which may then lead to violence. Psychologization of gender inequality is particularly visible in discussions of violence against women. The host dubs violent men 'mad', their behaviour pathological, and psychologists are invited to comment on it.

Because both feminist and anti-feminist political positions are less articulate in this programme, debates about whether gender inequality exists or not and about equality and difference do not even occur in my sample of *Catherine*. However, criticisms of gender relations within the family are often followed by attempts to revert from a critical stance towards men and restore the balance of responsibility. In several episodes, whenever the host criticized men either as partners or as fathers, other female guests in the studio responded by defending men. In an

episode on work-life balance, the host criticized men for not taking part in childcare but her female guests suggested that that is so because fathers are pushed away by mothers.

A female guest: In a period just before the child is supposed to be born, a mother starts to see only her child and she doesn't see her husband any more. I think that's the reason [...] because of such an absolute commitment to a child, husbands are neglected... (2007c, *How Women Manage between Career and Children*)

Another example of this common response to criticisms of gender inequality is a need of some participants in discussions about violence against women to neutralize the problem by insisting that there are also male victims of women's violence. Men's responsibility for gender inequality or violence seems to be the biggest taboo in these discussions. The result of this is that women's lower status in society can often be discussed only in gender-neutral terms, e.g. by choosing the term domestic violence instead of the term violence against women.

The programme's combination of 'feminine', 'female' and 'feminist' aspects is visible at the level of women's participation as well. As I explained in the previous chapter, the programme encourages female participation and is generally affirmative towards women. Women are often celebrated by the programme as in these exclamations of the host: "Long live women employers!", "Long live grandmothers!", and "Long live women who gave birth!" However, affirmation of women is limited by the programme's traditional definitions of femininity. An indicative example of this can be found in the episode about *women's* problems in balancing work and childcare (2007c). The 'successful woman' who has professionally achieved a lot but is also a "successful mother" and "a good wife of a successful man" is invited to talk about how she managed to achieve all that. While attempting to affirm women, the programme constructs the neo-traditional ideal of femininity marked by a combination of success in professional terms, in marriage and in motherhood. In effect, it once again individualizes the

issue of gender inequality because it presents women's achievements in terms of individual women's ability to be energetic and well-organized.

#### 6.2.2. *Evening talk shows: Latinitsa and Key*

The Croatian evening talk show *Latinitsa* (HRT) is the only programme among the selected popular talk shows that is largely supportive of feminist discourses. The programme has dealt with a number of issues related to gender inequality, approached them from an explicit critical perspective and included feminists in these discussions on a regular basis. For example, the host, Denis Latin, introduces the episode *Discrimination Against Women* (*Latinitsa* 2005a) in the following way:

In the last 100 years feminism brought women the right to vote, rights to work and education, awareness of violence against women, liberation of women's body, and the right to be different. Although women comprise 52% of population, they still do not share equal rights with men.

The programme also treats 'feminine' issues in a non-traditional way as it diversifies the range of positions with regard to the issues such as marriage or motherhood, addresses them with respect to gender inequality and politicizes issues such as love. At the level of women's participation, the programme reproduces gender segregation as it privileges men's participation in episodes that deal with 'hard news', as I showed in the previous chapter. However, in the episodes that deal with different aspects of gender inequality, the programme provides ample space for women's testimonies of their experiences with gender discrimination and violence against women. Also, feminist guests are treated as credible sources on matters of gender.

The programme addresses the problem of gender inequality both with respect to the public and the private sphere. The most common example of inequality in the public sphere used in the programme is gender discrimination in employment, whereas violence against women is

the most common example of inequality in the private sphere. These issues are addressed with respect to legal problems and institutional failures that contribute to gender discrimination and violence against women and a wider critique of politicians, the Catholic Church and society for the legitimacy they give to sexist gender relations. Also, interrogation of gender discrimination is complemented by an inquiry into the legal and institutional mechanisms that can protect or compensate female victims of violence and provide women with mechanisms to counteract gender discrimination.

Feminist guests in *Latinita* are usually NGO activists, politicians who are members of official bodies for gender equality, and academics. They are invited to provide critical analysis of the presented cases, contribute further to documenting gender inequality and institutional failures in battling discrimination, and suggest what the possible political measures against gender discrimination could be. In doing so, they often provide examples of sexism by pointing at the representations of gender in school textbooks, the media, messages of politicians and church officials or the Croatian dictionary. They also provide statistical data as evidence of gender discrimination and male violence against women. Furthermore, they advance the argument about unequal distribution of power and resources between men and women as the main explanation of problems such as unequal division of household work or violence against women.

Asked about the political strategies of change, feminist guests mention particular measures aiming at economic empowerment of women, higher political participation, protection of women victims of violence, compensation and justice for women victims of war rapes, and expansion of the nursery infrastructure. However, political measures are usually discussed briefly and in a rather perfunctory way because discussing problems themselves takes up a bigger part of the programme. Exceptions to this are the issues of violence against women,

discrimination against women in employment and war rapes as their analysis was more extensive. In these cases, the failures of relevant institutions and authorities were scrutinized and legal and institutional frameworks analyzed with respect to how they contribute to discrimination or violence against women.

In addition to discussions about how institutions should combat gender inequality, *Latinita* also discusses questions of social change with respect to the private sphere and the issues such as marriage, childcare and household work. In these episodes, women often express their expectations from men concerning equal participation in childcare and housework. Different models of ‘family life’ are explored through a range of personal stories. In an episode on women and marriage, the programme included both happily wedded guests and women who talked about their ‘non-conventional’ relationships and who were highly skeptical towards marriage. The episode *Career or Family* (2004b) included a range of ‘characters’: a mother without a career, a woman with a career but without children, women and men with careers and children. *Latinita* picks up the issue of those women who commit only to motherhood by reminding the government of its promises of financial help to those women, and at the same time celebrates the accomplishments of the Croatian music diva who chose not to have children. Love has also been dealt with in a politicized way in as much as the episode on ‘great loves’ included love stories about a Serbian woman and a Croatian man in an ethnically divided city of Vukovar and about two gay men (2007a).

Personalization in *Latinita* is, therefore, used as an approach to social and political problems from the perspective of a series of personal experiences. The politicization of personal experiences occurs in several ways. Women’s personal stories about their experiences of discrimination at work or in politics, of domestic violence and rape, are given in sufficient

volume that they do not seem as isolated individual experiences. For example, one of the episodes that dealt with violence against women included eight women who talked about their experiences with abusive husbands and institutions that did not help them. Furthermore, in all of these episodes, there is a strong link between personal stories, critical social and political analysis and inquiry into possible courses of political action. Presentation of individual cases where institutions have failed to protect women who were abused by their partners is also used to raise a question of responsibility of particular institutions and politicians in implementing the laws against gender discrimination and violence against women. Finally, personal stories are politicized in those episodes where a range of experiences with relationships is diversified to include a mixture of both people whose relationships adhere to the forms of traditional heterosexual family and people who are in gay relationships, alone or in non-conventional heterosexual relationships, with children or without children.

The supportive treatment of feminist perspectives is part of a broader critical profile of the programme. In many of its episodes, *Latinita* adopts a watchdog role of journalism in interrogating critically the workings of the state, business and powerful institutions such as the Catholic Church. The programme also regularly adopts the role of the tribune of the ‘people’, as in the episode when a father of a murdered girl was provided with an opportunity to question a high-ranked police functionary about what he perceived as failures in the police investigation into the death of his daughter (2002b). This approach extends to the episodes in which the programme takes side of marginalized groups in Croatia such as Serbian minority or women.

However, this critical journalistic ideal is in many cases also balanced against the norm of impartiality which stipulates that there should be a balance of views on controversial issues. Therefore, many episodes about ‘feminist’ issues also involve participants who attack feminist

perspectives. Anti-feminist guests are most commonly related to the Catholic Church or identified as supporters of the ‘traditional family’, motherhood and a high birth rate. Nevertheless, some of their criticisms of feminism are shared by other participants who are not profiled as ‘religious conservatives’. This shows that particular anti-feminist statements are much more widespread and are often drawn on as a ‘common sense’ response to feminism.

Anti-feminist guests dispute feminist critique of gender inequality in the previously mentioned ways. For example, gender discrimination is denied by claiming that both men and women are judged according to universal criteria rather than gender at work. Furthermore, attacks at feminists concern the question of men’s responsibility, the least palatable part of feminism. An anti-feminist guest phrased this objection succinctly: “I fight violence against women, but I am against the feminist claim that a man is a priori guilty” (2000, *Abuse of Women*). This objection was most visible in discussions of violence against women, where the anti-feminist side in the studio claimed that women are to blame as well for men’s violence against them. According to these guests, “domestic violence is the only case where a victim is an aggressor,” “it is like when the storm breaks out after it has been brewing for days,” and “both parties participate in it.” Blaming women for domestic violence is complemented by claims according to which there are men who are abused by their female partners as well. Once again, men are presented as threatened and one such participant asks: “Given that most social workers are women, who can the abused men turn to?” When supporters of such claims cannot give evidence of men abused by their partners, they turn to any proof of situations where women are perpetrators of violence. One of them, thus, asks: “And how many women throw their baby into the bin?” In these and other ways, anti-feminist guests aim to obscure inequality by balancing out



the agency and responsibility in domestic violence, as well as the victimhood and privileges of men and women.

In addition, anti-feminist guests attack feminism as politics against ‘natural’ social, psychological and biological differences between men and women and provide different reasons against the change in gender relations. Concerning the private sphere, they reject the changes by referring to the values of traditional family and to the ‘natural’ role of women as mothers. In different ways, they also object to changes of gender relations in the public sphere. In one case, changes are rejected in the name of preserving women’s moral superiority, which the male world of politics would corrupt. As there is a strong link between the Catholicism, the support for traditional family and constructions of Croatian national identity in the anti-feminist perspective, feminism is in some cases seen not only as a threat to the family life but by extension as a threat to Croatia. In one such attack a male anti-feminist says to a feminist:

If you saw a happy couple, a man and a woman, with a baby in a pram, both of them smiling, you would approach them and shout: “Who contributes more to the family, you or you? The happiness of the whole society is in question and not of women and men separately. (2002a, *Gender Inequality*)

From this perspective, feminism is a divisive project that aims at fragmenting the family and ultimately the whole society.

Confronted with such accusations, feminists juggle between words such as ‘ravnopravnost’, ‘jednakost’, ‘razlika’: equal rights, equality and difference. They stress that they are not for equality as sameness, but for equal rights and difference. Again, politics of difference is not further defined but feminist statements about women and politics are an example of how they try to balance equal rights with difference. A feminist guest advocates gender parity in all representational bodies, but later suggests that local politics might be even more important to

women given their gender-specific daily responsibilities for children and family. In other examples, feminists praise traditional women's expertise that women would perhaps take to politics. "Women know how to handle a budget!" says a feminist academic about the possibility for a woman to be in charge of the ministry of defence. Women's rights to equal participation in the public sphere are thus complemented by attention to, or affirmation of, women's traditional spheres of expertise.

Still, when anti-feminist participants are present in *Latinitsa*, they are in a minority and therefore not afforded the same position as feminist views in the programme. Their perspective is included within a broader framework critical of gender discrimination constructed through the host's script, documentary features, personal stories in the studio and analysis provided by the feminist guests. However, sometimes the programme applies the principle of balance in ways similar to anti-feminist guests. The most obvious example of this, although not the only one, is when violence against women is addressed as gender-neutral domestic violence. For example, the host asks the viewers of *Latinitsa*: "Have you ever been abused by your male or female partner?" or comments on a particular case of violence against women: "Tomorrow, this can happen to any of us, whether we are women or men." In another case, the episode about murders in the family included mainly cases where women were murdered by their partners after years of abuse, but this was balanced out by presenting a case where a woman killed her (non-abusive) husband. The examples of violence that is systematic and grounded in gender inequality and an isolated case where no interpretations were offered for the reasons why that happened were thus presented by the programme as the same (2006b).

Finally, *Latinitsa*'s support for feminist perspectives is sometimes hampered by advocacy for gender equality which is articulated in terms of mainstream gender discourses. The

example can be found in the way in which the programme often tries to use the ruling party and Catholic Church gender politics as an argument against gender discrimination, as in the host's following statement:

The host: Let us go back to the political level (...) and comment on the following fact. The party in power declared war against the low birthrate in Croatia. Isn't helping women who are pregnant, who will give birth, isn't solving their problems also a way to win the war against the low birthrate? (2005a, *Discrimination against Women*)

Critical inquiry into the failures of institutional politics paradoxically results in approaching the issue of gender discrimination within the ideological horizon of that very same politics: its pro-birth rate rhetoric and the family as one of its fundamental values. In an attempt to hold politicians accountable for not fulfilling their promises, *Latinita*'s host recontextualizes the problem of workplace discrimination against women who are mothers as a problem of the low birthrate and family in Croatia.

The Serbian evening talk show *Key* (RTS) differs from *Latinita* as it includes feminist perspectives but is not supportive of them. In *Key*, gender discrimination is not acknowledged as a 'fact', but it is addressed as a claim that should be proven or overruled. The host, Nataša Miljković, elicits personal stories, information or critical analysis of gender discrimination, but then brings them into question through her subsequent alternative claims that deny discrimination. This is a rather typical approach to the topic in the programme, as well as to the topic of discrimination against gays and lesbians. For example, the host begins an episode *Can a Woman Be Einstein?* (Key 2005a) in the following way: "What does it mean, how is it to be a woman in Serbia? Is there discrimination against women in Serbia or is that only one more excuse women give for their laziness?" In several episodes, the host invites critical comments on gender discrimination, discrimination against gays and lesbians, or gender relations in marriage,

but then regularly questions them from perspectives that deny gender inequality. In terms of women's participation, the programme does not contribute to greater women's presence in the media but often treats female participants in sexist ways as I showed in the previous chapter.

Occasionally, the host also refuses discussion of gender discrimination altogether, as in those episodes where she did not plan that as part of her topic but her guests found it relevant to the topic. For example, she refuses to discuss women's status in politics in an episode on women in politics. She clarifies that at the start of the episode and later she needs to reinforce it when a female politician brings this issue into a discussion:

Let us be clear, tonight we are not going to talk about women's political influence, or the position of women in society. We are not going to talk about how many of them there are in the parliament or the government. We are going to talk about those women who are out there, who practice politics, about their style, behavior, anything that can tell us something about the difference between men and women in politics. (2005b, *Women's Side of Politics: Useful or Harmful*)

In other cases, she attempts to prevent other guests from expressing their feminist views. For example, two female politicians criticized the title of the episode called *What Makes a Good Serb?* (2006c) for excluding both other ethnicities as well as women. The word 'Serb' in the title is a generic masculine noun in Serbian and this led a female politician to comment on the issue of gender insensitive language. When she tried to explain how feminine forms were recently accepted for female MPs in parliament, the host interrupted her: "Let us not talk about [that], people will change the channel."

The host applies the journalistic norm of 'balance of views' in two ways in her treatment of gender discrimination. First, journalistic balance is understood by the host as balance between statements that criticize gender inequality and those that deny or enact gender discrimination. An example of her understanding of 'balance' can be found in the episode on women's style in

politics where her main question was: Did women bring more good or harm to Serbian politics? All throughout the episode, the host treated the claim that women's influence on politics is harmful as being equally legitimate as claims about women's contributions to politics.

Second, balance in discussions of gender relations is taken to mean balance between men's and women's responsibility for gender inequality and violence. In the episode *Can a Woman Be Einstein?* gender discrimination and women's laziness are taken as equally plausible explanations of women's lower status in society. Furthermore, in the name of 'fairness', the host asks her female guests "to be sincere" and admit that they are also privileged because they are women; that many women who are present in the public made the idea of emancipation disgusting to men; and that women are sometimes the biggest obstacles for other women's advancement etc. In the episode on prostitution, the host asks a similar question: "Isn't it true that there are more female pimps now? Does that discredit the claim that women are victims of men in prostitution?" (2005f). Men's responsibility for discrimination or violence is once again balanced by insisting on fair and sincere confession from women about how they are either better off than men or equally responsible for their own position. This maneuver is partly possible because gender discrimination is understood as something that men do to women, and not in terms of systemic social practices in which men are systematically privileged regardless whether individual men or women discriminate against particular women or not.

In the episode *Can a Woman Be Einstein?* the existence of gender discrimination is further questioned through the introduction of the 'character' of a 'successful woman'. To prove the thesis – that women should only try harder and they will not suffer discrimination – the studio is full of successful women whose example is meant to encourage less successful women. Drawing on the popular strategy of empowering women through affirmation of successful

women, the host declares that a happy ending is possible even in a world rife with gender discrimination:

Somebody can say that it is a fairytale, but my next guest, a truly extraordinary young woman, will show you that somehow you can have it all: family, career, school and marriage.

In this way, personalization results in an individualized and psychologized approach to gender discrimination. It is understood as a question of either the ill disposition of men with prejudices or as a phenomenon whose presence or absence is a result of the character traits of women. Consequently, braver and more persistent women are assumed not to suffer from discrimination, whereas those with a ‘weaker will’ are implied to be able to treat it through a change in their character.

Criticisms of gender inequality as an effect of the patriarchal social order are, nevertheless, present in the programme, sometimes because the host invites them and at other times despite her explicit rejection or implicit exclusion of that perspective. Inasmuch as gender discrimination is one side of a ‘balanced’ explanation of women’s lower status in society in the episode *Can a Woman be Einstein?*, the host does ask her female guests to say if they have ever experienced discrimination and to comment on particular examples of discrimination or harassment. These questions provide the opportunity for several women – three politicians, a journalist and a football referee – to discuss a range of problems related to gender inequality. They point out discrimination at work, in politics and in male-dominated jobs, the reduction of women to wives, sexual objectification and harassment, and inequality in household work and childcare. In the same episode, a woman who was presented as a Super-Woman also objects to her presentation by contesting the “myth that a woman can do everything” irrespective of whether their partners participate in household work and childcare.

In the episodes where the host rejects or excludes the topic of gender inequality, her guests still bring it into the discussion. In an episode on women in politics, for example, the only female politician invited insists that the discussion of female politicians needs to be situated with respect to the issue of the marginalization of women in positions of leadership. She also provides a broader critical perspective on the topic by explaining women's lesser participation in politics also in terms of economic gender inequality and misogyny (2005b). Also, in the episode on murders in the family where the host does not address violence against women as the specific widespread type of violence in the family, a female victimologist and a male psychiatrist bring in a gender perspective and identify a great number of such murders as violence against women with a root in patriarchal gender relations (2005c).

Some of the elements of the feminist critique of gender inequality are similar as in *Latinita* and they involve critique of sexism at the symbolic level; critical analysis of women's lower status in society in terms of gender discrimination; references to statistical data that show inequality between the sexes concerning resources and power; and some personal accounts of discrimination. However, much less attention is given to the failures of institutions to protect women against discrimination and violence and to discussion of political measures. Also, there are fewer personal testimonies from women and the programme does not feature any life narratives about violence against women. Female guests, who are critical of gender inequality or of gender relations in male-female relationships and marriage, are not qualified as feminists. If they are qualified at all, then some of them are called by the host "fighters for women's rights" and some of them position themselves as such by criticizing gender based discrimination and violence and advocating gender equality. Most of the women who position themselves in such a way belong either to women's NGOs or are politicians. Still, women's NGOs are represented

only very marginally in *Key*. Except for the episode on gay rights that involves LGBT NGOs, the programme involves only one other women's NGO, which deals with violence against women. While NGO members and politicians address the topic of discrimination and violence explicitly, there are other women belonging to different professions who do not discuss discrimination explicitly but express their skepticism about the institution of marriage, and household and childcare as women's obligations.

Anti-feminism is rarely present in the programme as an explicit set of statements that object to feminist criticisms or politics. This is so because discrimination against women or against gays and lesbians are explicitly thematized in only two episodes of my sample. In addition, violence against women is discussed explicitly only in the episode on prostitution. The anti-feminist opposition to criticisms of gender inequality or feminist politics takes mainly the form of sexist statements, such as the claim that wives of some of the Serbian politicians were to blame for their disastrous politics or for their bad results at the elections. Such statements of open sexism are not tied to a particular political project or even identified as a particular political position.

Exceptions arose only in two cases where guests represented two sharply opposed sides. The first such episode dealt with gay rights and LGBT NGOs were confronted with an opposition whose attacks on gay activists were articulated from a perspective of an Orthodox Church believer. In this episode, homosexuality was equated with zoophilia and pedophilia, violence against homosexuals was explained as a 'natural' response to the 'violence' of homosexuals against heterosexuals,<sup>56</sup> and heterosexuals were presented as generally threatened by the 'violence' of the 'gay lobby' (2005e). The second exception is an episode *What Makes a*

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<sup>56</sup> This is the same strategy as when domestic violence against women is 'balanced' by the alleged women's violence against men.



*Good Serb?* which opposed ultra-right wing nationalists to anti-nationalists, one of whom was also a feminist politician. In a discussion about gender sensitive language that emerged because the feminist guest criticized the sexist and nationalist implications of the title of the episode, a member of an ultra-right wing, nationalist and religious youth organization objected to the introduction of particular feminine forms for female MPs as something that is unnecessary in the Serbian language.

The only explicit discussion of feminist political struggle against gender discrimination occurred in the episode *Can a Woman Be Einstein?* As in many cases before, the struggle against gender discrimination is problematized as politics of sameness. Some participants of this episode express their fears regarding the politics of gender equality, situating it along with feminism as contrary to femininity or women's specific needs and characteristics. These two types of resistance to gender equality should be distinguished. The first draws on the popular images of feminists either as 'tomboys' or 'prudes' in a war against sex and female beauty, whereas the second points at the deeper controversies surrounding feminist politics of equality and difference.

In the first case, a female guest compliments another female guest for her prettiness by saying 'I like that unequal look'. Furthermore, a discussion about the stereotypical representations of successful women as 'she-dragons' ends in an attempt to bring together equality, professional success and femininity:

Guest 1: Well, I don't know whether we look like she-dragons tonight here. I think that we are quite decent...

The host: No, I selected you very carefully...

Guest 1: ...pretty, gentle women who only do serious things. And I think that tonight we showed that a woman can be a woman and still occupy powerful positions in the state and international politics...

In the second case, gender equality and specificity are contrasted when some female guests in this episode voice their objections to the laws that equalize men and women with respect to hard physical labor, e.g. employment in mines.

A striking feature of the use of the term gender equality in the episode is its multiplicity of meanings, which are to a certain extent conflated. The best example of the ways in which different meanings of this term are interwoven is a final discussion. Each guest was invited to answer a question from the programme's title: Can a woman be Einstein?

Guest 1: Yes, she can be Einstein and there are many women in the world who are equivalent to Einstein in their fields. It is important to make equivalent women's success in school and in employment. There is a gap there.

Guest 2: I would pose that question differently: can a woman be Mileva Marić,<sup>57</sup> a woman who was an excellent scientist and who is not known? There are some doubts that he took some things from her as well. Recently, I watched something on discoveries about DNA and I saw that there was female team there as well behind it, but we don't know about them.

Guest 3: I agree with this, but I think that a woman cannot and should not be Einstein (...) It is enough if she is that beautiful Mileva, who, by the way, probably knew how to bake as well (...) Let our girls continue to pump their CVs as well as their breasts and lips, simultaneously. It won't harm them.

Answers to this question combine three understandings of the relationship between men and women regarding equality: (1) women are equal to men regarding their abilities; (2) women are not equal to men regarding their chances and status; and (3) women are not and should not be equal to men regarding their gender-specific needs and characteristics.

This discussion shows the conflation of different meanings of gender equality. The question of equality of abilities is posed in a way that potentially obscures inequalities in terms of social status, which is why it is rephrased in the first two answers in terms of social inequalities. The third answer can be interpreted as a mixture of the rejection of the norm of a male genius as a goal for women and the rejection of previous points about gender equality in

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<sup>57</sup> Mileva Marić was a scientist and Einstein's wife.

society in favour of femininity which is largely defined in traditional terms. This conflation of different meanings is interesting because it is at the root of many statements that deny gender inequality or reject feminist politics against gender inequality. Gender inequality is denied when equality of women's and men's abilities is confused for equality in terms of social status, whereas struggle against gender inequality is rejected when it is seen as politics at odds either with traditional femininity or with specific women's characteristics and needs or as adherence to a male norm (e.g. exemplified by a male genius such as Einstein).

### 6.2.3. *Activist programming: Fade In, Speck of Respect and B92 Investigates*

In Croatia, Fade In, an alternative media NGO, has produced activism-oriented documentaries, reports and promo films since 2001. Fade In has collaborated with the public channel HRT on a number of projects. The NGO regularly produces reports for HRT's breakfast programme *Good Morning Croatia*; it produces a youth documentary series *Direct* for HRT; and several of its films were shown on HRT. The main purpose of most of Fade In's production related to women is to present the activities of women's NGOs to the general public, to publicize their perspectives and to expand media coverage of problems associated with gender inequality and violence against women. In terms of their approach to women's participation and representations, Fade In attempts to increase the presence of feminist activists in the media and to affirm women's achievements. A typical example of the latter approach is their documentary film about Marija Jurić Zagorka, the first Croatian woman journalist, a writer and a feminist. The film is produced as homage to this important historical female figure, but also as a contribution to the history of women's struggle against gender inequality in Croatia. This aspect is very prominent in the film as it devotes significant attention to the harm Juric suffered both in her

private life and work because of the patriarchal culture of the nineteenth century Croatia (Fade In 2007c, 2007d).

In their coverage of women's and LGBT NGOs, Fade In's reports for HRT programme *Good Morning Croatia* (2001-2007) engage with the issues of in/equality and violence in a number of ways. Many reports include critical analysis of gender discrimination and violence or use gender as a category of analysis of different phenomena, e.g. globalization. The reports also provide information on women's and gay and lesbian movements. The interviewed activists explain the history and significance of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March, V-day, gay pride or key feminist slogans such as 'Personal is Political'. The reports function as communication channels for the NGOs to present their specific demands or to protest against particular cases of sexism or homophobia. They inform viewers about the availability of help women's NGOs offer to women victims of violence or discrimination. Also, by providing coverage of particular aspects of violence or discrimination against women, they take part in the NGOs' efforts to sensitize the public in general, and women in particular, in the course of their preventive actions against these problems. However, sometimes the reports are not concerned with the problem of gender inequality but publicize NGOs' cultural and educational activities, such as feminist and queer festivals, seminars, exhibitions etc. Some also engage with women's organizations which focus on problems that are not only related to gender, such as drug addiction or the lack of nurseries in the local community.

Fade In thus acts as a campaign vehicle for the feminist critique of gender inequality, which is also visible in their film about women and the media. Fade In produced *Distorted Reflections* (2007a) for the women's NGO B.a.b.e., as part of their long-term programme Women and the Media. The film presents some of the common feminist criticisms of the media,

such as pointing out the marginalization of women as sources, different modes of address to women and men and the priority which is given to women's physical appearance. This film also draws on the most common feminist activist idea about the media representation of women as a 'distorted reflection' as in this statement of a women's media advocate:

I do not want the world of enforced political correctness, because that is not sincere. But I would like the media to stop with *distorted reflections* which include only women with particular looks and of certain age, and to offer something for everyone.

While this approach is shortsighted as it suggests the possibility of undistorted reflections of women, it also reveals other meanings given to such a request. Clearly, it is a protest against a reductive set of representations of women and a request to diversify both the range of women's participation in the media and the provision of programmes for women. This comment is an example of what I discussed in Chapter 2, where I argued that this activist request should be understood as the call for more diversity and media provision of representations in which different women's groups can recognize themselves.

A characteristic feature of most of Fade In's production is the absence of journalists' narration. Instead, there is an emphasis on the intimate modes of presentation where all the information, analysis, and accounts are provided by people whose problems, experiences or activities are in focus. Their documentary *The Last Time* (2007b) is a good example of this approach as it addresses violence against women by focusing only on experiences of women in one particular shelter, instead of the common presentation of this problem which combines personal accounts with statistical information and experts' analysis. But since a number of women give their individual accounts of the violence they endured, different situations in which their male partners were abusive, and their experiences with the institutions which are supposed

to protect them, their accounts acquire a social dimension. The problem is thus presented as social and political, both in gendered terms as men's violence against women and in terms of institutional failures to protect these women. The film focuses in particular on the problems of these women after they leave their abusive husbands. Over a two-year period, the Fade In crew followed these women's attempts to reconstruct their lives and leave the shelter. By following the efforts of these women, the film shows how poverty and the lack of institutional support in such situations pose almost insurmountable obstacles for these women. In addition to showing the ways in which women's agency is met with structural lack of support for victims of violence against women, the film gives publicity to the shelter's activities and the ways in which it tries to help these women.

Another characteristic feature of their production is the activist rejection of the non-critical application of the journalistic principle of balance. A good example of this is the way in which non-feminist voices are included in the film about women and the media. The film includes non-feminist voices only marginally through very brief statements by an editor of a women's magazine, an aesthetic surgeon, a marketing manager and a stripper. Some of the common excuses and explanations for the different treatment of men and women in the media are provided by these sources. Marginalization of women in particular kinds of media is explained by the prevalence of men in areas such as politics. The division of 'feminine' and 'masculine' areas is partly explained through reference to traditional notions of femininity that tie women and particular kinds of issues, such as flowers for instance. Finally, representation of women's bodies in advertising is justified by the notion of its power to attract attention. But given how marginal these statements are in the film, the purpose of their inclusion can be interpreted either as providing examples for discourses and practices which are criticized in the

film or documenting the types of non-feminist views on the issue. They are not included in accordance with the neutral journalistic model of pluralism and balance.

In Serbia, *Speck of Respect* (RTS), an eight-episode documentary series, provides another example of feminist advocacy in journalism. The series is designed as a systematic examination of women's unequal status in a range of areas. The programme includes episodes on violence against women, economy, politics, media, health, education, Roma women and sex trafficking. The series tries to document gender discrimination and violence against women both through presenting statistical data and women's accounts of these. The programme also provides information on the legal, economic and institutional background to these issues. All throughout the series, diverse participants point out the legal gaps, institutional failures and characteristics of economic environment that contribute to the conditions in which discrimination and violence against women occurs. Identification of problems is followed by discussions of political and cultural struggle against discrimination and violence against women. Discussing politics usually takes a form of identifying particular political or legal measures, but sometimes it also concerns the desired cultural changes in terms of countering sexist discourses about gender. The programme also applies gender as a category of analysis to various areas and in that way highlights the specific concerns of women. Examples of this are an episode on women health, where women and men were compared in terms of specific health issues, or a discussion about economic transition in terms of the specific ways in which it affects women.

The series does not balance claims about inequality between men and women with alternative claims about women's responsibility for their own plight or domestic violence. In an episode on violence against women, a journalist even critically comments on a widespread practice of holding both partners equally responsible. The programme endorses feminist

perspective as feminist participants' accounts are supported by the narrator's critical stance towards gender inequality and by the interviewed experts who testify about different kinds and the scope of gender-based discrimination and violence on the basis of their professional experience as police officers, doctors or union activists. Furthermore, the programme does not feature personal stories in ways that individualize and psychologize gender inequality. Gender discrimination and violence against women are addressed explicitly and individual women's experiences are set against a broader critical examination of gender inequality. These problems are also discussed with respect to specific criticisms and demands concerning the institutions, legal changes and political measures.

The programme displays some common feminist journalistic approaches to women's participation and representations. The majority of sources are women, who are mainly members of women's NGOs, but also feminist academics and politicians holding posts at parliamentary, governmental or regional bodies for gender equality. In representing women and their experiences, the series combines attention to underprivileged groups of women and victims of gender discrimination or violence with the affirmation of women's agency and professional success. An example of this mixture is an episode on economic gender inequality, which juxtaposes a successful female broker's message to women that they should believe in themselves and that *they can do it* with a short interview with a Roma teenage girl who earns her pocket money by cleaning toilets. The programme shows an awareness of differences between women in economic and ethnic terms. However, while it devotes a whole episode to the double discrimination suffered by Roma women, the complete absence of lesbian women is conspicuous. Finally, the series applies another common journalistic way of countering gender inequality by affirming female historical figures or women who are successful in traditionally



all-male professions. The episode about women and education features a story about the first Serbian woman who earned her PhD at the time when women were largely absent from the university; and a policewoman is chosen as the spokesperson for the police in an episode about violence against women.

If anti-feminist voices are present in the series, they are interviewed as agents in areas under discussion, such as journalists in the episode on the media or politicians in the episode on politics. Anti-feminist statements in this programme are redolent of the similar statements noted in my analysis of other programmes. The first type of these statements concerns the refusal of gender equality as sameness. A female journalist says:

I don't even want equality. Your male colleague and I can never be the same; he can break my arm at any point. Equality in public life, in employment, yes. But equality in male-female relationships, no. I feel fine in my woman's skin, and I don't need a decree to feel superior or dominant. (*Speck of Respect* 2005e)

Gender equality is once again seen at odds with femininity and as a project of women's domination over men. Another comment repeats the idea about gender discrimination as something that men do to women, which ceases to exist if women discriminate against other women. In his defence of page three girls, a male newspaper editor says: "Women edit an erotic section, choose photographs. That's better than if men were there, that would be a bit sexist" (2005e). But in the wider context of the series, which is defined by a critical perspective concerning gender inequality, these statements have a documentary value and they provide illustrations of the ways in which the issue of gender in/equality is popularly understood.

TV B92 (Serbia) documentaries on gender inequality and violence against women have been produced within the series *B92 Investigates*.<sup>58</sup> This series has been broadcast since 2006 and so far it covered 'women's issues' such as violence against women, prostitution, sex

<sup>58</sup> The series was renamed as *Re-action* in 2009.

trafficking, women and the media, and women in the army. The programme exhibits characteristics similar to *Speck of Respect* in terms of the treatment of the topic of gender-based inequality and violence. Most episodes involve an explicit critical analysis of inequality, evidence in the form of statistical data or women's stories about their experiences, critical examination of the legal, institutional and political context, and articulation of specific changes and measures that should fight discrimination and provide mechanisms that women could use when necessary to protect themselves. In terms of women's participation, these episodes provide publicity for testimonies and discussions of women's experiences with gender discrimination and violence, for women's NGOs' perspectives on these problems, and affirmation of women's achievements in the areas that have traditionally excluded women such as army or the police.

In *B92 Investigates*, most attention has been given to domestic violence against women, which is the main focus of three episodes (*B92 Investigates* 2006a, 2006b, 2007b). The main thrust of these episodes is in raising awareness of the existence of the problem of violence against women and of the need for political and institutional measures against it. These aims are pursued by documenting violence against women, interpreting the problem in terms of gender inequality, and identifying the failures of the courts, police, and centres for social work in their treatment of victims and abusers. The three episodes about violence against women highlight different aspects of this problem. The first episode examines how male violence affects women and children. The second one deals critically with the politics of sentencing and the prison conditions of women who killed their abusive husbands in self-defence. And the third one identifies the particular problems in the implementation of the new Family Law that stipulates new protective measures for victims of domestic violence but which are not put into practice. In addition to coverage of domestic violence, the programme also tries to raise public concerns over

the sexual and physical abuse of women in prostitution, by presenting first-hand accounts of women who were trafficked or who have worked in prostitution.

In addition to raising awareness of violence against women, the programme publicizes critical approaches to gender inequality. Similarly as in the case of *Fade In*, one of its episodes has been produced because of the NGO B.a.b.e., as part of its regional project aiming to redress gender inequality in the media. The episode on women and the media, *Macho Men and Tomboys* (2006c), provides an extensive discussion about sexism and gender inequality in general, and in the media in particular. In this collage-like picture of critique of sexism in the media, most of its aspects are identified. Whether in the form of an argument or a story about a particular experience with sexism, gender inequality in the media is discussed with respect to segregation of the sexes according to the public/private distinction, the marginalization of women as sources, devaluation of femininity, gender in/sensitive language and the sexualization of both actual women journalists and sources, as well as the representation of women in the media. In addition, the episode investigates gender discrimination in journalism as a profession in terms of decision making positions and salaries.

In terms of its approach to balance of views and personalization, the series resembles other activist programmes and *Latinitsa*. The stories about individual experiences in the programme are set against critical analysis of gender inequality as in the episode called *A Message for an Abuser* (2007b):

A woman: I was exposed to the psychological and physical violence in the last five years. I endured beatings and all kinds of abuse thinking: "It will get better." And I kept quite because of the children. However, the last time he tried to slaughter me, and my eldest son saved me, and only seconds kept me away from the death...

A female psychologist: This is what distribution of power between the sexes looks today, in the world we live in. Violence occurs where there is an abuse of power.

[...] Economic violence happens where one has an enormous material power, and the other does not have any and is in a dependent position.

Equally, the programme does not apply the journalistic principle of balance to the issue of responsibility for violence or discrimination. Majority participants address these issues from a perspective critical of gender discrimination and they include not only members of women's NGOs, feminist academics and politicians, but also people who are professionally involved in fighting violence against women or sex trafficking. Critical perspective is privileged not only because it is shared by the majority of participants, but also because it is endorsed by the narrators. Lastly, the episodes on violence against women explicitly criticize the common assumptions about violence against women which balance the blame of both partners and psychologize the abuse by seeing these men as mad or alcoholics.

While episodes on violence against women, sex trafficking or prostitution do not include anti-feminist views, the episode on women and the media include some journalists who expressed non-, anti-feminist or even sexist views (2006c). Two very prominent female journalists, the director of the PR office of the commercial channel TV Pink, and the Director General of the public channel RTS, all express views that deny discrimination, devalue women or excuse the media for the marginalization of women. In a fashion similar to anti-feminist statements in the talk shows, two female journalists transfer the 'blame' for the lower status of women onto themselves:

A female journalist: I am not sure that women are threatened that much, rather they are not interested, they have a feeling of powerlessness, of not being able to change or do anything, which is not true.

A female PR: And who is to be blamed for that? Will women just sit and say: "Society is to blame, or this or that..." No, I will say: Women are guilty.

Furthermore, the Director General of the public channel RTS links feminization of journalism to its demise and a prominent TV B92 female journalist devalues women as sources in comparison to men. But the inclusion of these kinds of statements does not present another case of the application of journalistic balance because: they are in a minority; they are usually surrounded by critical statements; and their claims to truth are undermined by the information and evidence about discrimination which is provided by the voice-over of the narrator. In other words, they are not presented as an equally legitimate point of view in the programme because the questions of whether there is gender discrimination or not and whether men are privileged are never left open.

Finally, all activist programmes in my sample show a huge discrepancy between numbers of female and male participants. Thus, in *Speck of Respect* (RTS, Serbia) women comprise 84.3% participants; in *B92 Investigates* (TV B92, Serbia) women make 78%, and in *Fade In's* programmes (HRT, Croatia) women participate with 80.3%. Such predominance of women in these programmes is comparable only with the predominance of men that is commonly found in the news (Gallagher, 2005). When compared to marginalization of women in the news genres, the great dominance of women in activist programming can be seen as an inversion of this general pattern: as women are highly marginalized in informational content, activist programming attempts to balance this lack by offering this limited media space mainly to women. This inversion is also visible in the care that is taken in these programmes to include women from those professions that are usually not present in other media programmes.

### 6.3. Serbian and Croatian Programmes Compared

My analysis of talk shows presents a mixed picture in terms of their potential for feminist appropriation, as the table below also shows. The table sums up quantitatively some of the main

characteristics of the examined sample of talk show programmes regarding the participation of feminist sources and women who tell about their personal experiences with gender-based inequality and violence, as well as programmes' level of engagement with problems related to gender inequality and those that specifically affect particular groups of women.

Percentage of women- and gender-related episodes that feature the following characteristics	<i>Sanya</i>	<i>Catherine</i>	<i>Latinitsa</i>	<i>Key</i>
Episodes involving women's personal stories about their experience with gender discrimination and violence	33.3%	6.6%	53.3%	6.6%
Episodes involving pro-feminist guests' criticisms of gender inequality and violence against women	53.3%	13.3%	60%	33.3%
Whole episode focus on women affected by a problem related to gender inequality and/or violence against women	40%	13.3%	53.3%	6.6%
Whole episode focus on a problem affecting a group of women, e.g. breast cancer or female unemployment	33.3%	13.3%	6.6%	13.3%
Women's participation	68%	71.4%	58%	55.4%

Table 10 Distribution of the particular characteristics relevant to gender sensitive journalism across programmes

The two daytime talk shows, *Sanya* (TV RTL, Croatia) and *Catherine* (FOX TV, Serbia), exhibit features that in some ways coincide with elements of gender sensitive journalism but are also seriously limited in terms of the kind of critique of gender inequality they can accommodate. As genres that are largely defined as women's and oriented to women in many of their episodes, the programmes present opportunities for appropriation by feminist media activism as they encourage women's participation in the media, promote a largely affirmative stance towards women, and touch upon a number of concerns that affect contemporary women, such as female unemployment, health, problems with childcare etc.

However, these programmes' potential to contribute to gender sensitive journalism is seriously limited by their preference for traditional definitions of femininity, which stresses motherhood, beauty, romance and marriage as the most important concerns of women. Also, as programmes that largely deal with 'women's issues' defined in traditional terms, they are generically conceptualized as being outside of politics and therefore when they discuss gender inequality they largely psychologize and individualize this problem. The exceptions are *Sanya*'s episodes on discrimination of pregnant women and mothers in employment where the problem is discussed in social and political terms as well. *Sanya*'s affirmative stance towards motherhood extends in this case to the inclusion of feminist critique of gender discrimination at work. Finally, the opportunities for feminist participants to express their views in the programme such as *Sanya* are sometimes severely limited because the programme approaches the issue of gender inequality by staging the confrontation of oppositional perspectives, which enables the circulation of anti-feminist discourses and sexist treatment of feminist participants.

The two evening talk show programmes, Croatian *Latinitsa* (HRT) and Serbian *Key* (RTS) show greater differences than the daytime talk shows in terms of how they can be appropriated for gender sensitive journalism. *Latinitsa* is the only examined talk show programme that approaches gender inequality explicitly and critically, contributes to the media coverage of its various forms and includes feminist guests regularly. While the programme does include anti-feminist views as the 'other side' in these discussions, their perspectives are situated within a broader critical framework and are not afforded equal status. On the contrary, *Key* treats both criticisms of gender inequality and denials and legitimization of it as equally legitimate sides in discussion. Occasionally, the denial of gender inequality is not expressed only by guests but by the host as well, as when successful women were invited to discuss whether gender

discrimination is only one more excuse for women's laziness. The two programmes differ in their use of personalization as well, as *Latinitsa* links personal stories to discussion of social and political structures and solutions, and *Key* presents gender in/equality as an effect of psychological features of individual men and women. Finally, neither of the two programmes redresses gender segregation of female and male participants along the lines of the public/private distinction, but *Latinitsa* provides ample space for women's testimonies of their experiences with gender inequality and violence against women, whereas *Key* does not.

Unlike the two evening talk shows, Serbian and Croatian activist programmes show a range of similar characteristics. This group of television programmes is made by journalists who see their role as journalists in terms of the advocacy against social inequalities (Curran 1991). They are sympathetic to women's NGOs and often provide publicity for their activities, protests, campaigns or policy proposals. In that way, they help the NGOs to participate in the public sphere with their definitions of problems and proposals of solutions. They also act as a channel of communication between women's NGOs and women as their constituency, as they provide information on services that the NGOs offer to women and the ways in which interested citizens can get involved in their activities.

In addition, these programmes counter gender inequality in the media because they aim to expand the media coverage of issues of specific concern to women in general – and issues such as gender inequality and violence against women in particular – and women's overall participation in the media as speakers on a range of issues. Finally, these programmes do not understand the journalistic principle of balance as extending to denials of discrimination, sexism and even allocation of responsibility to men and women in case of the violence against women.



They also do not individualize or psychologize the issue of gender inequality but present it with respect to discourses and social and political structures which sustain discrimination.

Their limitations as a feminist resource relate to their insufficient attention to differences among women, as well as the ways in which the generic features of informative genres direct them towards certain approaches to gender inequality and marginalize others. In terms of their approach to differences among women, some of these programmes, such as *Speck of Respect* and Fade In's production, try both to document the ways in which women are underprivileged and affirm women's achievements. To different extents, all examined activist programmes also engage with the issues that are specific to particular groups of women, such as economically marginalized women, women in different regions of the country, Roma women, women in prostitution, lesbian women etc. However, only Fade In's production is systematically concerned with different inequalities, whereas particular groups of women, such as lesbian women for instance, have been omitted from *Speck of Respect* or *B92 Investigates*.<sup>59</sup>

In terms of their examination of gender inequality, most of these programmes investigate the problem primarily with respect to the public sphere, leaving inequality in the household work and in the family, or issues of relationships and sexuality, still largely outside of the remit of informative programming. A significant exception to this trend is extensive coverage of violence against women, which has been the 'feminist' issue that has been given most attention to both in Serbia and Croatia because of the new laws in this area and because of women's activism regarding this problem.

Finally, the two countries differ in certain aspects of the media discussions about gender inequality and the ways in which the selected public and commercial television channels'

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<sup>59</sup> This obviously applies to my sample, which I finalized in 2008. Very recently, in September 2009, TV B92's *Reaction* had an episode about the failed Belgrade gay pride which prominently featured lesbian activists.

programmes fare with respect to gender sensitive journalism. As I already showed in the previous chapter, Croatian anti-feminist participants are usually identified as Catholic believers or conservatives advocating ‘healthy Croatian families’, motherhood and high birth rate. In Serbia, anti-feminist participants are usually not tied to a particular political position but mainly draw on popular anti-feminism and common sense sexist definitions of women. In addition, in Croatia, popular programmes also approach certain forms of gender inequality in politicized ways. *Latinitsa* approaches gender inequality as a social and political problem more generally, whereas *Sanya*’s exploration of political aspects of this issue is limited to gender discrimination of mothers and pregnant women in employment. Conversely, both Serbian *Key* and *Catherine* largely lack institutional and political perspectives regarding gender inequality. This is so because of the different extent to which the question of gender inequality became a part of official politics in the two countries, which I discussed in Chapter 3.

In terms of the differences in the channels’ orientations, HRT, the Croatian public television channel, provides more space for critical exploration of issues of concern to women generally and gender inequality in particular than RTS, its Serbian counterpart. HRT broadcasted a very popular talk show *Latinitsa*, which approached gender inequality mainly critically, and it has institutionalized collaboration with a media NGO Fade In whose goal is to promote NGO causes in the media. In Serbia, *Key* as *Latinitsa*’s counterpart treats critique of gender inequality and denials of gender inequality as equally legitimate positions, and *Speck of Respect*, the activist programme produced for RTS, did not get much support from the channel as I show in the next chapter. On the other hand, Serbian commercial channel TV B92 produces a series *B92 Investigates*, which includes episodes critical of gender inequality, whereas Croatian activist programmes I found were limited to the public channel. These differences stem from the

different recent histories of television scenes in the two countries. While I provided an overview of their histories in Chapter 3, I address these differences further in the next chapter by looking at how different institutional goals affect the individual programmes' representations of gender and treatment of activist journalists.

## 6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I moved from my discussion of the feminist ideals of gender sensitive journalism (Chapter 2) to investigating how its elements are introduced, negotiated or suppressed in the actual journalistic practice. More narrowly, the activist programmes can be seen as concrete attempts to apply a feminist ideal of journalism in practice. More broadly, some aspects of gender sensitive journalism, e.g. coverage of feminist issues, can be observed in popular talk shows as well, which also provide suitable data for analysis of the obstacles posed before gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media.

In the Serbian and Croatian committed journalistic practice, the feminist demand for more coverage of issues of concern to women was largely pursued through investigations of different forms of gender based violence and discrimination or coverage of events related to gender politics, e.g. women's NGOs' activities, legislative and political initiatives, incidents, research reports etc. In terms of the demands for women's greater participation, they mainly took the form of ensuring media access to members of women's NGOs, other women active in the public sphere, and victims of gender discrimination and violence. The feminist calls for more 'realistic', 'positive' and diverse representations of women could also be identified in the actual practice. An effort to show 'real women' was found in programmes that represent women's lives, problems and experiences in various areas, such as politics, work, education, healthcare etc. An

approach that seeks more ‘positive’ representations of women was noticeable in programmes that aim to affirm female historical figures or other ‘successful women’: scientists, businesswomen, artists, politicians etc. Finally, a demand for more diverse representations could be linked both to those programmes that focus on particularly marginalized groups of women and to attempts to fill in the gaps in mainstream media representations of women by showing women in traditionally male professions, such as army, police, pilots, cameraman etc.

My analysis also uncovered the limitations of the ways in which gender sensitive journalism is pursued in the actual journalistic practice. In an attempt to counter women’s marginalization in the public sphere, the committed journalists neglect problems in the private sphere. The exception to this is a substantial coverage of violence against women, which is the main problem discussed regarding the private sphere. The result of the overemphasis on the public sphere is that problems such as unequal division of labour in the household or in childcare are marginalized in the pro-feminist journalism in my sample, so are issues of love or sexuality. In addition, changes in media genres linked to the private sphere are not attended to, as there are no attempts to involve male participants in discussions about issues pertaining to the private sphere.

The overemphasis on women’s agency in the public sphere is also visible in the approaches to women’s participation. In attempts to improve women’s participation and representations, pro-feminist journalists often focus on: feminist activists and other women who are politically active in the public sphere; female experts; women in traditionally male professions; ‘women achievers’; and women who are victims of gender inequality and violence, or other inequalities. Consequently, women’s participation and representations in pro-feminist programmes are sometimes limited to these groups of women. While these limitations are a

result of feminist attempts to counter the problem of marginalization of women in the public sphere, they are also a consequence of the particular genres in which the pro-feminist journalists in my sample work in. All the pro-feminist journalists in my sample produce information genres, although they range from more traditional news and documentaries to reports made for a breakfast magazine programme. The dominant institutional orientation of their work leads further to the exclusion of some issues associated with the private sphere, such as household work, love or sexuality.

Elements of gender sensitive journalism are also present in popular journalism, represented by talk shows in my sample. Most of all, these programmes do address some feminist and ‘female’ issues, such as gender discrimination, violence against women, women’s health or unemployment. Moreover, their interest in the private sphere enables them to address a wider set of ‘women’s issues’ than in the case of the examined activist informative journalists, as these programmes discuss love or sexuality. In addition, the feminine character of some popular journalistic genres, such as daytime talk shows, results in a generally affirmative stance towards women’s participation and representations, if not towards feminism as well. However, the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in these programmes depend both on their political position with regard to the issue of gender equality, and on the ways in which critical and neutral, popular and institutional journalism are present in them. Some of these programmes, such as *Latinitsa*, exhibit properties of all four types of journalism, so it is important to note that these four journalisms sometimes overlap in a single programme. But in principle, only the overall orientation towards critical journalism, as in *Latinitsa*, ensured largely supportive approach to feminist discourses in my sample.

The lack of critical and institutional journalistic perspectives in other popular programmes resulted in particular problems in the coverage of feminist issues. The lack of institutional journalism resulted in individualized and psychologized coverage. The lack of critical journalism resulted in the applications of the norm of balance of views in the ways that equalized the legitimacy of anti-feminist and feminist discourses. This made it very difficult for feminist participants to advance critical views on gender as they were often attacked by anti-feminist participants. However, such coverage was not the result only of the particular kinds of journalism, but also of the very strong anti-feminist and sexist resistance to feminist discourses about gender inequality. When they are coupled together, the lack of critical and institutional orientations in popular television journalism and anti-feminism present major obstacles to the introduction of gender sensitive journalism to the mainstream television media.

## **Chapter 7: Journalists' Accounts of their Work: Factors that Advance or Hinder Gender Sensitive Journalism**

### **7.1. Introduction**

So far, I examined the ways in which the elements of gender sensitive journalism were present in, or missing from, the particular television programmes selected as relevant to my research into gender sensitive journalism and television media in Serbia and Croatia. Through critical discourse analysis of four popular talk shows and different informative formats produced by pro-feminist journalists, I looked at the ways in which 'women's issues', participation and representations were informed by sexist and feminist discourses in these programmes, but also at how different journalistic professional values, such as balance of views or personalization, shaped their potential for gender sensitive journalism. In this chapter, I take the examination of the factors that advance or hinder gender sensitive journalism further. I pursue this question by analyzing the interviews with six Serbian and nine Croatian journalists, who worked as producers or editors for the television programmes I focus on in my research.<sup>60</sup>

Extending Djerf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson's (2004) argument about the place of women in the news – as shaped by notions about gender, particular journalistic paradigms and the agency of individual women and men – in Chapter 2 I propose that the main factors that inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media are: discourses about gender and feminism; professional journalistic values within different types of journalism, such

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<sup>60</sup> See Chapter 4 for elaboration on the rationale behind the selection of the interviewees and the discussion of the research process.

as committed and neutral, or institutional and popular; and feminist media activism. Following this assertion, I examine the Serbian and Croatian journalists' accounts of their work to find out how these three factors inform their understanding of, and approaches to, particular elements of gender sensitive journalism, such as coverage of 'women's issues' and advancement of women's participation in the media.

## 7.2. Discourses about Gender and Feminism

My analysis of the interviews with the Serbian and Croatian television journalists confirms the claim that discourses about gender and feminism are very important in terms of journalists' understanding of, and willingness to engage with, aspects of gender sensitive journalism. This influence comes about in three ways. Firstly, journalists' dispositions towards discourses about gender and feminism influence their interest in including elements of gender sensitive journalism in their work. Secondly, discourses about gender and feminism shape journalists' understanding of 'women's issues'. Thirdly, their awareness of the dominant discourses about gender and feminism affects the ways in which they approach women- and gender-related issues as they try not to alienate the audience through 'too aggressive' feminist stances.

In Chapter 2, I argued that there are two dimensions to gender sensitive journalism or any other project that aims to tackle the problem of discrimination against traditionally marginalized and under-privileged groups in the media. Gender sensitive journalism aims to ensure equal provision for women in terms of the coverage of issues of concern to them, as well as their greater participation across the board and more diverse representations, but also to eliminate



various forms of sexism from the media. Journalists' dispositions towards discourses about gender and feminism inform their approaches to the two dimensions of gender sensitive journalism. This is most visible with regard to their understanding of the issues of gender inequality and discrimination and in terms of their approach to sexist discourses about women.

While journalists who collaborate with women's NGOs, as well as those talk show journalists who engage with investigative journalism in the Croatian talk show *Latinitsa*, see gender inequality as an important social problem, a minority of popular talk show journalists minimize its scale or even question its existence. In the first group, a producer of *Latinitsa* (HRT) says she covers gender discrimination "because you feel that every day" (Journalist 8). Another journalist, a producer of the Serbian *B92 Investigates* documentary series, says she wants to give the data about gender inequality to women so that they will not accept discrimination or violence any more and know that they can change their lives (Journalist 3).

In the second group, two journalists addressed the issue of gender inequality and discrimination by either minimizing its extent or doubting its existence. Thus, a producer of the Serbian talk show *Pyramid* (TV Pink), minimizes the scale of gender inequality by suggesting that this problem is limited to the rural areas (Journalist 4). In another example of this approach, a producer of the Serbian talk show *Key* (RTS) expresses her stance towards coverage of gender discrimination like this, while talking about an episode of *Key* on successful women:

Sincerely...my goal wasn't either to discourage [women] or to point out that there is inequality, but to show that there are situations where inequality is an excuse for not doing enough...primarily among women (...) and that they have to fight by seeing that there are some good examples, that there are women who didn't give up, or they had a lot of luck, but they exist and they are successful. (Journalist 2a)

As these different comments show, critical awareness of gender inequality, or the lack of it, clearly influences the extent to which journalists will seek to confront the problem of gender inequality through their work or will not.

In a different way, this is also visible in the interviewees' take on sexist discourses about women. Majority of my interviewees were aware of sexist gender ideologies and some wanted to counter them. This was usually understood as countering prejudices and stereotypes about women. For instance, as a producer of *B92 Investigates* says, she wants to show women in different professions, including women in the traditionally male professions such as army or pilots, so that "a four year old girl would have something else in her repertoire except for actresses and singers" (Journalist 3). However, a minority of my interviewees, who were talk show journalists working for the Croatian daytime talk show *Sanya* and the Serbian evening talk show *Key*, differed from this approach.

Thus, a producer of *Sanya* says that any "unorthodox approach to female beauty, "any questioning of the idea that women should wear make up and look good" would not be accepted in the environment created by that daytime talk show (Journalist 10). This journalist seemed discontent with what she named as the prevalence of neoconservative discourses about women in her programme, but largely complied with what she saw as the limitation in terms of the scope of the 'acceptable' ways of talking about women in that particular programme. She particularly seemed unhappy with the number of journalists and guests who discussed women- and gender-related issues from the perspective of the Catholic Church, but often felt outnumbered. However, in addition to compliance, journalists' unawareness of sexism certainly presents another hurdle standing in a way of any change towards more gender sensitive journalism. For example, talking about her episodes about gender and women, a producer of *Key* (RTS) says how she wanted to

make an episode about ‘public women’. However, she defines ‘public women’ not as agents in the public sphere but as wives and girlfriends of famous men, women “who exist in this world only because they are with someone” (Journalist 2a) Accordingly, her programme regularly allows even derogatory statements about women as my analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 shows.

Such journalists’ dispositions towards sexist or feminist discourses about gender also inform the ways in which they define and approach ‘women’s issues’. In Chapter 2, I argued that there are three different ways of understanding the concept of ‘women’s issues’. I named these: ‘feminine’, i.e. traditionally defined women’s concerns as pertaining to women’s duties and interests in the private sphere; ‘female’, i.e. the cases where women are specifically affected by different phenomena and therefore coverage of those issues is of particular relevance to them; and feminist, which involve issues related to different forms of gender inequality (Chapter 2). I argued that gender sensitive journalism involves coverage of ‘female’ and feminist issues, but does not follow the understanding of ‘women’s issues’ that limits women’s interests to the private sphere. My interviewees’ understanding of ‘women’s issues’ largely corresponds to ‘feminine’ and ‘feminist’ definitions of ‘women’s issues, but shows additional nuances within the categories. ‘Feminine’ issues include two sub-categories, whereas feminist issues are defined in more and less explicit terms.

‘Women’s issues’ were defined in ‘feminine’ terms most explicitly by journalists who worked on commercial channels’ daytime talk shows, Croatian *Sanya* (RTL) and Serbian *Catherine* (TV FOX). Answering my question whether *Catherine* is a women’s programme in her view, she says that while not all topics are oriented towards women, the programme largely follows the concept of women’s magazines: “There are stories about clothes, kitchen, celebrities. These are the things because of which women will buy a magazine or watch a show” (Journalist

15). In the case of *Sanya*, a producer explicitly links the themes covered by her talk show to women's magazines and says that is how RTL TV saw the themes that *Sanya* should cover:

They [RTL] chose me ... although I never worked on television before but I exclusively worked in women's magazines. I was the provider of content and it wasn't important that I didn't have television experience; it was much more important that I understood women's magazines' themes and that we should try to follow that. (Journalist 10)

Within 'women's issues' understood in 'feminine' terms, the topic of male-female relationships is particularly seen as interesting to audience because it concerns them directly, they can identify with what is said and everybody has an opinion about that.

In addition, two interviewees who worked on the talk show programmes discussed women-related issues more in terms of the commercial exploitation of female sexuality. Journalists who worked for the Serbian talk show *Key* (RTS) and the Croatian talk show *Sanya* (RTL) gave the following examples of this group of women-related issues: a Croatian female pop star's Internet porn scandal; women who use their bodies and sexuality as a source of income, status or publicity; or 'curiosities' like the results of a German research which show that men who stare at big female breasts for 10 minute a day live longer. Talking about episodes with high ratings, the producer of the Croatian talk show *Sanya* (RTL), makes the connection between the exploitation of female sexuality and commercial interests explicit:

In principle, episodes with high ratings were all those which had...let's say...some element...how should I say it nicely...some element of sexual provocation. For example: 'In big breasts I gaze, in order to extend my days'. (...) And that had extremely high ratings. We had some women with big breasts and men...so, how they react...but in a humorous way. (...) Then we had 'Such a lot of money for a bit of lingerie'. Whether men like thongs, whether they prefer certain bras; and then we of course had girls who walked around in lingerie. That was watched by an enormous number of people. (Journalist 10)

While various interviewees have also mentioned other ways to ensure high ratings, which I discuss later, exploiting (female) sexuality is clearly seen as one of the ways to achieve this goal in the case of these two talk show journalists.

In the feminist category, journalists grounded their coverage of ‘women’s issues’ in concerns of women’s NGOs. A producer of the documentary series *Speck of Respect* (RTS, Serbia) says that she explored women’s status in different areas “as they are categorized in women’s NGOs’ seminars” (Journalist1b) Another interviewee, a producer of *Good Morning Croatia* (HRT) says something similar:

Diverse women’s groups contacted us regarding their seminars and activities. Much of our content actually arose from our collaboration with various NGOs, including women’s NGOs. (Journalist 11)

Among these themes, domestic and sexual violence against women has received by far the most attention according to all the Serbian and Croatian interviewees who said they covered this type of themes. In addition to that issue, a couple of Croatian journalists said they also often covered the issue of gender discrimination in employment. A large part of the remaining coverage consists of reporting on women’s NGOs’ activities and incidents of gender based discrimination and violence. Finally, several journalists covered these issues either by examining women’s status in diverse areas, such as politics, economy or the media, or by discussing women’s rights regarding specific issues such as abortion.

However, some journalists who define ‘women’s issues’ in this way address their coverage not with regard to feminism but in relation to more neutral journalistic notions about the relevance of certain issues. What matters here is an item’s relevance for a certain population and not specifically for women, as a Croatian producer at the talk show *Latinitsa* (HRT) explained (Journalist 8). Sometimes, defining ‘women’s issues’ in this way is a strategy aimed at

presenting feminist issues as relevant to the whole society and not only to women. Some journalists believe that presenting these issues as feminist or women's is dangerous, as issues of concern to women can then seem particularistic and less important. Because of this, a Croatian informative journalist (HRT) is against naming these issues as feminist:

Division into feminist and non-feminist themes, that is like something marginal (...) No, we are talking about our life, we are saying that a man killed his wife; that doesn't have anything to do with a feminist approach. That is a crime and society should see it as a crime. (Journalist 13)

Another HRT informative journalist also mentioned how she presents these issues as social issues to her colleagues when s/he wants to stress their relevance (Journalist 7).

This and the following examples show that even when journalists genuinely want to cover 'women's issues' in feminist terms, certain notions of femininity and negative discourses about feminism inform their approach. In my interviews, the most widely mentioned negative idea about feminism affecting the coverage of gender inequality was that some feminists were aggressive. A producer of the Croatian talk show *Latinitsa*, for instance, said how women from the women's NGOs were sometimes too aggressive. Replying to my question if they were more aggressive than many men who appeared in his/her programme, he said:

No, but it is not expected...You know what the problem is...There are many men who are belligerent in the same way, but that is not expected from women. What is expected is a calmer, softer approach, you know. (Journalist 9)

Although not all journalists mentioned this explicitly, a notion that potential aggressive excess should be watched when covering gender based violence and discrimination was present as a motif in several interviews. This shows the extent to which even journalists who want to advocate against gender discrimination internalize negative discourses about feminism in their attempts to win over the viewers. The fear of driving viewers away and irritating them is most

commonly mentioned in relation to this issue. I shall come back to this later when I discuss the ways in which the perceived audiences' interests affect journalists' approach to 'women's issues' and participation.

Another negative idea about feminism, which appeared in the interviews, concerns the opposition between feminism and femininity. A Croatian public television journalist, who has done a lot to increase coverage of women's NGOs on HRT, says that what she finds annoying about feminism is its refusal of certain aspects of femininity such as beauty for instance (Journalist 11). She feels that feminists advocate for a crippling version of femininity and that instead, all aspects of femininity should be equally legitimate. In a more anti-feminist version of this criticism, a producer of the Serbian *Catherine* (TV FOX), believes that the media should advocate for gender equality and that a way to do that is by affirming women but not feminism:

But I want to make it clear (...) I am not in favour of feminist movements which will appear in the media every day and say that a woman must do this or that because that doesn't make a woman a woman. A woman must show that she is a woman in a different way: by appearing in the media elegantly dressed and behaving like a lady (...) And on the other hand, she'll say that she has a good job and a career but she's also realized as a mother and a housewife... That is a strong woman and these women should appear every day and talk about their lives. (Journalist 15)

In the name of safeguarding the 'true' femininity, feminism is in this case rejected and substituted for the affirmation of 'successful women', which is then seen as the acceptable expression of support for gender equality.

At the most basic level of individual journalists as communicators of discourses, these different examples show how the presence or absence of journalists' commitment to gender equality, their specific gender identifications or internalization of particular notions about women or feminism, all affect the ways in which they are likely to approach 'women's issues',

participation and representations in their every-day practice. Most journalists who collaborate with women's NGOs are explicitly pro-feminist and actively pursue aspects of gender sensitive journalism through their work.

In Chapters 6 I discussed some of their work where they critically examine different forms of gender inequality and provide coverage for women's NGOs' activities and concerns. A minority of journalists who are sympathetic to women's NGOs' causes, do not see themselves as pro-feminist activists but see their critical coverage of gender inequality in terms of its relevance to women as any other group of citizens. This group includes journalists who work for the Croatian evening talk show *Latinitsa*. However, even in the case of these two groups of journalists, their awareness of the negative discourses about feminists as aggressive sometimes makes them cautious about claims or particular feminist guests that in their view might be perceived as too aggressive by the viewers.

Gender sensitive approaches to 'women's issues', participation and representations are limited or absent in the case of other Serbian and Croatian talk show journalists for several reasons. In the case of the two daytime talk show journalists, critical approaches to gender relations are limited as the shows pursue the sexist notion of 'women's issues' as pertaining to appearance and domesticity. That is why the Croatian journalist who worked for *Sanya* thinks that questioning the importance of beauty for women would be unacceptable in that programme, whereas /her Serbian colleague supports media advocacy against gender inequality as long as the notions that motherhood, appearance and domesticity are essential components of womanhood remain intact. In the case of the producers who work for the Serbian talk shows *Key* (RTS) and *Pyramid* (TV Pink), their inclination to minimize the existence of gender inequality results in a lack of interest in engaging with gender inequality in and through the media. This is



accompanied by the lack of awareness of sexism (or homophobia), even in the case of derogatory statements about women, as is visible in the case of the producer of *Key*. I shall come back to the issue of the unawareness of derogatory meanings of certain statements about women in general, or lesbian women (and men) in particular, later when I discuss journalists' understanding of 'balance of views'.

### 7.3. Professional Journalistic Values

While my interviewees included both journalists who worked on popular talk shows and those who worked for different types of informative or infotainment formats, my analysis shows that they work with many similar professional values but apply them differently depending on their disposition towards discourses on gender and feminism and their dominant orientation towards a particular type of journalism. Thus, although pro-feminist journalists are sometimes limited by the professional criteria for the selection of topics and sources, they often make an effort to formulate their interest in covering 'women's issues' in line with the professional requirements. Conversely, journalists who are not interested in countering gender inequality in and through the media refer to the professional criteria as reasons for their lack of engagement with this area. At the same time, journalists often have a mixture of orientations towards different types of journalism, e.g. committed and neutral or institutional and popular, which leads them to negotiate between them in their coverage of 'women's issues' or in their approach to women's participation in the media.

### 7.3.1. *Hierarchy of 'hard' and 'soft' issues*

Several pro-feminist journalists pointed out that the pressure to cover politics means that some other issues, including 'women's issues', are neglected. Talking about how her documentary on sex trafficking will be shown only after the elections, a producer of *B92 Investigates* (TV B92, Serbia) says: "Unfortunately, politics is here catastrophe, [it's] the main thing" (Journalist 3). Her Croatian colleague, a producer of *Latinitsa* (HRT), comments on this aspect too: "Politics is still more important than what you eat, who you live with, who you sleep with and so on" (Journalist 12). These comments reflect the problems pro-feminist journalists may have to push for more coverage of 'women's issues' due to the gendered hierarchy between the 'hard news' and 'soft news', which marginalizes women's concerns as their lives have traditionally been tied to the private sphere and privileges the field of official politics which is still dominantly male (See Chapter 2).

But privileging 'hard news' with regard to journalists' perception of the relevance of themes can also work in favour of the greater coverage of 'women's issues' once they are a part of official politics. Thus, another producer of *B92 Investigates* says that one of the reasons for the increase in the coverage of violence against women in Serbia were the new laws that regulate that area (Journalist 5). Similarly, a Croatian pro-feminist producer (HRT) says that 'women's issues' became somewhat more popular once political parties got involved with them (Journalist 7). The extent to which gender politics and issues of concern to women are present in the official politics is thus an important factor influencing the extent of their coverage in the media. This is borne out by my programme analysis: In Croatia, where the issue of gender inequality has been more present in the official politics than in Serbia, institutional and political perspectives on

issues related to gender inequality are present in the popular talk shows more than in the similar Serbian programmes.

### 7.3.2. *Novelty and topicality*

Novelty and topicality are professional values that, on the evidence of my interviews, journalists often understand and bend in accordance with their overall perception of the importance of a topic. Thus, pro-feminist journalists argue in favour of covering issues such as gender inequality by referring to their novelty and look for the ways to make them more topical. Conversely, journalists who are not interested in these issues mention these same values as reasons against their coverage. For example, when a Serbian pro-feminist journalist (RTS) proposed a documentary series about gender inequality to her superiors, she stressed that “it’s a new and important theme,” that “no one has covered that, no one has dealt with this issue” (Journalist 1a). In an opposite example, as she told me, his/her colleague rejected a news item about a man who killed his wife, explaining her decision in a following way: “What kind of news is that? It happens every day” (Note 3).

While there is room for maneuver with regard to the novelty of issues, pro-feminist journalists do occasionally have to explain to their colleagues why they want to cover particular ‘women’s issues’ *again*, as they already covered them before. For example, a Croatian journalist (HRT) tells how she explains to his/her colleagues why violence against women should be covered again:

Colleagues sometimes joke with me and say ‘Oh, again you and your women’, but I tell them ‘Yes, but what did we achieve since the last time we covered that or what happened in the last year? Let’s see if there is anything new, why a women’s safe house is being closed, why they can’t get money, why the city promised one thing but did another. And in that way I don’t have any problems [to cover these issues]. (Journalist 7)

The professional value of novelty can, however, hinder coverage of issues of concern to women since it can be antithetical to a prolonged coverage. This is important because, as a producer of *B92 Investigates* emphasizes, only a long and sustained coverage of issues such as violence against women can have any effects (Journalist 5).

The notion that journalists should cover topical issues also works to constrain coverage of ‘women’s issues’. As a Croatian pro-feminist journalist (HRT) says, her programme is closely tied to daily events, but in addition to covering ‘events’ the programme also has a slot for ‘themes’, i.e. features that deal more generally with a range of issues (Journalist 7). While she sees coverage of ‘events’ as the area where she has less freedom, she stresses that there is more room for ‘women’s issues’ within ‘themes’. While this is particularly true for journalists working on informative programmes, talk show journalists also stress that very often their episodes are based in topical issues and events. External occasions for covering ‘women’s issues’, therefore, matter a great deal to those journalists who are committed to advocacy of gender equality in their work. A Serbian pro-feminist journalist (RTS), thus, says that she covers ‘women’s issues’ whenever she has a reason: “when there’s a press conference or a report or an incident” (Note 16). Other journalists also mention that they cover these issues on occasion of relevant dates such as March 8<sup>th</sup> or 16 days of activism against VAW and when there are women’s NGOs’ actions and reports, new laws, or incidents of violence or discrimination. The extent of women’s NGOs’ and other organizations’ activities related to women and gender issues is thus an important factor in terms of greater or lesser coverage of these issues.

However, like with novelty, topicality also proves to be flexible as once again journalists address this requirement according to their overall disposition towards gender discourses. A Serbian talk show journalist (TV Pink), who earlier minimized the extent of gender inequality,

transferred the responsibility for choosing issues from him/herself to the objective notion of ‘events’:

The concept of the programme is that the themes are always events and news. So, themes...the editor cannot just come up with them because he thinks that women’s rights or the lack of visual arts in the media are the themes that society should deal with. Ergo, I don’t have that freedom at all nor anyone who would edit *Pyramid*, nor the team behind me. The themes are always events and that is the rule of the format. (Journalist 4)

A lack of events related to certain themes is mentioned here as a reason for their lack in the programme and that excuse is used here to explain the absence of themes such as women’s rights in this talk show. Conversely, journalists who are interested in covering ‘women’s issues’, tell of situations where they find ‘events’ and create topicality. A producer of *B92 Investigates* says, for instance, that when she finished her documentary on sex trafficking she made it more topical by connecting it to the approaching World Football Championship, as there was a lot of talk at the time that the tournament will exacerbate the volume of trafficking (Journalist 3).

A Croatian pro-feminist journalist (HRT) addresses this issue in professional terms as well and relates it to the problem of poor development of investigative journalism. “As a journalist you have to search for things because not everything will come on a plate to you (...) You can make everything into news but you have to get to that news” (Journalist 13). The problem that she detects is poignant, as my interviewees differ in terms of whether they look for their topics in the other media or they see their task as journalists in broaching new issues. In the case of the quoted Serbian talk show journalist (*Pyramid*), he also said that the process of choosing the events consists of following all other media to find the most interesting events (Journalist 4). In yet another example of this, a producer of the Croatian talk show *Sanya* says they covered those feminist themes, such as violence against women or gender discrimination in

employment, which were already present and topical in other media (Journalist 10). Being aware of this, some of the interviewed journalists, who are committed to covering women- and gender-related issues, believe that their coverage of these issues spilled over to other programmes on their television channel and other media. Some of them, like journalists of *Latinita*, even see the spreading of certain issues into the other media as one of the goals in their work.

### 7.3.3. *Impartiality and balance of views*

Journalists' ideas about their professional obligations with respect to balance and impartiality also have a significant impact on their coverage of 'women's issues'. While journalists talk about impartiality regarding their position towards different perspectives, they discuss balance with respect to the inclusion of diverse and opposite views on various issues. In the case of the journalists who critically covered gender equality, some of them felt compelled to give disclaimers and explain how that does not affect their impartiality. A producer of *Latinita* (HRT) thus explains how she objects to 'black and white' approaches and disagrees with some women's NGOs who argue that women are only victims of domestic violence and never perpetrators. She says:

You know what I dislike...I am a woman and I'll advocate for women's rights when I think that women are threatened. But at the same time, I'll defend rights of a man, when I think that he's threatened. [Otherwise] it's like an argument that you cannot commit a crime in a defensive war. In the same way, a woman is not always right. (Journalist 8)

Similarly, other two HRT journalists supportive of women's NGOs' causes, also make disclaimers and say that they never were advocates of one sex only, that they do show when a woman makes a mistake, but that at the same time they push for more coverage of gender inequality and violence against women (Journalists 6 and 7). As these examples show, some

journalists who engage with rights and concerns of particular social groups seem to feel the need to stress that that does not make them partial and to emphasize their professionalism by stating that they scrutinize the members of that group as well.

A related idea about journalists' obligation to provide viewers with a balance of different perspectives informs their choices in terms of guests and their positions regarding 'women's issues'. Generally speaking, my interviewees mention several reasons why providing balance between different views is a good journalistic practice. They say that different views are good material for a discussion, we can learn something from a disagreement, there is a widespread perception that quarrels are good for ratings, and a dialogue is necessary when there is a disagreement about some issue in society. In addition, as a producer of *Catherine* (TV FOX) says, as a journalist she is obliged to present diverse views to the viewers so that viewers can choose for themselves (Journalist 15). While my interviewees provided this set of reasons why there should be a balance of views, a question of limitations of this balance was much more difficult to answer. In the interviews, I discussed this issue with journalists particularly in relation to the coverage of issues such as gender discrimination or violence against women. My aim was to understand why and how they thought that even these issues should be covered from the opposite perspectives, which often means that participants who deny gender inequality or endorse sexist discourses about women are included in the name of the balance of views (Chapters 5 and 6).

Interviewed journalists mainly stress two reasons for inclusion of opposite sides in media discussions about 'women's issues' such as gender-based discrimination, rights and violence. Firstly, their perception that there is no social consensus around these issues is a major reason why journalists believe that public dialogue, which is facilitated by the media, is necessary with

respect to these issues. Second, as many of them stress, without including ‘all sides’ they cannot depict a problem and present ‘a real picture’ of it. Accordingly, most of my interviewees believe that even parties who support discriminatory discourses should be part of the dialogue in the media. While they largely share these professional reasons for including opposite sides, they differ in terms of their position with respect to the parties involved. What the interviews show is that the way in which journalists will treat anti-discriminatory and discriminatory discourses about women will depend on their understanding of their professional duties as journalists and on their disposition towards discourses about gender and feminism.

In line with the ‘neutral’ type of journalism, the producer of the Serbian talk show Catherine (TV FOX) explains that her opinion does not matter in this situation, but that her task is to invite different parties who will confront each other and viewers can then draw conclusions from their arguments. That is why she thinks that when it comes to an issue of gender discrimination both those who advocate against it and those who deny its existence should be given equal time in the programme to explain their views. Conversely, the interviewees who pursue the committed type of journalism believe that they need to have a position with respect to issues such as discrimination and violence. For example, a producer of *B92 Investigates* criticizes journalists who do not have their own opinion and because of that they include an abuser and an abused woman as two equally legitimate sides (Journalist 3).

Similarly, most of those journalists who have clear critical commitments, say they would include discriminatory views in their programme primarily to confront them. While they also believe that as journalists they should not take side of particular guests/sources in the course of studio discussions, the way they confront discriminatory discourses is through an overall conceptualization of the programme. As another B92 journalist explains, when sources who deny



(gender) discrimination or advocate against certain (women's) rights are included, a journalist should conceptualize a programme either to show the denied problem through features or by creating a particular ratio of guests in the studio where majority would hold anti-discriminatory views (Note 18). By inviting more guests with views that a programme supports and by depicting a problem under discussion through features, the programme would try to make discriminatory discourses or denials of discrimination meaningless.

The ways in which derogatory statements about women or other social groups are included in the programme also depend on the gender politics of particular journalists, programmes and the media. Talking about the conditions under which she would keep such statements in her documentaries, a producer of *B92 Investigates* says that she would keep them only if it was abundantly clear from the rest of the content that that is not the position of the programme (Journalist 3). The reasons why she would include them are twofold. She says that derogatory statements about women can sometimes explain and illustrate the reasons for the marginalization of women. For example, when she made a documentary about women and the media she interviewed a prominent female journalist who always had very few female sources. She was interested why that was so. In the interview, the journalist expressed her dislike for female sources and eventually said that when you have more than three women the studio is like a henhouse. This statement, as the producer says, provided her with an answer: "Aha, that's why you don't have many women in your programme." The second reason why she would keep statements like this is when they are coming from people who should be held accountable for holding discriminatory views given their position as doctors, politicians, social workers etc. Her reasons were echoed by some of the other interviewed pro-feminist journalists.

In other cases, the lack of awareness or clear policy were the reasons why derogatory statements about women or other social groups were left in the programme. A Serbian producer of the talk show *Key* (RTS) says she did not react when guests said something sexist or homophobic if s/he did not recognize that as derogatory at the time (Journalist 2b). While other talk show journalists also say that in quick discussions sometimes a journalist does not manage to respond timely to such statements, the derogatory statements about women or gays and lesbians are fairly explicit in *Key* as my analysis of the programme shows. In the interview, the journalist's comment about not recognizing derogatory statements was given in relation to the following three cases. In the first case, a male guest said to a woman in the programme that she is a status symbol of her boyfriend; in the second case, a male psychologist said that women loose value with age if they do not get married by thirty; and in the third case, two guests said that no one normal would want to have gay people as their neighbours.

While the lack of awareness of derogatory discourses is a problem in this case, even when a journalist recognizes something as derogatory such statements can still be kept in the programme if there is not a clear political commitment to leave them out or to interrogate them. A producer of the Croatian talk show *Sanya* (RTL) recalled a case when a male guest attacked a feminist woman in the studio and told her that no one would want her given how she looks (Journalist 10). She says that that shocked her, she felt very uncomfortable and she even thought that that should be cut out in editing. Eventually, it stayed in because an organizer told her that they should not waste more time on editing than they need to, especially given that the feminist woman did not seem particularly upset to him. As all these examples show, journalists will be very careful about derogatory statements about women only if a commitment to gender equality

is one of their genuine priorities. When ratings are a priority, other commitments are just not important enough.

#### 7.3.4. *Public and audiences' interests*

Another two major criteria journalists refer to when they talk about their coverage of 'women's issues' are their professional obligations in terms of serving public interest, on the one hand, and ideas about audiences' interests, on the other hand. That is, journalists account for their decisions in terms of two broad types of journalism: institutional and popular (Chapter 2). Their motivation to critically cover 'women's issues' is, thus, not informed only by the level of their involvement in women's activism but by their broader ideas about what professional duty and success are in journalism: raising socially relevant issues and/or getting high ratings.

Thus, a Croatian journalist (HRT), who was awarded by Women's Network of Croatia for gender sensitive journalism, says she does not see herself as Rosa Luxembourg standing on the barricades but that "she was only doing her job." She explains:

I believe that is a normal part of my job, that it is my duty as a citizen and especially as a professional journalist to talk about something that I believe is a problem. And as long as there is such an imbalance with respect to the problems that women have and problems that men have, it seems to me very normal that I should talk about those problems and cover them. (Journalist 13)

Idea that journalists are responsible for raising awareness about problems of discriminated groups was mentioned by all interviewees, except for the two producers of talk shows shown on commercial television channels, Croatian *Sanya* (RTL) and Serbian *Pyramid* (TV Pink) who said that covering gender inequality or opening social themes is not on their agenda, but might be present in the background (Journalists 10 and 4). In the case of some journalists working on public television channels, they also related the coverage of issues such as women's NGOs' activities and

gender inequality to the legal obligations of public service broadcasters. Journalists who were committed to covering these issues phrased their goals in terms of their contribution to social change by: raising public awareness of violence against women, motivating women to take action, uncovering institutional failures in implementing laws concerning gender based violence and discrimination and most ambitiously, forcing politicians to take measures when these laws are not implemented.

Nevertheless, these duties are most often balanced with what journalists think interests viewers. A reporter working for *Latinita* (HRT) and a producer of *Key* (RTS) gave almost identical replies when they explained the way their programme combine themes. The first journalist says:

The position of our team is that we cover some socially relevant issues. For example, single parents are always a socially relevant theme. Maybe ‘weddings’ are a bit less relevant but they are interesting to watch. I don’t know if you were told that the episode on weddings had extremely high ratings (...) So, these are the things that interest people. Therefore, we cover what people are interested in, what we are interested in (...) and what we think is socially relevant in that moment. (Journalist 12)

While most interviewed journalists stress that raising viewers’ interest is one of their most important aims, in some of the cases this makes ratings the most important criterion in assessing the value of certain themes. It is clear from my interviews that ratings matter not only in commercial channels where high ratings are seen as a matter of survival, but also in public channels. But what made interviewees’ accounts in this regard different, was that only a minority of them approached socially relevant issues, including gender inequality, in terms of their ratings. In these cases, gender inequality, or for that matter ecology or disability, just do not seem interesting enough.

The producer of *Sanya* (RTL) thus recounts that whenever she suggested to her RTL superiors in Germany that s/he would like to cover issues such as disability, they would respond: “Who wants to watch that?” (Journalist 10) They would accept a theme if she could explain how that will be appealing to viewers. The producer later explains that she would not address gender inequality explicitly as she thinks that people in her audience would not care about that because they think that gender equality was achieved a long time ago. Instead, she is in favour of addressing these issues as part of episodes about male-female romantic relationships because that concerns audience directly “and it is not a matter of statistics or good intentions.” Similarly, the producer of *Key*, which is shown on the Serbian public channel, evaluates gender-related themes in terms of the ratings:

If you name a theme ‘gender inequality’, viewers are then not really interested...’cause every time you get ratings and all those episodes that dealt with the position of women had very poor ratings. But if you package [gender-related themes] into episodes about kept women, prostitution, Severina [pop star porn scandal] and you invite appealing guests who support their ideologies, then you get much more interest. (Journalist 2a)

Later on, in the interview, this producer explains that issues such as ‘women in politics’ have been done to death without any results and that these issues are “very boring to the viewers, viewers’ hair raises when they hear them.” In the case of these two journalists, who have to or want to achieve high ratings, the perceived audiences’ dislike for issues such as gender inequality results in their avoidance. There is clearly a correspondence between the journalists who see ratings as a criterion of their professional success and perception that issues such as gender discrimination are fatally boring or at least dangerous for ratings.

However, pro-feminist journalists also lead an implicit dialogue with the imagined negative responses to their coverage of gender inequality or violence against women. An

interesting example of this is an idea that women are to blame for the violence they endured, which is a common comment on this issue as my programme analysis shows. Because journalists are aware of such a possible response to their coverage of this issue, this idea slips into their discourse as they try to prevent such a reaction by arguing against it in advance. For example, talking about her usual way of raising her viewers interest in violence against women, a pro-feminist journalist (HRT) says: “And then you have a touching story: ‘Listen to what happened to her. *She didn’t make a single mistake* except that she married a wrong guy.’ And then she tells her story” (Journalist 7). Equally, committed journalists are also aware of negative ideas about feminists and that is one of the reasons why there is a widespread perception that the best way to address discrimination is by showing individual women’s problems and a concern that some women’s collectives that could be perceived as aggressive will drive viewers away.

Still, a difference should be made between seeing coverage of gender inequality as boring because that will not bring high ratings and being concerned that you will not achieve a goal of raising public awareness about something if your coverage provokes responses along the lines of derogatory ideas about women or feminism. In both cases though, as journalists try to foresee their viewers’ reactions and interests, decision-making is once more highly influenced by what journalists perceive to be common discourses about gender and feminism.

#### 7.3.5. *Personalization*

The journalists’ orientations towards institutional and popular journalism, or the mixture of both orientations, also inform their approaches to personalization, which in turn affects their approach to ‘women’s issues’ and participation (Chapter 2). According to most of my interviewees, stories about personal experiences are invariably an important part of their coverage of various problems and phenomena. For example, coverage of violence against

women always includes victims' stories. A kind of fascination with the appeal and emotional power of the stories told in first person is shared by all interviewed journalists, irrespective of the genre of their programme. Personal stories are told by 'ordinary people' and by celebrities, but while celebrities are mentioned as welcomed guests by the majority of talk show journalists, that is not the case with the interviewed informative journalists who do not invite celebrities. Depending on how these stories are introduced and combined with contributions by other types of guests, the trend of personalization either enables the presentation of connections between individual cases and a more structural and political analysis of problems or it leads to individualization of social inequalities.

A number of journalists committed to raising public awareness about gender inequality and violence against women, believe that the best strategy to raise viewers' interest in these problems, create empathy with victims, lessen prejudices against women or other marginalized groups, and depict a problem is by allowing victims or people from these groups to tell their story about their experience. A producer of *B92 Investigates* says that when she made a documentary that consisted only of three women's stories about their experience of domestic abuse, she wanted to raise public awareness of this problem by provoking an emotional reaction in viewers (Journalist 5). A Croatian producer for the media NGO Fade In, says she likes to make portraits of individual women, e.g. a portrait of a nurse, because she believes that this strategy is "not too invasive on patriarchal mind" and that that is perhaps the way to lessen prejudices (Journalist 14).

This strategy is in some ways similar to a previously mentioned common approach of some talk show journalists to address gender inequality by affirming successful women. Where the interviewed journalists differ is in whether personalization in their work leads to

individualization and depoliticization of social inequalities or is combined with a more structural analysis of, and an activist approach to, these problems. This difference largely depends on how journalists combine personal stories with contributions of other guests.

A real anxiety about experts is visible in the cases of those journalists who assessed their success in terms of high ratings. The producer of *Sanya* (RTL) says that they mainly limited expert advice to some episodes about problems, as their German RTL consultants wanted them to have only ‘ordinary people’ as guests and to keep down analysis, conclusions and lecturing as much as possible. Talking about different feminist guests they had, she makes a difference between good and bad ways of talking about these issues:

If you had some [feminists] who talked too theoretically, who used some terminology which is not understandable, who talked less about their own experience but made general points, then that wouldn’t be well received and you would feel that the audience [in the studio] wasn’t on their side. (...) But in case of some women, whose approach was more (...) personal, e.g. ‘Look, I have two children, it is very difficult, my husband helps me, we somehow manage, I work but...’, then that was well received. (Journalist 10)

In yet another example of ‘anxiety about experts’, the producer of *Key* (RTS) expresses her reservations about them by repeatedly saying that they are often boring, too theoretical, unclear and repetitive (Journalist 2b). She also stresses that in order to be a good speaker on television it is not enough to have expertise but that television requires the guests to be able to attract viewers, “to keep them glued to the screen.” Talking about the coverage of gender inequality, she says that one of the reasons why it is very difficult to cover that topic is because it is ‘too theoretical’ and there are very few people who could talk about that issue in an appealing way: it’s always just “bitter complaints.” A corollary of this approach is that personal stories of ordinary people and celebrities are seen as a recipe for success, which often disables a more analytical and politicized approach to these issues.



In an even more extreme example of the individualization of social and political issues, the producer of *Catherine* (TV Fox) says she is in favour of the media promoting gender equality but is emphatically against even a hint of politics in her daytime talk show (Journalist 15). She makes it clear that the principles of this daytime talk show were to discuss everyday problems but that there will be nothing that concerns political parties and political life in Serbia in this programme. Instead, the programme should promote gender equality by affirming strong women. In the case of *Sanya*, its producer says that they did invite women who worked in governmental and parliamentary committees for gender equality, but that they principally avoided them because they lectured a lot (Journalist 10). What this aversion to discussion about politics prevents is a discussion of the failures of institutions or any political action that would involve institutions.

Journalists who are committed to gender equality or see their work in terms of public interest usually situate personal stories in a broader context and are oriented towards interrogating governments and institutions with respect to problems of gender inequality and violence against women. While a couple of B92 journalists stress that sometimes personal stories are powerful and clear enough to stand on their own, the difference between this stance and the one discussed above is that there is no refusal of analysis, information and political discussion in this case. A B92 producer does say that women's personal stories about domestic violence were powerful and clear enough to stand on their own in her documentary, but she adds that this film was preceded by another documentary on the same topic which provided a broader context through interviews with experts, NGOs and representatives of institutions (Journalist 5). With minor exceptions, a combination of an ordinary person, expert, NGO member and someone from

a relevant institution is a standard mixture of sources/guests in the case of most of these interviewees.

Journalists of *Latinitsa* perhaps most forcefully express this stance. They stress that concrete stories are the foundations of the programme, but that then they build on that theoretically and politically. A producer of *Latinitsa*, explains their approach:

So, there is someone who tells their story...but if that story does not have a solution to the problem, if it is not heard by anyone from institutions, then it actually means nothing. (...) I really avoid exploiting a guest. The worst situation is if you exploited a guest (...) but you didn't help him/her. That's when you lose credibility. But if you bring an expert, if you bring someone from a ministry, if someone promises that they'll do something and eventually a problem is solved, then you're satisfied as well as your guest. (...) If you show people [in institutions] who made mistakes, by their name and surname, some sanctions still do follow...And after that, maybe someone will think twice before they send some woman away, instead of listening to her and helping her. (Journalist 8)

What these examples show is how journalists' position with respect to gender discourse, as well as their professional goals regarding public interest and commercial success, combine to lead to the politicization of personal stories or the individualization of gender inequality.

### 7.3.6. *Credibility of sources*

Answering the question about gender and selection of sources and guests, most journalists said they do not pay attention to gender of their sources but always choose the most credible and competent person. While pro-feminist journalists were very proactive in trying to cover issues such as gender based violence and discrimination, gender equality in selection of sources did not seem to be something they considered much in their work. The following answer by a Croatian pro-feminist journalist (HRT) is typical in this regard:

No, I can't say I pay attention to that (...) I haven't thought about that, but I can't say that I differentiate...that I would rather choose a woman than a man. No, I would rather take someone who's an expert in an area. If the biggest expert for

telecommunications is a woman, I'll take her. If the Head of the Governmental Committee for Human Rights is a man, I'll take him. So, I don't care if it's a woman or a man, what is important is the expertise in an area. (Journalist 7)

However, four of my interviewees said they do try to have greater balance in terms of gender of their sources and guests. There were two reasons mentioned behind that: countering marginalization of women in the media and achieving a balance between 'women's and 'men's' views on various issues.

Two Serbian pro-feminist journalists (RTS and TV B92) and a producer of Croatian *Latinitsa* (HRT) said that women are marginalized in the media and that is why they pay attention to gender of their sources and always try to include women as well (Note 16; Journalists 3 and 8). *Latinitsa's* journalist says how she always saves a couple of places in the studio for women, whereas B92 journalist says that whenever she has a man and a woman who are equally competent she tries to interview a woman in that situation. In the latter journalist's experience, women sometimes shy away from talking for television and want their male colleagues to be interviewed instead. As she takes quite a proactive stance in this regard, she tries to convince them to talk:

And then I insist that it should be her, because there are always more men. And I say 'Please, let's not...I already have a male source, wouldn't it be better if you as a female source talked too, as you already are in a [relevant] position and you have the knowledge to say something about this.'

However, the two Serbian journalists also stressed that often in daily informative journalism they have to opt for the immediately available source and do not have enough time to look specifically for women.

While marginalization of women as sources is a motive of these journalists to pay attention to gender, sometimes journalists are in favour of gender balance of their sources

because they believe that a programme is better if there is a mixture of femininity and masculinity. The producer of *Catherine* (TV FOX) says that they always try to have both genders because women and men have different views about all themes (Journalist 15). The producer of *Latinita* says that as a woman she finds a programme with men-only unacceptable and boring to the extent that she would change a channel (Journalist 8). Like her Serbian colleague, she believes that women and men approach issues differently and says that most of the times she finds women's approach closer to hers. She finds it difficult to explain why that is so but says that perhaps it is because women are more realistic, accessible and emotional than men and that "enriches" a programme. While this approach tries to achieve a balance in women's and men's perspectives, it borders on reification of gender differences when it explains differences in perspectives by referring to traditional properties of femininity and masculinity.

Finally, some journalists offered explanations for the extent of women's presence in their programme, which referred either to 'objective reality' or to gender discrimination. A prominent explanation in this regard suggests that women's presence in the media mirrors their presence in various other occupations and areas. The producer of the talk show *Pyramid* (TV Pink), says the media are not responsible for the small number of women in media discussions about politics, but that political parties are responsible for that because men dominate their higher ranks. In his view, the media only pick sources typical of a certain area:

I do not look at men and women differently. In show business, there are more women (...) I need a photo robot from that scene and when you look for someone there, in 9 out of 10 cases you will find a woman. When you look for a politician, in 9 out of 10 cases it will be a man. (...) The ratio is absolutely the same as it is in [these areas]. (Journalist 4)

Women's marginalization in areas such as politics is complemented by their dominance in some other areas. As several journalists stress, they did not pay attention to gender of their

guests/sources but they had more women because they dealt with issues such as children and relationships or social issues more generally, where as journalists perceive, there are more women who deal with them. While women's presence or absence in certain areas certainly affects their representation in the media, journalists' unawareness of their responsibility works to discursively maintain the status quo of gender segregation in the media along the lines of public/private division.

That there is more to women's presence in the media than their presence in certain areas, is visible from experiences of some journalists who say that women are sometimes more reluctant to speak for television because of the pressure that they should look pretty but also not be too feminine as that would draw attention away from their expertise. The two Serbian journalists who try to involve more women mention that women are sometimes anxious about being interviewed for television without having the time to attend to their appearance (Note 16; Journalist 3). At the same time, as they say, feminine appearance sometimes works against their credibility as experts since they are either not listened to or there are complaints that their hairstyle, earrings or scarves draw away attention from what they are saying. "There is a terror of beauty", says the B92 journalist, but also a pressure to conform to masculinity. "Why do I have to be in gray?" she asks, "Why can't I have my [feminine] style? But as soon as something is new, then people mind that, it diverts attention from the story and that's when objections [against women] start" (Journalist 3). These two journalists see these two kinds of pressures as one of the reasons for marginalization of female sources in the media.

#### 7.4. The Agency of Pro-feminist Journalists

As the previous section shows, pro-feminist journalists often have to negotiate their political commitments with the professional criteria for the selection of, and approach to, topics and sources. The hierarchy of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ news, journalistic orientation towards novelty and topicality, as well as journalists’ concerns over audiences’ reactions, all work to limit the opportunities for gender sensitive coverage of ‘women’s issues’. In addition, the professional norm of credibility of sources, which requires ‘gender neutrality’, limits the extent to which even many pro-feminist journalists try to increase the presence of female sources. Nevertheless, as my analysis of the interviews shows, most of these journalists actively try to increase the critical coverage of issues of concern to women in general, and feminist issues in particular. Moreover, many of them often find the ways to argue in favour of the gender sensitive coverage of ‘women’s issues’ in line with the professional values of journalism. A minority of them also tries to raise women’s participation in the media, consciously choosing female sources in situations where they find both men and women who are competent to talk about an issue.

Their agency certainly introduces aspects of gender sensitive journalism into the programmes for which they work. By extension, as journalists often look for their topics and sources in the other media, it can be also argued that pro-feminist journalists initiate further coverage of ‘women’s issues’ and the visibility of certain female/feminist sources in other programmes and the media. However, the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism on the levels of programme or television channel policy, depend on the influence of pro-feminist journalists within the particular television channels and the presence or the lack of the institutional support for the particular types of journalism that allow for gender sensitivity. In the cases that I examine, pro-feminist journalists were successful in their attempts to further gender

sensitive journalism in those television channels where they could draw on, or create, the institutional support for public service and investigative types of journalism.

Both in Croatia and Serbia, new media laws were adopted in 2002 and 2003, which required the transformation of the state television channels into the public service television (Chapter 3). According to the Croatian pro-feminist journalist with a senior position within the public channel, the newly posed obligations to HRT to provide public service were partly understood in terms of the coverage of civil society issues, including women's NGOs' concerns and activities (Journalist 11). Before, as she recalls, coverage of women's NGOs and issues such as violence against women and gender inequality was largely a matter of initiatives of several female journalists within HRT. A good example for this is collaboration between the programme *Good Morning Croatia*, where she worked before, and the NGO Fade In, created with the aim of promoting NGO causes through the media. As Fade In's journalist recalls, when their collaboration started in 2001, most journalists within GMC were not interested in NGO or 'women's issues' (Journalist 14). Therefore, the pro-feminist journalist who wanted to increase such coverage accepted Fade In's offer to provide this for GMC. In Fade In's journalist's view, GMC was the door through which Croatian NGO sector, including women's NGOs, went public. This production was partly financed by HRT, which bought Fade In's reports for GMC, but also from various NGO donators as HRT money was sufficient only for reports made in Zagreb.

However, in 2004, a question was raised about how the new status of HRT as the public service broadcaster will be implemented in terms of the programme policy. As the above mentioned pro-feminist journalist held a senior position at HRT, she conceptualized parts of the programme policy in line with the idea that public service should also involve the coverage of the NGO sector. With a team of associates, she conceptualized the Department of Mosaic

Programmes according to the format of the already existing morning magazine, *Good Morning Croatia*. As she says, the two defining features of programmes in this department were that they often dealt with civil society issues and that their approach was more accessible and intimate than in the traditional informative formats. These programmes approached the viewers as “a neighbour would talk to a neighbour.” But they also, in her view, opened the space for investigative journalism and many issues, such as sexuality, gender, and ethnic minorities. After this department was created, it became an umbrella department for some already existing critical programmes as well, such as *Latinita*.

Her account reveals several factors influencing the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in HRT. Its new legal status opened a question of how the channel fulfills public service role. This afforded the legal grounding and stronger legitimacy to those journalists who were interested in covering NGO issues and activities. Furthermore, as she and several other HRT journalists say, the political changes that happened in 2000 were instrumental with regard to the coverage of NGO issues in general, and ‘women’s issues’ in particular. Given the nationalist (gender) politics of the nineties (Chapter 3), NGO and ‘women’s issues’ were largely the preserve of *Good Morning Croatia* and *Latinita* then. But after 2000, barriers to NGOs’ presence in the media lessened and women- and gender-related issues gradually became more widespread and accepted. Due to the combination of these developments and her own senior position, she was able to introduce more systematic coverage of NGO-related matters. This was primarily achieved through the creation of the Department of Mosaic programmes, whose programmes were meant to regularly cover NGO issues. By defining the department’s public service provision in this way, she also enabled a greater coverage of ‘women’s issues’ and women’s participation in its programmes. Still, as the programme policies change from time to



time, and with them the structure of the departments, this is likely to be a temporary policy. It still shows that in order for gender sensitive journalism to be advanced at the policy levels, it takes a mixture of the influential pro-feminist journalists and the favourable institutional environment for the types of journalism that are compatible with gender sensitivity.

This is also visible from a different example of the Serbian pro-feminist journalist, working for the public channel RTS, who produced *Speck of Respect*, the series about gender inequality and women's status in different areas (Journalist 1a, 1b; Note 16). In her case, the presence or the lack of the institutional support was also crucial for her success or failures regarding the production of special programmes about 'women's issues'. While she had the support of the then television director to produce the series, she was completely ignored by the most powerful man within the channel, Aleksandar Tijanić, the Director General, and found little overall interest in this topic within RTS. The television director's support was important as it made the project possible at all. However, in terms of the subsequent treatment of the programme after it was produced, the journalist was left to her own devices and the series was largely marginalized. According to the journalist, the programme was not properly advertised on RTS, it was initially buried in the very late time slots and it was actually never given its regular time slot but was constantly moved around so it was very difficult to know when the next episode will be shown.

This treatment can be partly explained by the way in which the producer and her interest in the coverage of 'women's issues' were completely ignored by the Director General. As one of the episodes of the series dealt with women and the media, the producer sent a letter to Tijanić inviting him to participate in the programme as an interviewee. She never got any reply although she invited him to take part in the programme produced for 'his' television channel. She was

similarly treated by Tijanić again when she proposed to continue the series and work as someone who is specialized for the coverage of women's and different marginalized groups' concerns. The person who was crucial for approving her project proposal was the Director General. She sent her proposals on two occasions, in 2006 and 2007, and never got even a reply.

Such an approach to the coverage of 'women's issues' by the Director General can be partly explained by his publicly known stances about women and feminists. Tijanić has, for instance, described his own brand of journalism as "journalism with balls" and has been vocal in defending instances of sexism in the media, particularly with regard to women's NGOs 2003 lawsuit against TV Pink related to derogatory statements about women. In one of his defences of TV Pink's programme in question, Tijanić talks about women's NGOs in a following way:

How would Serbia look without Serbian men? Just a crowd of happy, fat, not depilated Serbian women. Hopelessly more open down than in their heads. All bought in the same shopping mall. Cohorts of vaginas in a destructive attack on anything that acknowledges logic and reason. Women's Gestapo system crews. (2004)

While I am not saying that such statements express RTS policy with regard to gender sensitive journalism, I do think that it would be very hard to imagine any programme politics aiming to critically interrogate gender inequalities in an institution where the man who holds such views has large amounts of power and is crucial in decision-making process.

In addition, such treatment should also be seen in the light of the problems with the transformation of the ex-state television channel into the public service television. In 2004, the management of the house and senior editors did tackle an issue of transformation into public service television in terms of its programme strategy. As an RTS senior editor recalls, one of the ways in which RTS management addressed this issue was by creating a special department called Programme Actions (Note 10). This department was meant to include channel's flagship

programmes, which were generically quite diverse, and satisfy three purposes: public service requirements; better thematic overview of these programmes; and higher ratings. As he says, the programmes in this department were meant to focus on some “serious, eternal themes” and be protected from the pressures of daily politics and event-oriented journalism characteristic of informative programmes.

However, an example of the analyzed evening talk show *Key*, one of the flagship programmes belonging to this department, suggests that the implementation of public service requirements is highly questionable (Chapters 5 and 6). While the interviewed producer of *Key* did stress that the programme covers some issues, such as disability, that no other television channels cover, she repeatedly evaluated different themes in terms of the ratings they can ensure. While she did not explicitly say she would not cover themes that get low ratings, her dislike for them was fairly clear. In terms of the coverage of ‘women’s issues’, as I noted before, she explicitly said that raising an awareness of gender inequality is not her intention. In addition, neither she nor the senior editor, mention coverage of NGOs as any particular concern within the public service remit. This declarative support for public service television is visible in other ways as well. For example, at the time of my fieldwork, RTS website stated that they have a new department for civil rights and national minorities, but when I tried to find this department it appeared that it did not exist!

Finally, the example of the pro-feminist B92 journalists also shows that aspects of gender sensitive journalism can become a part of a departmental or a channel’s policy when there is a combination of the influence of pro-feminist journalists and the institutional support. As B92 journalists’ accounts reveal, the coverage of ‘women’s issues’ has arisen from the interplay between the women’s NGOs’ media activism, individual journalists’ initiatives within B92, and

the way B92 journalists and management have understood and defined the profile of this television channel (Journalists 3 and 5). Two particular issues have received particular attention within TV B92 and have been dealt with at the level of the channel rather than at the level of individual journalists' initiatives. In 2006, B92 introduced the usage of feminine forms for female professionals and its informative journalists decided to systematically cover issues related to domestic violence.

In the first case, it all started after a B92 journalist attended NGO workshops about gender, sexuality and the media and subsequently produced a *B92 Investigates* documentary about this topic. As she became aware of some of the problems in this area, she raised the issue of sexism in language within her television channel. In particular, she and several of her colleagues who supported her addressed B92 management with regard to the usage of masculine nouns for female professionals on their television channel. According to the two interviewed B92 journalists, an interest in activism has been a part of the channel's identity because of their oppositional stance to the Serbian regime in the nineties. Thus, the management of B92 supported this initiative and decided to systematically attend to this aspect of language usage. This decision was then introduced in a top-down manner: Veran Matić, the director of B92, informed employees about this; meetings were held where this decision was explained; and a list of the most common nouns for female professions was drafted so journalists could consult proof readers if they were not sure about particular words.

In the second case, as the other B92 journalist recounts, the issue of ethics in covering domestic violence was raised after scandalous press coverage of the murder of a two-year old girl by her stepfather. After many negative reactions to such coverage, the NGO Center for professionalization of the media called a meeting where this issue was discussed. She and her

B92 colleagues attended the meeting and later on made a decision to systematically cover different types of domestic violence. In addition to this meeting, she also attended a workshop about sensitive approach to victims of incest, which was organized by the NGO Incest Trauma Center in Belgrade. Following this decision, s/he often covered violence against children and violence against women in the news and this work led her to produce two documentaries on VAW. Furthermore, as part of the decision to engage with the problem of VAW, B92 has initiated a fundraising campaign to finance a safe house in Belgrade.

Both journalists covered gender based discrimination and violence within news and B92 documentary series, *B92 Investigates*. The existence of this series within B92 television schedule is highly significant in this discussion as well. According to the second journalist, as B92 has been branded primarily as a channel with the strong informative programme, its informative programme was conceptualized to include particular elements important for its credibility: quality news, hard talk programme and investigative documentaries. The fact that B92 has had a time slot for in-house investigative documentaries has proved vital in terms of covering issues such as gender based inequality and violence, as it was within this programme that the two journalists had the opportunity to explore these issues in more depth than in short news items.

However, although this series is produced by B92, it is funded only partly through commercials but it largely depends on donations to B92. Furthermore, B92 advocacy against VAW and gender inequality in its informative programming is at odds with the rampant commercialization of its entertainment programme, which includes a number of reality shows that have been criticized for their sexist and homophobic content. For example, while B92 has covered issues such as discrimination against lesbians in the news, it also raised protests by Labris, the Belgrade based lesbian NGO, after participants of Big Brother made homophobic

comments on the show. Veran Matić, B92 director apologized for this, but the channel still remains weirdly schizophrenic in its programme policy with advocacy for social equality in its informative programmes and sexist and homophobic discourses in its entertainment programmes. Finally, due to the excessive commercialization of B92, programmes such as *B92 Investigates* perhaps have an uncertain future. As one of the producers says, there is money from donations for the programme at the moment, but that does not mean that in the future B92 management will not decide that producing documentaries is a too expensive way to retain credibility.

## 7.5. Conclusion

My analysis of the interviews with the Serbian and Croatian journalists shows that journalists' disposition towards discourses about gender and feminism is combined with their orientations to different types of journalism in ways that inform their interest or lack of interest in gender sensitive journalism. Pro-feminist journalists' interest in gender sensitive journalism comes from their critical approach to the problem of gender inequality. Conversely, journalists who minimize the problem of gender inequality or work for the programmes which are grounded in sexist definitions of 'women's issues, do not have gender sensitive journalism on their agenda. In both countries, the first group consists of those journalists who support women's NGOs' causes. They largely work for various informative formats, such as main news, regional and morning news and documentaries, but some of them work for talk shows at the Croatian public channel. The second group consists of other talk show journalists working for the Serbian and Croatian daytime talk shows at the commercial channels, and the two Serbian evening talk shows, *Key* at the public channel, and *Pyramid* at the commercial channel TV Pink.

The difference between the two groups also lies in the prevalence of the particular types of journalism in their work. Both groups of journalists will include ‘two sides’ in discussions about ‘women’s issues’, but while the committed, pro-feminist journalists confront participants with sexist perspectives, that is not the case with the second group who believe that journalists should be neutral or do not recognize the sexist or homophobic character of certain perspectives. Both groups aim to raise viewers’ interest through personalization in line with popular journalism, but while the first group does not shy away from analysis and political discussion, the second group reduces social and political problems to individual experiences. This happens for commercial reasons and/or because of the sexist approach to ‘women’s issues’ that excludes discussions of official politics. Similarly, both groups try to win audiences’ over for their programmes, but only the second group prioritizes the ratings. Thus, it avoids the coverage of those ‘women’s issues’ and participants who might drive viewers away because of their opposition to the common sexist discourses about women and negative discourses about feminism.

Finally, pro-feminist journalists in the two countries have similar opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in their day-to-day practice. While different professional values do sometimes do limit their opportunities for coverage of ‘women’s issues’ or activist approach to women’s participation, they often find the ways to pursue their interests in gender sensitive journalism through formulating them in line with the professional values. However, the interviewed journalists have different opportunities to apply elements of gender sensitive journalism in their work at the levels of the more systematic programme policy.

In Croatia, some of the pro-feminist journalists have held senior positions within the public channel which enabled them to partly direct the transformation of the ex-state television

channel into the public service. One of them was, thus, able to create the department whose aim was to provide public service by covering NGO issues. This also enabled a more systematic coverage of feminist and female issues, as well as an increase in public exposure of women active in women's NGOs. While this has certainly not been an overall policy at the Croatian public channel, as their recent report on their work regarding gender inequality shows (Chapters 3), my analysis of the programmes and the interviews shows that HRT does have pockets open to elements of gender sensitive journalism, both in informative programmes such as regional and morning news, as well as in a popular talk show such as *Latinitsa*. In addition, HRT has regularly showed programmes produced by the NGOs such as Fade In or B.a.b.e. about 'women's issues'.

In Serbia, the public channel has not defined public service in ways that would open opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. As my analysis shows, the pro-feminist journalist who has tried hard to establish a programme that would regularly deal with issues of concern to women has been utterly ignored by the Director General who makes decisions on the fate of programmes. In addition, as my analysis of one of its flagship programmes *Key* and the interview with its producer shows, the channel's counterpart of *Latinitsa* does not deal critically with 'women's issues' as is the case with its Croatian role model. While these two cases cannot be generalized to the overall channel's programme policy, my findings fit well with other research, such as Milivojević (2005) who criticized RTS for declarative commitments to public service without any substantial changes in that direction.

Finally, the two Serbian pro-feminist journalists, who have garnered support from their department or from the management, work for the Serbian commercial channel TV B92. Their suggestions to apply elements of gender sensitive journalism, such as the systematic usage of feminine nouns for female professionals or coverage of violence against women, have been



supported due to the history of critical journalism at TV B92. As the channel sought to retain its credibility earned by critical journalism in the nineties, when it opposed the regime of Slobodan Milosevic, the management enabled the production of investigative documentaries, some of which dealt with 'women's issues'. However, the rampant commercialization of TV B92 suggests that these types of journalism might have a very uncertain future at this channel.

## **Chapter 8: Women's Media Activism and Gender Sensitive Journalism**

### **8.1. Introduction**

As my analysis of the interviews with the Serbian and Croatian journalists shows, the agency of pro-feminist journalists is an important factor with regard to the development of gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream television media (Chapter 7). Their success in introducing elements of gender sensitive journalism has varied: from being able to occasionally pursue feminist interests in their day-to-day work to being able to inform parts of programme policy in gender sensitive ways, at the television channels such as the Croatian HRT and the Serbian TVB92 where pockets of critical and public service journalism have existed. However, their achievements are to a great extent also a result of Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs' activism. There is a clear link between the two: the majority of pro-feminist journalists went to women's NGOs' trainings and this is how they developed their interests in feminist activism. In addition, these trainings have established relatively enduring relationships between the NGOs and individual journalists, which led to different forms of their collaboration. In this chapter, I discuss feminist media activism in more detail, as the third important factor that informs the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media (see Section 2.4.3.). More specifically, I look at the impact and the relevance of Serbian and Croatian women's media activism for the development of gender sensitive journalism in the television media in the two countries.

The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines the ways in which women's NGOs understand and define different aspects of gender sensitive journalism. Since pro-feminist journalists become involved in gender sensitive journalism after the NGOs' trainings or other forms of contact with women's NGOs, it is important to see what notions of gender sensitive journalism are passed on to journalists by the NGOs. In addition, women's NGOs are the main source of ideas about gender sensitive journalism for the wider public, as their ideas on this issue are integrated into documents such as National Policy for Gender Equality<sup>61</sup> and presented in their publications, press statements and other publicist forms.

The second part of this chapter looks into particular forms of feminist media advocacy to uncover the ways in which they influence the television media in Serbia and Croatia. As the range of women's NGOs' media-related activities is too wide to be examined in all of its aspects in the scope of this chapter, my focus is mainly on those activities where I can establish a link between the programmes and television channels I have examined in my thesis and the work of feminist media advocates. I specifically look at the educational programmes for journalists and collaboration with pro-feminist journalists as its outcome, and feminist media activists' participation in the popular television programmes, such as talk shows. My analysis in both parts is grounded in mixed data, which consist both of the interviews I conducted with members of women's NGOs active in feminist media advocacy, and of NGOs' publications and documents where they define various aspects of gender sensitive journalism.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> See Section 3.4.2. for a discussion of women's NGOs' involvement in the creation of gender equality state policies.

<sup>62</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the principles of selecting this part of my data see Section 4.3.1.

## 8.2. Women's NGOs' Understanding of Gender Sensitive Journalism

Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs' understanding of gender sensitive journalism shares many features with the major trends in feminist cultural politics discussed in Western feminist texts. All key feminist demands from the media which I discussed in Chapter 2, (Section 2.3), can be traced in the statements and documents of the NGOs which I examined. The main problems which the NGOs identify in media representations of women are: gender stereotypes, marginalization of women, and sexist treatment of female sources. The main features of gender sensitive journalism are defined as: the avoidance of these sexist practices; increased coverage of 'women's issues'; increased women's participation as sources, agents in the public sphere, and subjects of media content; and more diverse and realistic representations of women. As in other projects that seek to change media representations of marginalized and devalued groups (see Section 2.2.), they define gender sensitive journalism both in negative terms, as what it should not be like, and in positive terms, what it should be like.

There is more to this similarity than the mere influence of the prominent Western feminist texts in English on feminists in non-Western countries. One reason for the similarities of feminist demands can be found in the similarities of sexist practices, e.g. as the results of the GMPP show (Gallagher 2005; MediaWatch 1995; Spears and Seydegart 2000), women are largely marginalized in news genres worldwide. But another important reason lies in the international character of feminist (media) activism. Similar measures are proposed in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (United Nations 1995), which has spurred feminist media activism worldwide (Gallagher 2001). According to the Platform, the governments should:

Promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research. (IV. J. 239. c)

Encourage, to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, these bodies to increase the number of programmes for and by women to see to it that women's needs and concerns are properly addressed. (Ibid., e)

Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities, rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to and beneficiaries of the process of development. (IV. J. 243. d)

While I am not suggesting that Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs copied the BDPA recommendations, I want to stress that influential documents such as BDPA circulate these ideas globally through many international forums and links. For example, Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs took part in the GMMP, published gender sensitive guidelines from other countries on their websites, or have had links with feminist journalists and activists from other countries.

Locally, the NGOs convey these important aspects of gender sensitive journalism to media professionals, politicians and the general public. However, their impact may be limited as the NGOs often phrase their demands in fragmented and self-evident ways. Also, their proposed countermeasures are often conceptualized as the opposite of the identified sexist practices, which leads to problems such as overemphasis on women's participation in the public sphere and the genres that are prestigious in the existing hierarchy of the public/private division. But there is little reflexivity about the possible problematic aspects of such reversal, e.g. the possible classism in the promotion of 'successful women'. Finally, while there is an occasional declarative awareness of the differences among women, NGOs' discussions of gender sensitive journalism largely focus on an undifferentiated notion of women as a social group. In the

remainder of this section, I examine how the common feminist demands from the media feature in the Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs' activism and what the shortcomings of the ways in which they are posed are.

In the NGOs' discussions of sexist media practices that need to be eliminated, stereotypes about women and marginalization of women are the most often cited problems, but activists also highlight gender insensitive language, sexist treatment of female sources and subjects, and, in particular, their sexualization. The NGOs usually define stereotypes through examples by pointing out that women are most commonly represented in the media as mothers, housewives or sexual objects. Answering my question about her understanding of gender sensitive journalism, a member of the Croatian Committee for the Media gives a representative answer:

Gender sensitive journalism... Well the first issue is that the stereotypes are a big problem. Stereotypes should definitely be eliminated, that is the most difficult task. Changing the mentality of society, of people, is always the hardest. But by advancing stereotypes in the media, we advance them in society: stereotypes about women as housewives, as exclusively mothers [...] or as show business vamp women, or as Super Women who are successful business women, mothers and carers at the same time, which is impossible. (Activist 9)

The harmfulness of stereotypes is often taken as self-evident. When it is discussed further in NGO publications, stereotypes are addressed as a problem of the limited media representation and participation on the one hand, and of negative media representations on the other hand (Sarnavka 2006; Savić 2007). Their negative impact on women is explained in terms of the reproduction of 'beliefs about women' or 'value systems' that originate in, and justify, the sexist public/private division, as well as gender discrimination grounded in misogynistic ideas about women as inferior (Sarnavka and Kunac 2006; Peščanik 2007).

Marginalization of women in media content is another problem that is always emphasized by the feminist media advocates in Serbia and Croatia. The NGOs' criticisms of marginalization

can be divided in four groups. The first criticism concerns marginalization of women in terms of the coverage of issues of specific concern to them. For example, a legislative initiative by the Croatian Governmental Office for Gender Equality notes as a problem that the media do not provide enough coverage of the issue of gender in/equality, as well as of activities and policies relevant to women (Croatian Government. Office for Gender Equality 2008). The second criticism relates to representation of women's lives more broadly. According to several NGO publications and state documents largely written by the NGOs, the media marginalize women's experiences, contributions and successes (Sarnavka and Kunac 2006; Serbian Government. Sector for Gender Equality 2009; Pešćanik 2006). The third criticism deals with the marginalization of women as sources and agents in the public sphere. As the NGOs stress, women are especially marginalized as experts and participants in public debates within the prestigious genres such as news and current affairs. Finally, the Serbian National Strategy for Gender Equality emphasizes that "some categories of women are almost completely absent: older women, women belonging to national and religious minorities, women with a different sexual orientation, women with disability, rural women" (Serbian Government. Sector for Gender Equality 2009).

The media are further asked to eliminate sexism in language and in the treatment of female sources and agents when they are present in the media. Two aspects of gender insensitive language are especially highlighted as problems: the usage of masculine generic nouns for professions performed by women which contribute to low visibility of women, and specific expressions, such as 'fairer' or 'weaker sex', that refer to women in stereotypical or derogatory ways. In terms of the treatment of women as sources and agents, feminist media advocates emphasize that the media should not diminish women's abilities and contributions or address

women in terms of their private and family life when that is not at issue (Jemrić 2003a; Peščanik, 2007). The NGOs also point out that female participants in the media should not be approached in terms of their appearance and sexuality in the situations where male participants would not be approached in the same way (ibid.).

Through their publications and other ways of media activism, feminist media advocates draw attention of journalists and the general public to the problem of the limited and derogatory representations of women in the media, as well as to the specific forms of sexism employed in the treatment of female sources and agents in the public sphere. However, activists' discussion of different forms of sexism in the media is often rather rudimentary in their explanations. Criticisms of sexist practices are scattered and not presented in a systematic way, and the highlighted problems are approached as self-evident, e.g. stereotypes are often addressed only through examples. To a certain extent, this is understandable as the NGOs address non-academic and non-feminist audiences and therefore examples of familiar limited or negative representations of women can often be the easiest way to communicate feminist criticisms. It is worth remembering that large sections of the general public would be unfamiliar even with the word 'rod', the Serbo-Croatian word for gender, as the main meaning of that word is 'kin' and it only acquired the meaning of 'gender' after Serbian and Croatian feminists introduced it to the vocabulary. Still, the fragmented and rudimentary character of much of their criticism can undermine the efficacy of their advocacy as it renders their views on what should be eliminated from the media more fuzzy.

Departing from the criticisms of the sexist practices that should be avoided in gender sensitive journalism, activists proceed to delineate gender sensitive journalism in positive ways, i.e. as what it should be like. In many ways, this alternative is defined as the opposite of the



sexist journalistic practices. For example, if stereotypes about women are seen to limit their representation and participation in the media to those aspects of their lives associated with the private sphere, then gender sensitive journalism is defined in terms of diversification of their representations and participation, often with the emphasis on their participation in the public sphere. If the usage of generic masculine nouns for female professionals is defined as discriminatory, then the usage of feminine forms of nouns when referring to women is seen as a change towards gender sensitive journalism. While some of the oppositional practices are fairly obvious, tackling marginalization is a case where the desirable change is defined in more elaborate terms. It is defined largely in terms of the coverage of particular issues relevant to women, critical approach to a variety of issues from the perspective of gender differences and inequality, and increased and diversified women's participation and representations.

Through these demands, feminist media advocates touch upon key dimensions of gender equality in the media in terms of: information, deliberation, representation and participation (see Section 2.2). These four dimensions are not separate from each other and overlap in many ways, but it is still important to note that they are distinct four ways in which gender equality is sought in the media. Gender equality in terms of information and deliberation partly means that the media would provide information of specific concern to women as well as opportunities for deliberation about these issues. It also means that women would not be undermined as participants in public deliberation on a range of different issues. In addition, women should be equally represented as sources and as protagonists/subjects of media content. The range of women as sources, protagonists and actors in the public sphere ties into the request for equality in representation in terms of greater diversity of women who are represented. The NGOs themselves do not formulate their demands in these terms explicitly, but these four dimensions of

gender equality regarding the media are nevertheless addressed. Below, I look at how the NGOs discuss each of these aspects of gender sensitive journalism separately.

Coverage of ‘women’s issues’ is seen as an important aspect of gender sensitive journalism because gender equality in the media is partly understood as the equal attention to women’s and men’s concerns, needs, interests and achievements (Peščanik 2007; Serbian Government. Sector for Gender Equality 2009). However, like stereotypes, they are most commonly described through examples. When they are defined at all, ‘women’s issues’ are described as those that specifically concern women or as those that are of key importance for women’s present status in the world. For example, a journalists’ manual by the Serbian NGO Pescanik addresses ‘women’s issues’ in terms of five thematic areas that are of key importance to women’s position in the contemporary world: violence against women; women’s health; women’s education; women and economy; women’s participation in decision making (Pescanik 2007). The five areas are broken down into sub-issues, e.g. the publication describes briefly different forms of violence against women. Not surprisingly, these five thematic areas are also present in the national policies for gender equality in Serbia and Croatia, as well as in the Beijing Platform (1995), although together with several others.

Furthermore, activists’ examples of ‘women’s issues’ present a similar mix of ‘feminine’, ‘female’ and ‘feminist’ issues which I identified as three particular meanings attached to the notion of ‘women’s issues’ (Section 2.3.1.). ‘Feminine’, that is, traditional women’s issues such as childcare, are recurrent in feminist lists of ‘women’s issues’. Because women are still largely responsible for childcare, the coverage of this issue is seen as relevant to them. Some of the interviewees, however, express their concerns about the perpetuation of the idea that this issue is

a women's concern rather than men's as well. A member of the Croatian Committee for the Media, comments on these two aspects of defining 'women's issues':

There should be more space for women...I wouldn't say for 'women's issues', although you could use that phrase as well. Because social politics, politics of care is more related to women, and capital, money, to men. [...] 'Women's' and 'men's issues' should be equally present in the media. Issues of local community, care...although, although...in our society these are still women's issues, because women are more responsible for care, but I think there should be a division of family work and care about children, about older people. Fathers should take paternity leave as well. So, it's a complex issue. (Activist 9)

These comments show the ways in which feminist media advocacy needs to negotiate between the demand that the media should attend to 'women's issues' arising from their responsibilities in the patriarchal private sphere and the feminist politics of gender equality that opposes the definition of such issues as 'women's issues'.

I have defined 'female' issues as those pertaining to cases where women have a specific experience or relation to a certain issue, giving an example of women's health items. This category can also be seen in terms of a critical approach, which addresses a range of issues from the perspective of gender differences, taking into account what is particular about women's experiences with regard to any issue. Some of the interviewed feminist media advocates defined gender sensitive journalism in those terms. A member of the Women's Section of the Serbian Independent Association of Journalists says that an important aspect of gender sensitive journalism is to look "where women are specifically with regard to any theme" (Activist 1). Similarly, a member of the Croatian Women's Network defines gender sensitive journalism in terms of approaching all issues with an awareness of gender differences and inequality, and seeking out the specificities of women's position with regard to any issue. Giving an example of a gender sensitive journalist, she describes her work in a following way:

The areas that she usually reports on are social and health issues. ... [In covering the issues in these areas] she always takes into account what is specific to a deprived social group. In this case: women. (Activist 11)

Many 'female' issues clearly overlap with 'feminist' issues: by seeking out the specificity of women's experiences or concerns with regard to a range of issues, very often the specificities in question regard the different ways in which women are unequal in society.

The NGOs particularly highlight the need for the increased coverage of issues related to gender inequality, that is, 'feminist issues'. In their publications and documents, the NGOs give the following examples of such coverage. According to them, gender sensitive journalism should investigate different forms of gender discrimination, inform about the laws in this area, report on state and NGO activities against gender inequality, and participate in campaigns for gender equality. Gender sensitive journalism is not defined only in terms of attention to such topics but also in terms of a critical approach to gender inequality. For example, Croatian Women's Network describes the work of the journalists who were given the Award for Gender Sensitive Journalism in terms of their "systematic ... affirmation of gender equality and the rights of sexual minorities" and contribution "to the elimination of prejudices that prevent women from participating equally in social processes" and "to sensitization of the public and better understanding of the problem of gender discrimination" (Administrator ŽMH Website 2007). By demanding that the media should investigate gender discrimination and affirm gender equality, journalists are targeted both as powerful allies that can contribute to the struggle against gender inequality in society and in terms of their professional (and sometimes legal) responsibilities to critically interrogate discrimination on any ground.

In addition, marginalization of women in the media is also addressed through the demands that the media should improve its record in terms of women's participation. The media

is told that it should ensure equal presence and visibility of women and men, provide more diversity in ‘women’s roles’ and recognize women’s achievements. Such demands usually take a form of insisting that women should be better represented as sources in the media. While the feminist media advocates emphasize greater women’s participation as sources on the whole, they often particularly stress that female experts, members of women’s NGOs and governmental bodies for gender equality should be consulted more often. Sometimes, such demands are followed by suggestions that a database of female experts should be created as it could be useful to journalists who wish to involve more women in their work. For example, this suggestion was made both by female journalists and members of women’s NGOs in meetings on the topic of ‘women and the media’ organized by the Serbian Women’s Section of NUNS, and in the process of consultations over the Serbian National Policy for Gender Equality respectively (NUNS. Women’s Section 2007h; Serbian Government. Council for Gender Equality 2006c).

Improving women’s participation in the media is also understood in two more ways. Firstly, it is seen in terms of greater involvement of women as agents in the public sphere. Consequently, one of the aims of the NGOs’ media-related projects is to “empower women to be active in the public sphere” and engage more in the deliberative political processes (Peščanik 2007). A Croatian activist whom I interviewed addresses this aspect of the desirable women’s participation in the media in a typical way. Answering my question about gender sensitive journalism, s/he says that the media should involve more women as “creators of policies,” “creators of our society and its interests” and “subjects who greatly contribute to society” (Activist 9). Secondly, women’s participation is also understood in terms of the coverage of women’s achievements. Examples of such media content include topics such as female artists, entrepreneurs, scientists or famous female historical figures.

While there is a strong emphasis on representing ‘successful women’ and women who are active in the public sphere or as professionals, this is balanced by another widespread demand that the media should represent the lives of ‘real’ and ‘ordinary’ women. Speaking about her ideal of gender politics in the media, an activist of the Croatian NGO B.a.b.e., says that her goal is to get the media to represent ‘women’s objective reality’. Explaining what that would entail she says:

[It’s showing] women’s everyday life, how ordinary women live, what their problems are. It’s that type of reports, news, programmes. [It’s also showing] women’s achievements. For example, a woman in a lab made a discovery. ... Don’t lie to me and say there aren’t such women. Because I know they are out there. So, please, focus a little and find them. Because they exist. Exceptional, genial, brave heroines, who are around us and no one knows what they did and achieved. ... Because women [in the audience] miss that. Because we are not all young and pretty, advertising soaps and singing. That is not women’s life. So, [the media should show] women’s lives and a whole range of issues that could be opened through that. (Activist 7)

This and similar statements by the Serbian and Croatian feminist advocates evokes familiar feminist demands that the media should provide more ‘realistic’ and ‘positive’ representations of women, whose criticisms and re-conceptualizations I discussed in Section 2.3.2. In agreeing with D’Acci (1994) and Gill (2007), I believe that such statements express more than just a flawed understanding of the media as an accurate or distorted reflection of unequivocal reality. I contend that they express a demand for more diverse representations of women that are grounded in the social lived experiences, interests, needs and achievements of women who are the contemporaries of such representations. It is a demand for recognition in a double sense of the word: recognition in terms of the elimination of derogatory representations and unequal treatment and recognition in terms of the provision of representations in which diverse women can recognize themselves.

Through their media advocacy, the NGOs conceptualize and popularize the elements of gender sensitive journalism for the interested journalists, politicians and members of the general public. In this way, the NGOs encourage a greater coverage of issues of concern to women and the advancement of their participation in the media. However, as in the case of their criticisms of sexist media practices, they often advocate for gender sensitive practices in fragmented and self-evident ways. For example, the phrase ‘women’s issues’ is very rarely discussed beyond a mere list of examples. Also, there seems to be little reflexivity about the ways in which gender sensitive journalism is defined as the opposite of the identified sexist practices. Thus, because the NGOs identify the association between femininity and the private sphere as sexism, gender equality in the media is largely defined as women’s greater participation in the public sphere. Also, because devaluation and invisibility of women is identified as sexist, the NGOs place great emphasis on the representation of professional, expert, successful women. ‘Real’ or ‘ordinary’ women are thus largely discussed in terms of attending to their problems, often pertaining to some form of gender inequality.<sup>63</sup>

While it is understandable that the recognition of women’s achievements and their advancement as participants in the public sphere are seen as remedies to the devaluation of women and their marginalization in the public sphere, more reflexivity is needed with regard to two aspects of such remedies. Firstly, gender segregation in the media cannot be changed by only including more women into the genres associated with the public sphere, but it has to be followed by greater men’s participation in the programmes discussing the issues traditionally related to the private sphere. Secondly, the NGOs need to be more reflexive about their emphasis

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<sup>63</sup> Such an approach to the change in the media is not limited to women’s NGOs or to Serbia and Croatia. For example, Threagold (2006) found that counter-narratives about asylum seekers in the UK are very often binary reversals of the identified anti-asylum and racist media narratives. As a result, they often remain within the parameters of the hegemonic anti-asylum discourse, failing to question its premises.

on the greater visibility and participation of elite women, so that their advocacy does not exclude all women who are not ‘successful’ and active in the public sphere or victims of violence and discrimination.

Finally, the Serbian and Croatian feminist media advocates do not discuss gender sensitive journalism sufficiently with regard to other forms of inequality, based in class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability. There is sometimes a declarative commitment to paying special attention to those groups of women who suffer from multiple forms of discrimination. For example, the Serbian National Policy for Gender Equality lists these groups of women, such as Roma, lesbian, rural, older, disabled women, as those who are particularly marginalized and disparaged by the media and urges the media to take extra care to improve representation of these groups. Furthermore, there are some examples of collaboration between feminist and LGBT media advocates, as there are overlaps in these kinds of activism.

In Croatia, a lesbian NGO LORI, active in the area of LGBT media advocacy, consulted the women’s NGO B.a.b.e. about their knowledge of, and experiences with, NGO media advocacy. Women’s Network’s award for gender sensitive journalism was also given to a journalist who promoted rights of sexual minorities. In Serbia, a lesbian NGO Labris, which advocates against homophobia in the media, also addressed some aspects of sexism in their media activism. However, intersections between gender and sexuality, ethnicity or class are not especially explored by any of these groups, e.g. media representations of lesbian women are not discussed in their own right but are subsumed under broader categories of women or LGBT population. Consequently, Serbian and Croatian feminist media advocates do not interrogate the ways in which their proposed remedies may obliterate inequalities among women and create new hegemonic femininities, e.g. a successful professional woman active in the public sphere.



### 8.3. The Impact of Women's Media Activism on Television Journalism

All four 'paths' of women's media activism identified by Byerly and Ross (2006) can be found in Serbia and Croatia as well (See Section 2.4.3.).<sup>64</sup> In this section, I focus on the third 'path', 'feminist change agents': the Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs with long-term projects that specifically aim to make the media more gender (and LGBT) sensitive. More specifically, I look at their impact on the introduction of elements of gender sensitive journalism into the mainstream television media. My analysis focuses on those instances of their activism where I can examine their influence with regard to the cases of activist and popular television talk show journalists and programmes, or television channels, that I studied in my thesis. Firstly, I look at the ways in which they attempt to initiate the creation of pockets of pro-feminist journalism through their educational programmes for journalists. Secondly, I examine the activists' approaches to, and experiences with, their participation in popular television programmes, such as talk shows, as another form of their feminist media advocacy.

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<sup>64</sup> The first 'path', 'politics to media', is largely represented by women's NGOs which focus on different forms of violence against women, as they were most active in getting media coverage for their concerns (e.g. Autonomna ženska kuća, Ženska soba, Croatia, and Sklonište, Serbia). However, most other women's NGOs also engage in different forms of public relations. The second 'path', 'media to politics', is taken by pro-feminist journalists whose work and agency I examined in the previous chapters (Chapter 6 and 7). The third 'path', 'feminist change agent', is found in all those women's NGOs which engage in activities and projects that specifically aim to make the media more gender sensitive. Their activities are very diverse and include: media monitoring (Ženska infoteka, B.a.b.e., LORI (Croatia); Dicens, AWIN, Žindok, Labris (Serbia); official complaints and lawsuits against particular cases of sexism in the media (LORI, B.a.b.e., Croatia, and Labris, Initiative against Misogyny in the Media, Serbia); education for journalists (LORI, B.a.b.e., Croatia, and Labris, Peščanik, Serbia); award for gender sensitive journalism (Women's Network of Croatia); and attempts to act through independent and governmental institutions in order to put pressure on the media to become more gender sensitive (B.a.b.e., Povjerenstvo, Croatia, Labris, IPMM, Serbia) Finally, the fourth 'path', women's alternative media, is also present and it involves the NGO production of documentaries or radio programmes on various women- and gender-related issues (B.a.b.e., Fade In, CESI, Croatia, Forum žena Prijepolje, Serbia).

### *8.3.1. Women's NGOs and pro-feminist journalism*

Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs' seminars about gender sensitive journalism or about media coverage of LGBT population have proved to be an effective way for the NGOs to raise some journalists' interest in these areas and establish themselves as credible sources for them. In Croatia, a women's NGO B.a.b.e. has been active in feminist media advocacy since 1996 and has held a number of seminars on women and the media as part of Zagreb Women's Studies Centre's programme and in its own organization. In addition, the Rijeka-based lesbian NGO LORI conducted seminars and more informal forms of education for journalists on media coverage of LGBT population during their 2005 campaign for sensitizing the media. In Serbia, seminars on women and the media have been held within a wider programme Women Can Do It. Since 2005, Pešćanik, a women's group from Kruševac, a town in Serbia, has run the programme's media-related part, which has involved trainings in gender sensitive journalism for local media journalists. Also, since 2003, Labris, a lesbian group from Belgrade, has held seminars for journalists, which focused on media treatment of LGBT population but also addressed some forms of sexism in the media.

The contribution of these seminars to the advancement of gender sensitive journalism is visible from the examples of pro-feminist journalism, which I examined in my thesis. Most of the pro-feminist journalists whom I interviewed in my research (see Chapter 7) mention their experience with women's NGOs' education as crucial for their interest in, and knowledge about, various aspects of gender inequality. The following quote by a TV B92 journalist shows how the NGO seminars can provoke participants to critically reflect on gender inequality:

As many people, I thought and felt that professions belonged equally to men and women, because I did not feel threatened. Until Svenka [a Serbian feminist linguist] said [at Labris's seminar] that even the word 'parent' existed only in a

masculine form, while women were those who gave birth. That really struck me; that was a good argument that made me think why women couldn't be addressed with [nouns in] feminine forms, why they couldn't be visible in their professions. Now I reached a point, *it is a process*, you know, I reached a point where I can't talk in masculine forms [about women]. Now that sounds so awkward to me ... as awkward as it would sound to other people if the Primeminister who was male was addressed as a woman. (Journalist 3)

Other journalists also stress that the seminars provided them with the excellent network of contacts in women's NGOs, which have been useful to them when they wanted to cover women- and gender-related issues. These contacts often lead to collaboration between journalists and women's NGOs on a regular basis, where women's NGOs call 'their' journalists when they want to publicize their actions and these journalists call women's NGOs when they need sources on 'women's' or other relevant issues for women's NGOs.

Furthermore, the pro-feminist television programmes that I analyzed in my thesis (Sections 5.3.3. and 6.2.3.), such as *Speck of Respect* (RTS) and *Macho Men and Tom Boys* (TV B92) in Serbia, are a direct outcome of these seminars. A producer of *Speck of Respect* attended seminars organized within Women Can Do It programme, which led her to her work on documentaries on various forms of gender inequality. As she established excellent contacts with the NGOs through the seminars, she relied on them throughout her work on the series to provide her with data, advice and to participate in the programme as sources (Journalist 1a). In the case of *Macho Men and Tomboys*, its producer attended both a Labris seminar and a regional seminar organized by the Croatian NGO B.a.b.e. Her film was actually produced as part of the B.a.b.e. workshop, since one of its aims was the production of documentaries on the topic 'women and the media'. Also, the same journalist initiated the adoption of the policy on gender sensitive language in TV B92 in 2006 (See Section 7.4). When the policy was introduced, the journalist invited Svenka Savić, a feminist linguist whom she met through the NGOs seminars, to help

them standardize gender sensitive names for female professionals. In Croatia, documentaries and reports on ‘women’s’ and other issues produced by NGOs such as B.a.b.e. and Fade In were shown on HRT, the public channel, because a HRT pro-feminist journalist enabled that (see Section 7.4.). Her links with women’s NGOs were also initially established through various seminars where she both learned from the NGOs and taught its members about PR.

By examining the interviews with the pro-feminist journalists and the activists, as well as the NGOs’ manuals for journalists and their other materials related to this form of their activism, I found that the NGO seminars for journalists have served several important functions. Through the seminars, the NGOs have established themselves as productive sources for individual journalists by providing them with their research data and various other types of information. In addition, the NGOs have raised journalists’ critical awareness of discriminatory media representation of women/LGBT population by informing them about the results of their media monitoring and by explaining concepts and ideas produced within feminist, gay and lesbian, and queer studies. Lastly, the NGOs have established relationships with individual interested journalists that would lead to future collaboration. Below, I discuss in more detail the ways in which the NGOs have pursued each of these objectives. I also assess the NGOs’ approach to the relationship between ‘knowledge’ and gender sensitive journalism, which is both beneficial for the advancement of gender sensitive journalism and simplistic in some ways as it reduces the problems of sexist and homophobic ideologies and power relations to the problem of the lack of knowledge.

The NGOs such as Croatian LORI and B.a.b.e. and Serbian Labris and Sandglass provide journalists with the basic data and knowledge about critical approaches to gender and sexuality. The workshops and manuals often present the data about discrimination and violence against

women/LGBT population and inform about: the state of their rights in different countries; legal regulations in that area; international conventions that Serbia and Croatia adopted; and the state mechanisms responsible for gender equality (LORI 2004; Labris 2005; Peščanik 2007). In addition, the NGOs circulate feminist and LGBT perspectives on gender and sexuality, by providing brief explanations of concepts and ideas developed within feminist and LGBT activism and theory. At the workshops and in the manuals, the NGOs explain concepts such as sex, gender, misogyny, discrimination, women's rights, sexual orientation, heterosexism, homophobia, transgender, intersexed, transsexual, coming out etc. Some of their publications, such as the *Reader* developed within the programme 'Women Can Do It' and published by the Serbian NGO Peščanik (2007), also include brief explanations about the five thematic areas seen as most relevant to women today: violence against women, women's health, women's education, women and economy, and women's participation in decision making.

In addition, the NGOs' trainings seek to sensitize the journalists for recognizing sexist and homophobic ideas underlying much of the media representations of women and LGBT population. The NGOs present the results of their media monitoring and draw journalists' attention to the specific ways in which the media justify, enact and reproduce discrimination against these groups. Criticisms of the media are followed by particular suggestions for gender/LGBT sensitive journalistic practices. Together with the critical analysis of the 'good' and 'bad' examples from the media, the NGOs try to engage journalists' sense of professional responsibility. As some of these publications say, it is the media's duty to investigate and condemn discrimination and violence, and to contribute to gender equality and LGBT human rights by sensitizing the wider public about these issues. Accordingly, there is a strong emphasis on the ways in which media laws and journalistic codices regulate journalists' work with respect

to discriminatory media practices. Most of such media seminars and workshops always refer journalists to the relevant clauses from the laws and codices which forbid discrimination on any ground or even state that it is a professional duty of journalists to confront anyone who advances discriminatory ideas publicly.

Finally, the third purpose of the seminars for journalists is to enable the NGOs to establish and further collaboration with the media. The member of LORI, whom I interviewed, speaks of that aspect of their seminars:

In the last part [of the seminars], they tell us what they need, how we can be more helpful, what the easiest way it is for them to work. So, they get education and we get information about how to reach them, how to ensure that something is published. And we establish contacts with them which have been very important to us. (Activist 13)

While most NGO media seminars have this aspect, collaboration and exchange of experiences between journalists and feminist activists have been at the centre of two workshops organized by the Croatian women's NGO B.a.b.e. The workshops were imagined as a mutual education of journalists and women's NGOs' activists. In the workshop, the journalists "educated activists about how to work with the media but then activists became instructors and talked to the journalists about their problems [with the media]," as one of the interviewed activists says (Activist 7). According to another interviewed activist of B.a.b.e., the exchange of experiences between activists and journalists made clear some of the problems in their communication. Many activists are afraid of talking to the media because they fear they will be misinterpreted, whereas many journalists are poorly informed about women's NGO sector (Activist 8). The workshop aimed to tackle these problems by enabling both activists and journalists to understand the other party's needs and concerns, as well as establish contact between them.

While the problem of journalists' lack of critical awareness of gender and LGBT discrimination is clearly more complex and deeper than their lack of information, there are still many areas where NGOs' provision of information and certain kinds of knowledge is a meaningful approach to media advocacy. Providing journalists with data about gender discrimination or information about legislation and policies in the area of gender equality are such examples, as journalists seem to be largely 'uninformed' about these issues. For instance, the Serbian NGO Peščanik (2006) found at one of their workshops for journalists that most participants were not able to list a single state institution that deals with problems of gender inequality and a minority had a vague recollection of the existence of the Governmental Council for Gender Equality. In a different case, as my interviewee from a Croatian lesbian NGO LORI says, the NGO paid a lot of attention to explaining the differences between transsexual, transgender and intersexed people to journalists, as they found that journalists were not familiar with the terminology at all (Activist 13).

However, the NGOs occasionally conflate journalists', sources' or audiences' unawareness of gender and sexual inequality, or even their active support for ideologies that legitimate and reproduce the inequalities, with the lack of knowledge and information about the media, gender or sexuality on their part. In the Croatian NGO Lori's manual for journalists, the NGO routinely strengthens their critique of the homophobic statements in the media by pointing out how they display a lack of scientific knowledge about human sexuality (LORI 2004). In another example, a media literacy manual produced by the Croatian NGO B.a.be. argues:

[I]f the female consumers of the Croatian media knew how to analyze the media and to reflect about their meanings, then certainly most of them wouldn't have said in our research that women and men are represented equally in the media. (Sarnavka 2006)

The NGOs reduce ideological dimension of social inequalities to the lack of knowledge for at least two strategic reasons. First, references to scientific *truth* and data, which show that gender inequality *exists* or that same-sex orientation is a *natural* and *normal* variation of human sexuality, strengthen the NGOs' critiques of inequalities because they present them as grounded in objective reality. Second, if the problem of sexism and homophobia in the media is approached as a problem of the lack of knowledge and information, then tackling the problem becomes a more manageable task.

But, even if the reduction of ideology to the lack of knowledge is a strategic move, the NGOs risk presenting education about gender equality and LGBT human rights as a quick-fix solution to the problem of sexism and homophobia. Although their publications define these problems also in terms of the 'lack of consciousness' about discrimination and with regard to the structural inequalities which certain media representations legitimate and naturalize, the NGOs' emphasis on knowledge as a solution reveals the extent to which power relations and identities associated with particular dispositions towards sexism and homophobia are harder to address within feminist and LGBT media activism. While the NGO education clearly does engage and enable some journalists to apply critical approaches to gender and sexuality in their work, this process is much more complex than purely cognitive. It potentially affects their identities, relationships with others and pits them against the existing power relations. This process is ultimately about the production of feminist or LGBT political consciousness, a form of 'consciousness raising', an activist method at the heart of the second-wave women's movement. But defining it this way would make it incompatible with the journalistic professional ideology which forbids journalists to be advocates.



Finally, my comparison of Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs educational programmes for journalists led me to uncover two additional significant features of women's media activism in the two countries. Firstly, my data shows that the examined Croatian women's NGOs influenced the Serbian NGOs and journalists I studied. The Croatian NGO B.a.b.e., for example, had a regional project EQVIVA, which involved Serbian journalists together with Croatian and Bosnian. One of the two B92 pro-feminist journalists whose work I examined in my thesis made her first film about gender inequality as part of this workshop. While this is an example of a direct influence, there have been other more indirect influences where the Serbian NGOs used Croatian NGOs' materials or consulted their projects as templates. Serbian women's NGOs used the Croatian translations of the materials within the international programme Women Can Do It, as well as some of their own materials produced for the programme, as this initiative was introduced to Croatia slightly earlier than to Serbia (Activist 2). Similarly, the Serbian lesbian NGO Labris consulted the Croatian NGO Lori's media monitoring projects from 2001 before they started similar projects in 2003 (Activists 4).

Secondly, the Croatian feminist media advocates have established better links with pro-feminist journalists working for the most influential media with the national coverage than is the case in Serbia. In Croatia, the educational programmes for journalists, organized by B.a.b.e. independently or through the seminars in Women's Studies Centre in Zagreb, involved some journalists from the most prominent media, such as HRT as the prime example. As a result, B.a.b.e. and Women's Studies Centre, have established a network of several prominent journalists who work at HRT and who have been supportive of their activism over the years.

In Serbia, the seminars in gender sensitive journalism were organized within the programme 'Women Can Do It', which was largely oriented towards stimulating women's

agency in local communities and thus involved work with journalists from the local media. This has meant that the main educational programme for gender sensitive journalism has largely left out journalists working for the media with the national coverage. Exceptionally, these seminars included journalists such as a producer of *Speck of Respect*, who worked at a local branch of the state broadcaster RTS. In addition, while seminars by Labris, which involved journalists from the national media, did touch on some forms of sexism, they still largely focused on homophobia in the media. My intention certainly is not to minimize the importance of feminist media activism at the level of the local media or with regard to the problem of homophobia, but to point out a gap in the Serbian feminist media advocacy which lacks a women's NGO that would work with journalists from the media with the national coverage over a longer period as B.a.b.e. have done in Croatia. Consequently, while there are pro-feminist journalists working for the television channels with the national coverage in both countries, such as Croatian HRT and Serbian RTS and TV B92, there are more of them in Croatia, and their links with women's NGOs are better there than in Serbia.

Explaining the differences in women's media activism in Serbia and Croatia is not easy without a broader and systematic comparison between women's NGOs' opportunities for activism in the two countries, as well as their interests in particular areas of activism, over the last two decades. On the grounds of the cases I looked at, they can partly be explained by the differences between the two countries in terms of their relationship with the EU. For example, the programme 'Women Can Do It' was introduced to Serbia later than to Croatia because of this reason. The programme was introduced by the EU-backed Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, which was established in 1999 but included Serbia only after the political changes in October 2000. In addition, both Croatian NGOs, B.a.b.e. and LORI, list EU and state funds as

sources of financial support for their media-related projects, while such sources do not appear in the case of the two Serbian NGOs, Labris and Pescanik (Kunac and Sarnavka 2006; LORI 2004; Sarnavka 2006; Peščanik 2006, 2007; Labris 2010b). Some of the Croatian state funds come from the institutions created in the course of EU integrations, such as Governmental Office for Gender Equality. In Serbia, the same institution, in collaboration with UNDP, allocated the first funds to nine women's NGOs only in December 2009 (Labris 2010a).

While more research is needed to investigate the links between the position of women's NGOs, EU integrations and feminist media advocacy in the two countries, these particular findings show a similar pattern as in the case of gender equality politics in the two countries after 2000 (see Chapter 3, Section 3.3.2). As I showed there, the Croatian women's NGOs could use some of the opportunities for their media activism provided by the gender equality policies adopted as part of EU requirements, whereas similar Serbian initiatives were marginalized by political instability, crises and preoccupations with the questions of nation-state.

### *8.3.2. Feminist media activists and popular television programmes*

In addition to creating pockets of pro-feminist journalism, some feminist media advocates also enter a wider media arena and appear as sources in many contexts that are not necessarily pro-feminist. Popular television programmes, such as talk shows which I examined in Chapters 5 and 6, touch on various gender- and women-related issues and are therefore public arenas where some feminist activists try to explain and promote feminist perspectives on these issues. Whether and how these programmes advance feminist perspectives partly depends on whether there are feminist activists willing to appear in them as guests. In my interviews with the members of NGOs which were active in feminist and/or LGBT media advocacy, I asked them about their experiences of appearing on television in general, and in talk shows in particular. In this section,

I explore how the interviewed feminist activists approach the prospects of appearing in these programmes and the experiences of those who have been guests in them.

A recurrent comment in all of my interviews, both in Serbia and Croatia, concerned the perceived general unwillingness to talk to the media among feminist activists. The following comment by a feminist academic and an activist of an organization within Women's Network of Croatia is representative on this account:

In my organization...most women do not want to talk to the media, for reasons that are strange to me. On the contrary, I believe that we, the activists, the feminists who are conscious [of gender inequality] should not avoid the media. So it turned out that very often when we need to announce our programmes or something else, it's 'C'mon, you do it, you do it!' (Activist 11)

While most interviewed activists stress this as a problem with regard to the presence of feminist perspectives in the media, the interviewed Serbian and Croatian members of women's NGOs differ in terms of their willingness to appear in the mainstream television programmes.

The Croatian NGO interviewees all had experiences of appearing on television, and some of them appeared several times in popular talk shows on the channels with the national coverage. Three of them appeared on the talk shows I examined in my thesis, *Latinita* (HRT) and *Sanya* (RTL). However, it should be noted that they do stress that there are approximately five women's NGO activists who appear in these programmes repeatedly. The member of the Croatian lesbian NGO LORI described the presence of individual LGBT activists in the media similarly (Activist 13). Still, there are even fewer members of women's NGOs who are present in the media in Serbia. It is therefore telling that the Serbian activists whom I interviewed because of their engagement with other forms of media advocacy said that they did not appear in similar television programmes. These activists were oriented more towards the coverage of their activities in the press rather than on television. Among my Serbian interviewees, only the

feminist academic, a member of the working group which devised the section ‘Women and the Media’ of the National Policy for Gender Equality, and a female politician who used to be the Chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality, had experiences with television appearances (Activists 6 and 12).

This is in accordance with the findings of my analysis of the selected Serbian and Croatian television programmes (see Chapters 5 and 6). In the Croatian talk shows I examined, members of women’s NGOs, feminist politicians and academics represent feminist perspectives. The Serbian talk shows include much fewer members of women’s NGOs and feminist perspectives are most commonly advanced by a few feminist politicians. While journalists’ approaches to feminism influence the programmes’ openness to feminist participation (See Section 7.2.), activists’ approaches to, and their anxieties about, participation in the media influence the overall media representation of feminism as well. By extension, they influence the media coverage of gender inequalities. Below, I examine the reasons behind activists’ decisions to appear or not to appear on television in general, and in talk shows in particular, as well as the typical problems they have in terms of talking to the television media and participating in the talk shows.

The interviewed feminist and LGBT media advocates generally do seek media coverage in order to publicize their activities and politics and win over the public for their causes. In addition, the NGOs which have engaged in media activism over a period of years, such as B.a.b.e., LORI or Labris, aim to become regular and credible sources of data and commentary to the media. However, the NGOs and individual activists differ with regard to the extent to which they pick and choose media outlets which they find acceptable for their participation. Also, the interviewees are divided into those who seem to be more oriented towards the print media and do

not really focus on television and those who appear in a variety of media and genres, including mainstream television programmes such as talk shows.

The Croatian NGO B.a.b.e. represents one end of the spectrum of the activists' approaches to the participation in the media as the organization tries to adhere to the policy that the media should not be refused if they contact them for data, statements or participation in television programmes. The members of B.a.b.e. have thus appeared in various media outlets, including television and the talk shows in my sample. An interviewee from the NGO explains the reasons for their position in the following way:

I want us to be present in the media because I want women to know about our organization and that they can contact us. Because if you are not in the media, how can an average woman know [about you]. (Activist 8)

This activist of B.a.b.e. emphasizes that she got used to talking to the media and is not afraid of them. Similarly, the activist of the Croatian lesbian NGO LORI, and the Serbian feminist politician who presented many of feminist political and legislative initiatives to the media, see themselves as experienced communicators and do not find it particularly difficult to talk to the media (Activists 13 and 12).

A more negotiated stance is found in the middle of the spectrum of the activists' approaches to their appearance in the media. Some of the interviewed activists stress that they struggle with the question where to appear and where not to appear, but they often push themselves to talk to the media despite the obvious problematic sides of participation in some kinds of media and genres, such as television talk shows. The Croatian activist (Women's Network of Croatia) has such a stance:

In the case of that type of programme, such as entertainment talk shows, it is very difficult to decide whether to go or not to go there. (...) Why should you go? Because in that type of programme various characters appear who operate with

the artillery of stereotypes, prejudices. And they get the chance, they get the opportunities for their voice to be heard. If I don't go to that type of programme, my voice, my position will not be heard. That is why I should go to such a programme. But you never know how many horrible people can come as well when everything becomes meaningless. (Activist 11)

This stance, where the activists negotiate whether to push themselves to appear in possibly problematic contexts or to reject invitations, was also prominent in the cases of two other interviewees: a second interviewed activist of B.a.be., who occasionally found it difficult to follow the organization's policy, and the interviewed Serbian feminist academic (Activist 7).

Finally, some NGOs were more active in seeking coverage in the print rather than the television media. Both lesbian NGOs were more oriented towards the press coverage in their media-related projects, although their seminars included television journalists as well. As the interviewees from both organizations stress, part of the reason for this preference is that NGOs' media advocacy often departs from the data acquired through media monitoring, which is much more costly in the case of television media and therefore NGOs gather data about television more rarely (Activists 4 and 13). But more importantly, both NGOs were more interested in the print media as they believed that the press was more open to lesbian issues and women's NGOs than television in general. In addition, Serbian Labris stressed that another reason why they were not oriented so much towards collaboration with the television media was that there was only one lesbian activist who was fine with being out in prime time programmes on television channels with the national coverage (Activists 4). In this case, lesbian activists are even more marginalized than other feminists as they are confronted with homophobia as well.

The avoidance of television also characterized Women at Work, the Serbian women's NGO whose members took part in one of the more visible feminist media initiatives in Serbia: the Initiative against Misogyny in the Media (IPMM). The IPMM gathered 55 women's NGOs,

which filed a lawsuit against TV Pink for hate speech against women in 2003 (see Chapter 3). As my interviewee from the NGO explains, during the debates about the lawsuit they mainly appeared in the press and radio media because they offered them better conditions than the television media (Activist 5). The IPMM chose to appear only in a few television reports where they knew that journalists' approach to their cause was favourable. The interviewee says that they were horrified at the idea that someone might invite them to a televised confrontation with the men from TV Pink whom they sued, one of whom was a well-known Serbian actor Milan Lane Gutović:

Thank God, there were no programmes where someone called him and us, and then 'for and against'. We agreed that we would not consider something like that, that that would turn into something with an easy-going, entertaining character. And we tried hard not to have that opposition, us vs. Lane Gutović, and to make sure that it doesn't seem that we are attacking him, but to emphasize that we are against gender discrimination and that people should not talk about women in such ugly ways and to give reasons for that.

What is visible from her account is how this group of Serbian feminist activists avoided those media outlets that would involve confrontation and entertaining approaches to the issue at hand and chose those where they felt they would not be attacked. Television talk shows seem to be the prime example of the kinds of programmes that they would have avoided. The IPMM's approach to media appearances, which she describes, stands on the opposite end of that of the Croatian NGO B.a.b.e.

While the interviewed activists differ in terms of the width of their participation in the media, as well as their anxiety over appearing on television, the level of agreement on the main problems they encountered in their media appearances is striking. The majority of activists mention the following problems: difficulties with communicating statements given from feminist



perspectives; confrontational, hostile and/or manipulative media environments; and stereotypes about feminists.

The activists talk about the problem of having to ‘translate’ from the feminist and academic discourses to the ways of speaking that would be understandable to the broader audiences. For example, as Serbian activists point out, using concepts as ‘gender’ or ‘misogyny’ is problematic because they are not widely known and cause confusion (See Section 8.2.). While this is a general problem activists experience with the media appearances, some activists particularly stressed this problem with regard to their appearances in television talk shows. According to a Croatian activist (Women’s Network of Croatia), talk show programmes, such as *Sanya* (RTL), often do not allow you to express more complex positions and force you to oversimplify your views:

In that type of entertaining talk shows, you have to translate from an analytical into an entertaining discourse, which can result in presenting some things as very one-dimensional and simple. And they are not like that in reality. But they push you to declare yourself: Yes or No. And you say: “Yes, but I can’t say that.” “Yes, but tell us now, are you for or against prostitution?” “Yes, but do we know what we are talking about? Let’s define things first. What does legalization mean? What does decriminalization mean?” “No, no, no, I am asking you...” You see, and then, what can you say in such a situation? Then you say: “I am against prostitution.” But often without an opportunity to explain why you chose such an answer. (Activist 11)

The first problem that activists’ complaints highlight is the silencing of feminist perspectives arising from the minoritarian position of feminist discourses, which means that its vocabulary and ideas are not familiar to the broader audiences. The second problem concerns the anti-analytical character of many media genres, including most television talk shows, that often push feminist participants in the media to oversimplify their positions.

Furthermore, the majority of the interviewed activists identify confrontational formats as the most problematic in terms of their media appearances. Radio and television talk shows are especially highlighted as paradigmatic of confrontational media genres. Most activists find it hard to express their views in such formats as, in their view, any discussion is turned into a pointless sensation. Such formats pose an additional burden on activists, as they have to advance feminist views in a hostile environment. As a couple of the Croatian activists with the experience of appearing in talk shows point out, this is especially difficult because they are often in a minority as feminists or as women. Finally, the confrontational format puts off some activists from appearing in the talk shows. The activists of Labris say they avoided appearing in such formats as they object to their widespread approach to ‘balance’ where parties who advance hate speech and discriminatory views are treated as equally legitimate as activists for lesbian and gay rights, which is something I also criticized in Chapters 5 and 6. According to them:

That happens often, that journalists call us to programmes where we are on the one side and the Church or Obraz [the extreme right wing organization] is on the other side, or someone else who breaks human rights and does not hesitate to use hate speech. So, we often talk about this [in our seminars for journalists], because, in our view, human rights do not have the other side. We often ask them: If you had a raped woman, would you call a rapist? ...Or if you make a programme about Jews, about their religion and ways of life, would you call a Nazi? Or if we talk to an [abused] child, will we call a pedophile? (Activists 4)

While some activists, such as the interviewed members of Serbian NGOs Labris and Women at Work, avoided such formats, others who had experiences with them provided examples of the particular talk shows and episodes, some of which I analyze in Chapters 5 and 6. In Serbia, the feminist politician complained about the episode of *Key* about ‘kept women’, where, in her view, the confrontational format led to meaningless fights (Activist 12). In Croatia, one of the activists said she felt very bad in the episode of *Sanya*, *Why are Men afraid of Successful Women?*,

because of the aggressive sexist statements of one of the guests (Activist 11). Moreover, she felt manipulated by the programme as she was misinformed by its journalists who told her that this particular guest, well-known for his sexist statements, would not be present in the studio. But he was. She stresses that this is not the only time she felt manipulated by talk show journalists, as it happened more than once that they misinformed her about other guests and even about topics of episodes. Conversely, both she and another Croatian activist singled out the episode of *Latinitsa* about discrimination against women as a positive exception, since it was a rare case among the mainstream television talk shows where they were not in a minority as feminists and which did not stage a confrontation (Activists 11 and 7).

Finally, most interviewed feminist activists with the experiences of participating in popular television programmes see the negative discourses about feminism as a major obstacle when they address the wider audiences. Having a vast experience with the anti-feminist culture, the interviewees feel they need to fight to win the audiences over for their feminist points of view by avoiding to be disqualified as stereotypical feminists. The interviewed activists' account of their experiences with the mainstream television programmes show that they combine two main strategies to achieve this: building 'common ground' with the audiences in general, and women in particular, and trying to dispel negative stereotypes about feminists through their own performance as 'non-stereotypical' feminists.

When they address the wide audiences of the mainstream television talk shows, they try to establish points of similarity with the public in general, and with the female audiences in particular. One way of establishing the common ground is by linking feminism with the aspects of gender equality which are now taken for granted. The following quote by a Croatian interviewee represents this strategy:

It depends on a situation and on a context when I present myself as a feminist immediately and when I don't. Sometimes I strategically wait and then I say: 'Now you agreed with me. See, those were feminist standpoints. (...) Women could not vote until after the WWII in our country, that is an achievement of feminist struggles. Girls could not go to school. Do you have a problem with your daughter being educated? Well, thank some feminists for that as well.' I am trying to find some examples which are the so called civilized standard today, but people might not be aware that they are results of feminist efforts among other things. (Activist 11)

But another important way of establishing the 'common ground' with the mainstream audiences is through the hegemonic properties of femininity. As anti-feminist discourses situate feminists in opposition to 'women', the interviewed feminist activists look for ways to signal to their (female) audiences that they are 'women' too. This attempt to establish overlaps between 'feminists' and 'women' is bound up with the second strategy of dispelling stereotypes.

The interviewed activists feel strongly that they themselves should not fit the stereotypes about feminists in order not to drive viewers away and to have a chance of being listened to. The first negative stereotype that the activists try to counter concerns the perception of feminists as aggressive, man-hating radicals. The second stereotype they are concerned with relates to their femininity, but it consists of several sub-stereotypes about feminists as ugly, sexually deviant and frustrated, unfeminine. In order to counter these stereotypes, the activists generally try to show that these *are* stereotypes by disproving them through their own examples. That is why they try to do the opposite to stereotypes: to appear calm, constructive and not extremist, pay attention to how they look, and in the cases of those who are married and have children, sometimes mention that detail from their biography. But at the same time, by trying to undermine stereotypes about feminists, they encounter other problems. Namely, they are sometimes pushed into the discursive terrain of the hegemonic sexist discourses about women. At other times, by trying to behave in non-stereotypical ways, they risk hiding gender

discrimination as a reason for feminist anger. The interviewed feminists grapple with these contradictions of their position by trying to oscillate between opposing anti-feminist and (hetero)sexist stereotypes.

The following quotes are representative in terms of my interviewees' statements about the ways in which they oscillate between the two oppositional strategies:

It is very important to me to negate the stereotype about feminists as hysterical old hags who have nothing better to do than to shout and hate men. (...) But I also try to say that (...) it is a trap in fact: when women are in a hostile environment in the media and when everybody is attacking them and a host does not give them an opportunity to speak, then they start shouting in the end. And the stereotype is confirmed: 'Here, look, these are those women who shout!' But that is not a fault of those women but of hosts who don't allow them to speak. (...) Given the society we live in and the whole set of entrenched prejudices against feminists, I believe that it is very important that feminists send out a message that they are wise and well composed women. (Activist 11)

I live in a very unconventional marriage. But I sometimes bring that up that I am married, that I have children. Because it is important for making sure that somebody listens to you. At the same time (...) I always say that I don't cook at all and that I still have three men around me. So, I send different messages. So, I have a fantastic relationship with my children but I didn't achieve that by cooking and washing for them. I say that my sons cook for themselves and wash their things. So, yes, I send that message that I am married, but at the same time I also always support gays and lesbians. (Activist 8)

Similar statements are also given with regard to their approach to their looks when they appear on television, where they oscillate between opposing the stereotype about the 'ugly feminist' and avoiding to comply with the sexist discourses about femininity as defined through sexualized appearance. Also, some of the interviewees emphasize that they try not to appear too radical by explicitly attacking men or institutions such as the Catholic Church, but that that does not mean that they do not present critical arguments that show that men are privileged or that the Church discriminates against women.

Squeezed between anti-feminism and sexism, the interviewees try to wriggle out of both by destabilizing them through presenting themselves in ideologically incongruous ways: as feminists with families, wives who don't cook, mothers who rally with lesbian activists. Whether they succeed in destabilizing both discourses is a question that cannot be answered here, as it is a matter for audience research. What matters in terms of my study is that my interviewees' strategies show the extent to which feminist participants in the mainstream television programmes feel under pressure to weigh their statements with an eye on the likely anti-feminist responses. In addition, it shows how the mainstream character of the popular television programmes pushes feminist activists to establish points of commonality with the wide audiences on the grounds of taken-for-granted forms of gender equality and hegemonic (hetero)sexist femininity as a way of securing attention for the feminist criticisms that do not belong to the mainstream discourses. In principle, this is a pragmatic move which seeks to build on the points of commonality to provoke the public in general, and women in particular, to consider other feminist points of view as well. However, it also shows the extent to which the activists, as feminists and women, feel that they are listened to under the precondition that they can be recognized in terms of the certain features of hegemonic femininity. This also shows the disadvantage which some women and feminists who cannot or do not want to be recognized in these ways are at in the space of the mainstream television.

My analysis shows the ways in which anti-feminist and sexist discourses, as well as certain generic journalistic professional values, affect the opportunities for feminist participation in the mainstream television in general, and talk shows in particular. The interviewees identified hostile anti-feminism and homophobia of other participants and audiences, and confrontational and anti-analytical features of talk shows, as the major obstacles to feminist and LGBT activists

who seek to participate in talk shows. Because of that, the Serbian interviewees from the NGOs Labris and Women and Work, avoided talk shows, whereas others, the Serbian feminist politician and academic and Croatian activists from B.a.b.e. and Women's Network of Croatia, believed that they should take part in them. However, even when these problems do not dissuade the activists from taking part in the programmes, they limit and shape the opportunities for their participation. As some activists testify, anti-analytical character of talk shows such as *Sanya* pushes participants to oversimplify their points, whereas the confrontational character of many talk show episodes is another obstacle to feminist participants as they have to advance feminist views in very hostile environments. Finally, the activists' awareness of the anti-feminist discourses pushes them to legitimize themselves in terms of the mainstream discourses about gender equality and femininity, which possibly re-draws the boundaries between the acceptable and unacceptable faces of feminism.

However, it is important to note that these are the activists' accounts of the difficulties they experience with the problems posed by participation in the mainstream television genres such as talk shows and not an analysis of their actual performances. In the sample of the talk shows episodes that I analyzed (See Chapters 5 and 6), I did not encounter any instances where activists legitimized themselves in terms of their marriage status, family or motherhood. In the selected episodes, particularly in the Croatian *Latinita*, the feminist guests mainly sought to provide evidence of gender inequality, point out the institutional failures in dealing with gender based violence and discrimination, and discuss possible policies against these problems. Therefore, their presence in the popular television programmes such as talk shows is an important form of feminist media activism – which is again more intense in Croatia than in

Serbia – as they are the main sources of critical perspectives on gender inequality for the mainstream media.

#### 8.4. Conclusion

Through their media statements, publications and trainings for journalists, the Serbian and Croatian women's NGOs perform an important discursive task as they disseminate globally widespread feminist notions of gender sensitive journalism to the interested parties in the local contexts of Serbia and Croatia. However, their presentation of various aspects of gender sensitive journalism also reveals several problems with the ways in which feminist demands from the media are advocated in practice. These problems involve: a fragmented and self-evident manner in which gender sensitive journalism is presented; an over-emphasis on women's participation in the prestigious genres of the public sphere and the omission to call for the changes in the genres traditionally associated with the private sphere, e.g. greater men's participation in them; an over-emphasis on media coverage of 'successful women', be they artists, scientists, politicians or business women, whereas the so called ordinary women are largely discussed in terms of covering their problems with gender based discrimination and violence; and a lack of more substantial interrogation of the intersections between gender and class, ethnicity and sexuality in their discussions of gender sensitive journalism.

There are two major ways in which the Serbian and Croatian feminist media activists introduce some elements of gender sensitive journalism to the mainstream television media in the two countries. Firstly, through their educational programmes for journalists, the women's NGOs raise interests among some journalists in gender and LGBT sensitive journalism. Also, through these events the NGOs establish links with pro-feminist journalists, which often lead to



further collaboration. Secondly, some feminist media activists also try to influence the mainstream, popular television programmes by participating in them. The activists' accounts of their experiences with the popular television programmes, such as talk shows, reveal specific difficulties in presenting feminist viewpoints in the mainstream television contexts. Widespread negative stereotypes about feminists, coupled with a confrontational and anti-analytical character of many television talk shows, often limit what and how feminist guests can argue in these programmes. Nevertheless, whether and how the popular television programmes involve feminist perspectives partly depends on whether there are feminist activists ready to appear in them. Thus, judging by the programmes I examined, this type of their activism is important, as the activists are the main source of feminist criticisms of gender inequalities as well as the information about the data and policies related to women.

Finally, both of these types of feminist media activism are more influential in Croatia than in Serbia. The Croatian women's NGOs have established better links with several prominent journalists working for the public broadcaster, whereas the main Serbian women's NGO that conducted trainings in gender sensitive journalism has fewer links with the journalists working for the channels with national coverage, as the NGO has focused on the local media. Also, the interviewed Croatian women's media NGO activists have tried to be present in the popular television genres, such as talk shows, more than their counterparts in Serbia. The interviewed Serbian NGO media activists largely avoided popular television programmes, such as talk shows, because of their confrontational and anti-analytical character. Among the Serbian interviewees, only the feminist politician and the academic have had experiences with this type of programmes. Consequently, women's NGOs are better represented in the Croatian popular television programmes than in the Serbian programmes which I examined.

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

### 9.1. Introduction

My thesis has explored feminist understandings of gender sensitive journalism, the ways in which its elements are present in, or missing from, the particular cases of television journalism, and the factors that further or hinder its advancement in the television media. These questions, which engage with feminist debates about the cultural politics concerning the media and feminist research into gender and journalism, were investigated in relation to the specific contexts of Serbia and Croatia in the period after 2000, which is a turning point when the authoritarian regimes were ousted in the two countries. The Serbian and Croatian television media in this period were highly suitable cases for analysis of questions about gender sensitive journalism, because the post-authoritarian attempts to install legislative, political and institutional changes across the board led to dynamic activities in the field of gender and the media too. The successes or failures of women's NGOs' or professional journalistic associations' efforts to push through certain media and gender-related initiatives opened or foreclosed opportunities for the introduction of gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream media. In the concluding chapter, I revisit my findings with regard to my main questions, discuss how they contribute to the particular areas of scholarship, and comment on the limitations of my thesis and the new areas of research that it led me to.

## 9.2. Gender Sensitive Journalism as a Normative Ideal

My understanding of gender sensitive journalism builds on normative ideas about the media representation of historically marginalized and underprivileged social groups in general, and women in particular, as discussed in two bodies of literature. Firstly, feminist and radical democratic critics of the liberal and Habermasian approaches to the media and the public sphere, such as Benhabib (1998), Fraser (1993), Landes (1998), Curran (1991), Carpignano et al. (1993) and others (See Section 2.2), were my important point of departure, as they have focused on the ways in which such groups have been excluded from the public sphere and on the alternatives to such exclusions. Secondly, feminist ideas, arguments and debates about the desirable changes in media representations of women, which are scattered in a variety of strands of feminist media research, have been my other point of departure. These ideas are discussed in overviews of the development of feminist media studies (Cirksena and Cuklanz 1992; Gill 2007; van Zoonen 1994), research on feminist media advocacy (Byerly and Ross 2006; Gallagher, 2001), specialist women's journalism (Mitchell 2000; Coward 1987; Werden 1996) and media representations of women (Macdonald 1995).

By interrogating and pulling together different normative arguments discussed in the two bodies of work, I identified the main features of, and controversies about, a normative ideal of gender sensitive journalism, as a journalistic practice that seeks to redress gender inequality in and through the media. In my understanding, gender sensitive journalism has two dimensions, like any other critical project that seeks to tackle marginalization and other forms of discriminatory treatment of underprivileged social groups. It is defined both with regard to what the media should not do in order to avoid discrimination against women, and which journalistic practices should be put in place instead. Gender sensitive journalism would ensure: provision of

information about, and opportunities for deliberation, of ‘women’s issues’ which do not relegate women back into the private sphere; increased and diversified participation of female sources and subjects across the board; and provision of diverse media representations of women in which they can recognize their historically specific experiences. In these ways, the media would serve women as citizens by securing the provision of information, deliberation, participation and representations *of, for* and *by* this particular social group. In addition, gender sensitive journalism would avoid the widespread forms of sexism in the media such as: gender segregation across genres along the line of public private division; limiting and derogatory representations of women; and particular forms of sexist treatment of female sources and agents, such as highlighting their gender, appearance, age, marital status etc.

Such a definition of gender sensitive journalism is based in the broadened concepts of political participation and citizenship, and notions of appropriate issues, genres and styles through which the media serve citizenship, as developed in feminist and radical democratic approaches to the relationships between the media, the public sphere and citizenship (See Section 2.2). My definition of gender sensitive journalism is premised on the understanding of political participation as pertaining not only to the formal political processes and organizations, but also to the circulation of discourses and representations of social groups, as Benhabib (1998), Carpignano et al (1993), Jones (2006), and Livingstone and Lunt (1994) argue. That is why gender sensitive journalism concerns not only provision of information of concern to women and opportunities for deliberation about these issues, but also non-discriminatory representations of women. In addition, following Fraser’s and Landes’s criticisms of Habermas and Curran’s criticisms of liberalism, my understanding of gender sensitive journalism assumes that that in serving citizenship the media should also cover issues related to the private sphere and dispense

with the gendered hierarchy between different forms of expression, which has traditionally privileged ‘masculine’ rational debate at the expense of more ‘feminine’ emotional, bodily or performative styles. Similarly, in line with Carpignano et al. or van Zoonen (2005) who criticize the traditional dismissal of entertainment as a resource for citizenship, I emphasized that not only information genres but also entertainment genres, such as talk shows, should be taken into account as potential resources for gender sensitive journalism.

My discussion also addressed some specific problems related to particular elements of gender sensitive journalism. In terms of the coverage of issues of particular concern to women, I have pointed out three different ways in which this notion has been used in the feminist texts I examined: ‘feminine’, i.e. traditionally defined ‘women’s issues’ as pertaining to the private sphere; ‘female’, i.e. issues where women have a particular experience related to a particular issue; and ‘feminist’, i.e. issues related to gender inequality. I have argued that gender sensitive journalism would involve coverage of ‘women’s issues’ in ‘feminist’ and ‘female’ sense, without addressing them in ‘feminine’ terms as limited to the private sphere.

In contrast to the calls for the specific media provision for women, as expressed in the notion of ‘women’s issues’, feminist calls for women’s greater participation in the media express demands for equality, as they are demands for their participation as sources and agents across the board. However, in both cases, as the experiences of producers working for the specialist programmes have shown, the small volume of programming results in the problem known as ‘burden of representation’, where producers struggle to address and represent particular social groups in all their diversity (Arthurs 1994; Cottle 1997). Therefore, gender sensitive journalism would work best if it were coupled with other critical forms of journalism that aim to redress other social inequalities.

Finally, concerning media representations of women, I addressed the post-structuralist feminist criticisms of the widespread feminist demand for more ‘realistic’ and ‘positive’ representations of women. By drawing on other feminist scholars, such as D’Acci (1994), Gledhill (1978), Macdonald (1995) and Gill (2007), I argued for a reformulated version of this demand along the lines of diversity and recognition. In addition to providing more diverse representations of women, gender sensitive journalism would also draw on the locally and historically specific experiences of women to provide representations in which female audiences could recognize themselves as their contemporaries.

Although such a description of gender sensitive journalism has been initially based in my reading of feminist media scholarship, it is important to note that a great part of that literature speaks of actual journalistic practices in specialist women’s media and programmes, e.g. Feldman (2000), Mitchell (2000) and Werden (1996), or discusses the principles guiding feminist media advocacy, e.g. Byerly and Ross (2006) and Gallagher (2001). It is, therefore, very important to point out that the feminist normative ideas that informed my definition of gender sensitive journalism are actually rooted in feminist journalistic and media advocacy practices. The main feminist demands from the media, such as calls for more coverage of ‘women’s issues’ or women’s greater participation, are globally widespread as a set of feminist common places in journalistic and activist practices. These demands are also formulated in globally influential documents such as Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and disseminated locally by women’s NGOs, as my analysis of the Serbian and Croatian feminist media advocacy shows (See Chapter 8).

Therefore, my thesis has also showed how the feminist journalistic ideal is articulated and advocated in the case of Serbian and Croatian feminist media advocacy. Through their various

media-oriented activities, the Serbian and Croatian feminist media activists articulate and publicize common feminist demands from the media. They criticize the limiting or derogatory nature of stereotypes about women, marginalization of women and sexist treatment of female sources, and call for more coverage of ‘women’s issues’, women’s greater participation and more diverse, ‘realistic’ and ‘positive’ representations of women. In these ways, they perform an important task of articulating and publicizing some of the main features of gender sensitive journalism for the journalists, interested politicians and the general public.

However, their articulation of these features also reveals several problems in the ways in which gender sensitive journalism is advocated in feminist activist practice. The Serbian and Croatian activists often formulate their demands from the media in fragmented and self-evident ways. For example, the activists do not address reflexively the controversial character of notions such as ‘women’s issues’ or ‘realistic’ and ‘positive’ representations of women. Furthermore, my analysis reveals the great extent to which the desirable journalistic practices are defined as the opposite to the sexist practices. For instance, since the association between women and the private sphere is identified as sexist, the activists’ overemphasize the increase in women’s participation in the public sphere. As a result, the necessary changes in the genres associated with the private sphere are ignored. Also, the overemphasis on women’s participation in the public sphere can lead to the feminist hegemonic femininity expressed in the figure of a successful professional woman. The participation of other women in the media is most commonly discussed under the rubric of ‘realistic’ representations, which usually concern the media coverage of women’s problems with different forms of gender inequality. Finally, while there are some overlaps between feminist and LGBT media advocacy, and a declarative support to improving media representation of women who suffer from multiple discrimination, a more

systematic attention to the ways in which other social inequalities intersect with gender inequality is still lacking in the Serbian and Croatian feminist media advocacy.

### 9.3. Gender Sensitivity and the Serbian and Croatian Television Programmes

Departing from my analysis of feminist ideas about gender sensitive journalism, my thesis has examined the ways in which elements of gender sensitive journalism are present in, or missing from, two particular groups of television programmes in Serbia and Croatia. I looked at how popular television talk shows, which regularly cover ‘women’s’ and gender-related issues, and the pro-feminist activist television programmes, fare with regard to the identified elements of gender sensitive journalism: coverage of ‘women’s issues’; women’s greater participation; and more diverse representations of women. In the actual journalistic practice, each of these areas relevant to gender sensitive journalism is informed both by sexist and feminist discourses and particular constellations of different types of journalism. My analysis has, therefore, showed how these different discourses and particular professional journalistic values inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the selected programmes.

Except for the activist programmes which mainly feature sexist discourses in order to challenge them or as illustrations of the problem of gender inequality, my sample of the talk show programmes provided rich material for the analysis of the impact of sexist discourses on gender sensitivity of television journalism. Sexist definitions of femininity as pertaining to the private sphere or as inferior to masculinity greatly inform the talk shows’ approach to ‘women’s issues’, women’s participation, treatment of female sources, and representations of women. The talk show programmes in my sample give sexist meanings to ‘women’s issues’ in three ways. In the case of the Serbian daytime talk show *Catherine*, the host explicitly referred to issues such as



‘childcare, relationships and beauty’ as typical women’s concerns. The two Croatian talk shows, the daytime programme *Sanya* and the evening programme *Latinitsa*, were not explicit in that sense but they established these issues as women’s concerns by discussing them largely with women. Occasionally, the two programmes involved a minority of men in these discussions, although not always successfully. In *Sanya*, men who were invited to discuss traditional ‘women’s issues’ such as parenting or beauty, reinforced traditional masculinity as opposed to such concerns. In *Latinitsa*, such attempts were more successful as the programme included men who talked about their role in parenting or taking care about their looks without distancing themselves from such activities, although they were still a minority. Finally, the Serbian evening talk show *Key* made a strong link between femininity and issues such as commodified sexuality and women’s relation to men as it routinely discussed women with regard to these issues.

Women’s participation in the talk shows is also informed by sexist definitions of femininity, which is visible in gender segregation along the lines of the public/private division and in the particular sexist ways of treating female guests in these programmes. Thus, the daytime talk shows, *Sanya* and *Catherine*, which are characterized by a mixture of ‘women’s’ and lifestyle, psychological and social pathology issues, show high levels of women’s participation. Conversely, the two evening discussion programmes, *Latinitsa* and *Key*, which discuss a wide range of issues that also includes ‘hard news’, show lower levels of women’s participation and marginalize women in the episodes that deal with the areas such as politics, war or economy.

Furthermore, my sample includes the following forms of the sexist treatment of female sources: addressing female guests with regard to their appearance or relationships with men; using masculine forms of nouns for female professionals; differential treatment of male and

female sources; and belittling as a means of keeping control over conversation. However, the Croatian and the Serbian talk show programmes differ in this regard. In my sample of the Croatian programmes, only anti-feminist guests harassed feminist guests by referring to their looks or relationships in disparaging ways. The two Serbian talk shows included all other forms of sexist treatment of female sources, which in the case of *Key* also came from the host. Both in *Catherine* and *Key*, female hosts' pretty appearance was highlighted by their male guests, and both hosts used masculine nouns for women. But the sexist treatment of female participants stopped there in *Catherine*, whereas *Key* involved other mentioned forms as well. The host in *Key* was exposed to sexist belittling by a male politician, but she herself also imposed sexist subject positions on her female guests by addressing them in terms of their beauty or relationships with men or by privileging male guests' contributions over those by female guests.

All four talk show programmes circulated sexist representations of women through the explicit statements about women given by guests or hosts. Such statements drew from three sources: common sense assumptions about femininity as pertaining to the private sphere; religious and/or conservative gender politics; and derogatory definitions of femininity as inferior to masculinity. However, the talk show participants were positioned in different ways towards these statements. Pro-feminist participants quoted such statements in order to challenge them or illustrate their criticisms of sexism. Anti-feminist guests endorsed such statements, advancing sexist representations of women. And lastly, sometimes these statements were also endorsed by some programmes through their hosts' statements.

The talk shows differ with regard to the dominant sources of sexist representations of women, as well as with regard to the types of participants who endorsed such representations. A considerable number of Croatian participants who advanced sexist representations of women

drew on religious and/or conservative political agenda. The Serbian participants who advanced such representations did not support any explicit political position but largely drew on common sense sexist assumptions about women as defined through their roles in the private sphere or their appearance and sexuality. In the Croatian programmes and in the Serbian daytime talk show *Catherine*, such representations were mainly based in the celebration of motherhood as the main women's role. This was different in the other Serbian programme, *Key*, whose several episodes represented women in terms of their commodified sexuality and relation to men. The programmes also differ in terms of the presence of derogatory representations of women. Except for *Catherine* which does not follow the confrontational format, all other three talk shows included derogatory statements about women, which suggested their inferiority to men, vilified them, disparaged them in terms of appearance, or questioned their sexual 'propriety'.

However, the programmes vary with regard to the types of participants who advanced such statements. In the Croatian *Latinita*, such statements were not espoused by the host but mainly by anti-feminist guests. In the two daytime talk shows, *Sanya* and *Catherine*, the hosts regularly endorsed sexist representations of women in terms of traditional definitions of femininity as linked to motherhood, romance, marriage and beauty. However, they did not themselves advance derogatory statements about women. Conversely, the host of the Serbian talk show *Key* endorsed derogatory statements about women herself as a legitimate position in a debate, e.g. by posing questions such as "Did women bring more good or harm to Serbian politics?" In my view, this difference comes about because of the different types of sexist discourses about women: the dominant sexist discourse in *Sanya*, *Latinita* and *Catherine* defines women in terms of their role as mothers, whereas the dominant sexist discourse in *Key* defines women in terms of their commodified sexuality and relationships to men. In the first

case, the celebration of motherhood acts as a ‘buffer zone’ against derogatory representations of women, whereas in the second case the sexualization of women is accompanied with more misogynistic forms of sexism.

My discussion of sexist discourses about femininity mapped out the ways in which gender sensitive journalism was missing from my sample of the Serbian and Croatian popular television journalism. My further analysis has showed how feminist discourses about gender inequality also exert influence on mainstream television journalism. As a result, there are pro-feminist programmes which attempt to be gender sensitive, but various participants in the popular talk shows also invoke feminist discourses. When the selected programmes or individual participants in them drew on feminist discourses, they confronted gender inequality in and through the media in the ways they addressed women’s issues, participation and representations. Most commonly, pro-feminist programmes, journalists and other participants in them addressed ‘women’s issues’ in feminist terms, by focusing on different forms of gender inequality. Sometimes, ‘women’s issues’ were addressed in ‘female’ terms as well, as in the case of talk show episodes about breast cancer or Fade In’s reports about services for women, e.g. their report on women-only shelter for drug addicts. In these cases, ‘women’s issues’ were not politicized either in ‘feminine’ or feminist ways, but the goal was rather to provide information that was of specific concern to women. Admittedly, only a tiny portion of ‘women’s issues’ was addressed in this way in my sample, as ‘women’s issues’ were almost always ideologically inflected either in ‘feminine’ or feminist direction.

The examined programmes varied greatly in terms of the ways in which they covered feminist issues. The main difference between the programmes concerns the extent to which gender inequality is acknowledged and treated as a social and a political problem. The activist

programmes, Serbian *Speck of Respect* (RTS) and *B92 Investigates* (TV B92) and Croatian Fade In's production for HRT, as well as the Croatian talk show *Latinitsa*, addressed issues related to gender inequality from within the overall critical perspective on this problem. They also established connections between stories about women's experiences of gender discrimination or violence against women and critical analyses of social, economic and political structures of gender inequality, institutional failures to combat gender discrimination, and activist, political and legislative initiatives against gender inequality. These programmes did not apply the professional value of 'balance of views' to discussions of gender inequality in ways which equalized the legitimacy of feminist and anti-feminist positions. The anti-feminist and sexist statements were in a minority and feminist, counter-statements often surrounded them. In the case of *Latinitsa*, although the programme often addressed feminist issues by staging studio debates between anti-feminist and feminist guests, the former were still in a minority, as the programme mainly acknowledged the problem of gender inequality through the host's statements and its documentary reports.

While the activist programmes and *Latinitsa* were largely supportive of their feminist guests' perspectives, the other three talk show programmes varied in this regard. As women largely populate the two daytime talk shows, *Sanya* and *Catherine*, they generally displayed an affirmative stance towards women, which occasionally led them to engage with 'women's problems', many of which arise from gender inequality. Interestingly, it was *Sanya*'s sexist celebration of motherhood as women's primary role that led it to critically explore gender discrimination against mothers and pregnant women. In the case of these problems, the programme even reached beyond the public/private division as it considered their institutional, legal and political dimensions. Similarly, in *Catherine*, the host regularly critically commented

on gender inequality in the areas such as parenting or work-life balance. Finally, the Serbian programme *Key* featured feminist criticisms of gender inequality to the extent that it occasionally involved feminist participants who espoused such views.

However, all three programmes' take on gender inequality was very limited for two reasons. Firstly, they often addressed gender inequality in ways that individualized and psychologized the problem, by presenting it as problems in male-female romantic relationships (*Sanya*), by systematically avoiding any discussion of politics (*Catherine*), or by reducing the problem of gender inequality to the psychological questions of male prejudices or women's character failures (*Key*). Secondly, in most discussions about issues that relate to gender inequality, *Sanya* and *Key* staged debates or even quarrels between feminist and anti-feminist guests, where they did not address gender inequality as a 'fact' but treated anti-feminist and feminist positions as equally legitimate.

The treatment of women's participation and representations are another two areas where the activist programmes and the talk shows differ. The reversal of the dominant, sexist patterns of marginalization and devaluation of women is the main feature of the activist programmes. The reversal is visible in several ways. Firstly, these programmes had the highest gender gap in terms of participation in my sample. Namely, women made between 78.0% and 84.3% in them. Such overrepresentation of women can be compared only to the same levels of overrepresentation of men in the news. Secondly, these programmes strived to provide publicity for feminist activists, politicians and academics, who otherwise often have to struggle to communicate their views in the staged mediated quarrels with anti-feminists. In the activist programmes, feminist participants publicized their activities, initiatives, positions, criticisms, and services they offer to women. The activist programmes provided publicity for some other groups of women as well.

They enabled women who experienced gender based discrimination and violence to be heard in the mainstream media, and they included high numbers of female experts. The reversal is also visible at the level of the activist programmes' treatment of representations of women. The two most typical ways in which they tried to reverse the dominant marginalization and devaluation of women was to affirm historically significant women, as in Fade In's film *Zagorka* about the first female journalist in South East Europe, or to show women who are successful in traditionally all-male professions, e.g. police.

The four talk shows largely do not display strategies that seek to remedy the traditional marginalization of women in the media, as they followed the typical pattern of gender segregation along the lines of public/private division. However, two further qualifications are necessary here. Firstly, although daytime talk shows *Sanya* and *Catherine* link high women's participation to the issues associated with the private sphere, they are nevertheless supportive of high women's participation throughout the programme, even when issues that do not concern women or gender are discussed. Secondly, *Latinitsa* does contribute to the greater participation of feminist sources in the media, as well as women who suffered from gender discrimination or violence.

In terms of the talk shows' approach to representations of women, they usually addressed the problem of devaluation of women through the affirmation of 'successful women'. This approach sometimes took a form of popular feminism, where a diverse range of 'successful women' was affirmed and their stories were also addressed with regard to gender discrimination. However, it was often coupled with the production of a hegemonic figure of a 'successful woman', especially in *Sanya* and *Catherine*, which almost always united professional success

with motherhood. Finally, in *Key*, the affirmation of ‘successful women’ was used to negate the existence of gender discrimination.

In sum, when elements of gender sensitive journalism are present in the Serbian and Croatian mainstream television media, they most commonly involve: critical coverage of different forms of gender based discrimination and violence; provision of access to the media for feminist activists, female experts and women who are victims of gender discrimination and violence; and attempts to reverse marginalization and devaluation of women by representing women who are historically significant, extraordinary in their achievements, or successful in traditionally all-male jobs. As my analysis showed, the strong orientation towards critical and institutional journalism was necessary for the programmes to support these elements of gender sensitive journalism.

However, the strategy of the reversal of sexist discourses about women, coupled with the dominant orientation towards institutional journalism, also led to an overemphasis on the public sphere, both with regard to the coverage of gender inequality and with regard to women’s participation. As a result, issues traditionally related to the private sphere, such as love, sexuality, housework, were neglected, save for the great attention to the problem of violence against women. Also, the question of men’s greater participation in discussions about these issues was ignored. This is of course the consequence of the public/private division in journalism: when institutional journalism is missing, gender inequality is individualized and psychologized, but when it is dominant, the private sphere is often neglected. The exception is the talk show *Latinitsa*, which covers both issues related to the private and the public sphere, and is therefore able to discuss critically both love and politics.



Finally, my programme analysis revealed both similarities between the programmes in the two countries, e.g. between the two daytime talk shows or the activist programmes, and significant differences. The main similarity regards the relative opening of the media to gender equality issues and sources from women's NGOs due to feminist activism and gender equality policies within official politics. However, due to greater prominence of gender issues in the Croatian official politics, the Croatian popular talk shows included more feminist guests and discussed issues related to gender inequality in more politicized ways than the two Serbian talk shows, as the former looked at the institutional and political dimensions of these problems whereas the latter ones mainly did not. While that is the first major difference between the examined Serbian and Croatian programmes, the second major difference concerns the forms of sexist discourse. In Croatia, sexist and anti-feminist discourses are often linked to religious and/or conservative gender politics, whereas in Serbia they are not connected to any particular political position. Instead, sexist discourses about women are more diverse in the Serbia programmes I examined as they include not only emphasis on women's role as mothers as in *Sanya*, *Latinitsa* and *Catherine*, but also discourses about women as sexual commodities and accessories to men in *Key*.

These differences can be explained in the light of my discussion of gender politics in Serbia and Croatia in the nineties and after 2000. Due to the general greater prominence of religious and nationalist gender politics in Croatia than in Serbia after the mid-nineties (see 3.4.), the Catholic cult of motherhood has a hegemonic position within anti-feminist and sexist discourses there. This is not to say that Croatian women are not sexualized in ways that militate against their participation in the public sphere. But I do believe that the hegemonic sexist cult of

motherhood has marginalized other forms of sexism, such as commodification of female sexuality or derogatory discourses about women, in my sample of programmes.

Conversely, sexualization of women has been more intense in Serbia because it was strengthened by the popular turbo folk culture in Serbia, which was promoted by TV Pink, one of the two nationwide commercial channels that appeared in the mid-nineties. As I explained, even a new term ‘sponsorusa’ (‘kept woman’) appeared in the Serbian popular culture and remained prominent even after the nineties (see 3.4.). Post-2000 continuity with this type of sexist discourse is evidenced by some episodes of *Key* that emphasize commodified sexuality as a prominent aspect of femininity. The links between this type of sexist discourse and official politics are less visible than in the case of nationalist and religious pro-natalist discourses, but this is not to say that it is not political, as it has been used as a political weapon against individual women active in the public sphere (see 3.4.). For example, sexualized or even fake pornographic images of female politicians and journalists have been published by certain media as part of the political attacks against these women. While undermining women through their sexualization is not unique to politics as a field or to a particular political discourse, it would be worth exploring further the relationship between sexualization of women and the violent, ‘masculine’ character of nationalist politics in Serbia, as evidenced by these cases. Perhaps not accidentally, all women targeted by such attacks were linked to the media, political parties or blocks that have opposed nationalist politics and its protagonists.

#### 9.4. Factors that Advance or Hinder Gender Sensitive Journalism in Serbia and Croatia

In investigating the factors that inform the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism, my thesis has followed the argument made by Dierf-Pierre and Lofgren-Nilsson (2004) in their

historical study about the intersections between gender politics and journalistic ideals in the Swedish television media. They argued that the place of women in the news is informed at the nexus of three structures: notions about gender, journalistic ideals, and the agency of individual women and men. My thesis applies and extends their argument, as I argue that the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism are informed by the following three factors: discourses about gender and feminism; professional journalistic values within different types of journalism, such as committed and neutral, institutional and popular; and feminist media activism, which includes not only pro-feminist journalists but also external feminist media advocates. In addition, as I found in my research, the institutional support within particular television channels for certain types of journalism and gender politics was of paramount importance for the opportunities pro-feminist journalists had in their attempts to introduce elements of gender sensitive journalism.

While my programme analysis already discussed the impact of sexist and feminist discourses and some professional values, I have addressed the influence of the three main factors more fully in Chapters 7 and 8, where I analyze their impact from the perspectives of the Serbian and Croatian journalists and feminist media activists whom I interviewed. The findings of my analysis of the interviews and the feminist activists' media-related documents and publications are further interpreted and explained with regard to the similarities and differences between the television scenes and gender politics in Serbia and Croatia after 2000, which I previously established in Chapter 3.

My analysis of the interviews has showed that the individual journalists' disposition towards discourses about gender and feminism is of great importance for their approach to gender sensitive journalism. This influence comes about in two ways: through journalists' personal commitment to feminist, anti-feminist or sexist discourses or through their awareness of

the dominant discourses about gender and feminism. The journalists' critical stance towards gender inequality was essential for their interest in the coverage of this problem. Such a stance characterized the activist journalists, but also journalists who worked for the talk show *Latinitsa*. The activist journalists' critical stance towards gender inequality led them to pursue gender sensitive journalism and negotiate that interest with their professional obligations. It also meant that they addressed 'women's issues' in feminist terms.

Conversely, when the journalists minimized the extent of gender inequality, as in the cases of the producers of the Serbian talk shows *Key* and *Pyramid*, their interest in the coverage of this problem was also minimal. In addition, when journalists endorsed sexist discourses about femininity and/or anti-feminist discourses, as in the cases of the producers of *Key*, *Sanya* or *Catherine*, they had very little interest in feminist coverage of 'women's issues', but approached them either with regard to appearance and domesticity or with regard to commodified female sexuality. This was sometimes the case not only because of the journalists' personal dispositions to these discourses, but also because of their complicity with what they saw as audiences' dominant views. Finally, the awareness of audiences' anti-feminism influenced the pro-feminist journalists as well, as they tried to cover gender inequality in ways that would not provoke audiences' anti-feminism and drive them away.

The journalists' accounts of their approach to 'women's issues', participation and representations, revealed further the ways in which professional journalistic values intersect with their gender politics. My interviewees brought up the following professional values as relevant for their approach to 'women's issues' or participation: the hierarchy between 'hard' and 'soft' issues; novelty and topicality; impartiality and balance of views; public/audiences interest; personalization; and credibility of sources. While some of these values limit the opportunities for

gender sensitive journalism, or for critical journalism in general, the pro-feminist journalists often find the ways to overcome such limitations. Ultimately, my analysis has shown that whether journalists negotiate their pro-feminist and critical approach to journalism with other professional obligations or they cite professional reasons for not pursuing aspects of gender sensitive journalism depends on a mixture of their overall gender politics and dominant orientation towards the particular types of journalism, critical or neutral, institutional or popular.

Some of the mentioned professional values militate against different aspects of gender sensitive journalism. The privileging of ‘hard news’ marginalizes ‘women’s issues’, unless they are a part of official politics in which case that contributes to their greater coverage. The values of novelty and topicality also pose problems to some pro-feminist journalists, as they need to justify the long-term coverage and find links between ‘women’s issues’ and topical events. Impartiality, as one of the central professional journalistic norms, pushes some critical and pro-feminist journalists to make disclaimers where they explain how their critical or pro-feminist stance does not make them biased in favour of women. In addition, the need to win the audiences over influences the way in which critical journalists address feminist concerns. Their coverage of these problems is in thus a constant dialogue with the imagined sexist or anti-feminist responses of the viewers, as they try to reach out to the viewers, raise their interest and empathy for victims of gender discrimination and violence. Finally, credibility as an important professional criterion in the selection of sources influences some of the interviewed pro-feminist journalists to look primarily for expertise rather than try to increase women’s participation as sources.

However, my analysis of the pro-feminist journalists’ accounts of their work has also shown that they often find the ways to overcome the above-mentioned limitations. The journalists who are committed to covering gender inequality actively seek external events that

can be used to justify the coverage of gender inequality in terms of the relevance, novelty and topicality. Furthermore, although these journalists often apply the neutral journalistic norm of presenting ‘both sides’, most of them are oriented towards committed journalism and thus do not apply balance of views in ways that treat anti-discriminatory and discriminatory positions as equally legitimate. The pro-feminist journalists and those working for *Latinitsa* include sexist and anti-feminist perspectives but in order to confront them through the overall critical conceptualization of their programmes. Also, while all interviewed journalists take great care to win over the audiences and thus apply many professional values from popular journalism, such as the emphasis on personalization, this concern does not influence the pro-feminist journalists to keep away from the critical or analytical coverage of gender inequality for fears that that might bring poor ratings. Lastly, a minority of the pro-feminist journalists also says that they actively look for more female sources whenever that is possible.

Conversely, the lack of pro-feminist and general critical orientation among other talk show journalists, coupled with the predominance of neutral and popular orientations in journalism, meant that they cited professional reasons for the aspects of their work that are, in my view, obstacles to gender sensitive journalism in their programmes. Professional values such as the priority of ‘hard news’, novelty and topicality were mentioned both as reasons against the coverage of issues such as gender inequality and as explanations for marginal status of these issues or female sources. For example, a journalist transferred the responsibility for the selection of issues and sources from him/herself to the ‘objective’ lack of ‘events’ related to issues such as gender inequality and female sources in the areas such as politics.

Furthermore, in discussing their approach to the norm of ‘balance of views’, these journalists revealed several reasons why discriminatory statements or treatment of female

participants are not challenged in their programmes, as I have shown in my analysis of some of these talk shows. Most of all, a belief that journalists have to be neutral with regard to different positions on any given issue and/or a lack of critical awareness of the discriminatory or even hate speech character of some statements result in an approach that does not challenge such statements. But even when a journalist recognizes some statements as discriminatory, the fast pace of talk show production pushes such concerns to the margins, when there is no conscious political commitment to confront or edit out such statements. Finally, the predominant orientation towards popular journalism leads most of the interviewed talk show journalists to generally avoid covering gender inequality or to cover it in anti-analytical and a-political ways. This is the case because these journalists believe that having feminist issues and guests, as well as expert or academic analysis, will result in poor ratings. In addition, the feminine popular journalism, as exemplified by the two daytime talk shows, largely excludes discussions of institutional politics with some exceptions in *Sanya*.

In addition to the discourses about gender and feminism and journalistic professional values, the agency of feminist media advocates is the third important factor that shapes the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism in the mainstream television media. Keeping the focus on the selected cases of the Serbian and Croatian television journalism, my thesis has shown how gender sensitive journalism has been furthered both internally, by the pro-feminist producers of these programmes, and externally, by the members of women's NGOs and other feminist actors. However, in terms of the success of their initiatives, I found a considerable difference at the level of day-to-day journalistic practice and at the levels of programme and channel policy. While the pro-feminist journalists found different ways to overcome various limitations posed by the professional values in their daily work, their success at the policy level

was much more variable. It depended on the power they had and on the opportunities for critical and public service journalism within the particular television channels.

When and where the pro-feminist journalists were in powerful positions, as it was the case with some of the interviewed HRT journalists, they advanced the coverage of ‘women’s issues’ and feminist activism as part of the public service remit. In addition, when there were institutional conditions for the development of public service and critical, investigative journalism at least in some departments of the television channels, as in the cases of the Croatian HRT and the Serbian TV B92, gender sensitive journalism was pursued as part of these broader journalistic orientations. Conversely, where the opportunities for critical and public service journalism were greatly reduced by the authoritarian and populist orientations in journalism, as it was the case in the Serbian RTS, the management did not show support for pro-feminist journalism either.

But many initiatives of the pro-feminist journalists whose work I examined, can be traced back to the media advocacy of Serbian and Croatian women’s NGOs, such as B.a.b.e., Pescanik or Labris. In examining the agency of feminist media advocates as the third factor, my thesis looked into the impact of the Serbian and Croatian women’s NGOs’ media activism on the presence or the lack of gender sensitive journalism in the examined programmes and television channels. By looking at the links between the pro-feminist journalists and women’s NGOs, I found that the NGOs’ seminars for journalists raised interest in gender sensitive journalism or LGBT issues among most of the interviewed pro-feminist journalists. Thus, some of their programmes I examined were a direct outcome of the seminars, which also led to different forms of further collaboration between the NGOs and the interested journalists, e.g. broadcasting NGO production on HRT or introducing aspects of gender sensitive language on TV B92.



Furthermore, I also analyzed the activists' experiences with the television appearances in order to assess the extent to which they tried to influence the popular programmes, such as the talk shows that I examined, and the limitations posed by the mainstream television on feminist attempts to publicize critical perspectives on 'women's issues'. The interviewed activists differed with regard to the extent to which they accepted media invitations as a matter of principle, negotiated on a case-to-case basis whether they should participate in the possibly unfavourable conditions for feminists, or generally avoided participating in confrontational contexts. These differences shed additional light on the presence or absence of feminist perspectives in the Serbian and Croatian talk shows, which I shall address shortly.

But whether they principally took part in popular programmes such as talk shows, or avoided them, they perceived similar problems with regard to such media appearances. The activists complained about the anti-analytical and confrontational journalistic approaches and anti-feminist stereotypes as the biggest problems they encountered in this regard. As some of them argued, such journalistic approaches push them to oversimplify issues and make it very difficult to present feminist views as they are often in a minority and in hostile situations. In addition, the awareness of the possible anti-feminist reactions to their contributions sometimes results in the activists' attempts to dispel negative stereotypes about feminists in their media appearances. But by trying to win over the wide audiences of the mainstream media, the activists sometimes legitimize their feminist positions and themselves through references to the most widely accepted aspects of gender equality and features of traditional femininity, thus revealing again how the dominant sexist and anti-feminist discourses inform the discursive conditions for the communication of feminist arguments and identities in the mainstream media.

Finally, I have interpreted my findings concerning the selected programmes and the factors relevant for gender sensitive journalism from the perspectives of the broader contexts of Serbia and Croatia. In establishing the links between the individual cases and the broader contexts comparatively, I have achieved two things. Firstly, I provided a thorough insight into the ways in which the political contexts, the characteristics of the television scenes, and gender politics all had impact on the ways in which television journalism is informed by sexist and feminist discourses in Serbia and Croatia. I have also explained why and how gender sensitive initiatives resulted from these particular contexts or were hindered by them. But secondly, by examining the two countries that had some significant differences in terms of the three main factors I identified as important for gender sensitive journalism, I have also shown how these differences also led to different outcomes in terms of gender sensitive journalism.

After the political changes in 2000, gender sensitive journalistic initiatives, and a greater attention to the problems of gender inequality and violence against women generally, appeared in the Serbian and Croatian television media due to the same reasons. Because of the feminist activism of women's NGOs and some female politicians, backed by UNIFEM and EU requirements in the course of integration processes, issues such as violence against women or gender discrimination became much more a part of official politics. As much of journalistic work is driven by the events and sources in the area of official politics, the bigger political prominence of some 'women's issues' resulted in their greater coverage in the media and more access for some feminist sources. In addition, feminist media advocacy, which involved trainings for journalists and different forms of collaboration, resulted in the appearance of pro-feminist journalists who tried to introduce aspects of gender sensitive journalism in their own work or at the more general levels of programme and channel policy. However, the differences in the speed

of institutionalization of gender equality politics, the opportunities for public service and critical journalism in the television media, and the scope of feminist media activism, created different outcomes with regard to gender sensitive journalism as well.

In Croatia, the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism were greater than in Serbia for all these reasons. Although the institutionalization of gender equality politics was mired in numerous problems in Croatia, as I showed in Chapter 3, that process nevertheless opened the mainstream public sphere to feminist concerns and sources from women's NGOs. 'Women's issues' became politicized because of that, but also because of the political initiatives of the Catholic Church in the areas of gender and sexuality. In this situation, the media have become the main arena of conflict over gender politics (Skrabalo and Juric 2005) between feminist groups and the nationalist circles linked to the Catholic Church. As a result, issues related to gender (equality) politics are more prominent and politicized in my sample of the Croatian programmes than in the Serbian programmes. They are discussed with regard to concrete political actions, processes and the work of official institutions not only in the activist programmes but also in some episodes of the popular talk shows.

Gender sensitive journalism was further enabled in parts of HRT programme in the course of the transformation of HRT into the public service broadcaster. In some departments, such as Mosaic Programmes that included *Good Morning Croatia* and *Latinita*, public service was conceptualized in terms of the greater coverage of NGO concerns and critical journalism. This concept of the public service is by no mean uncontested in HRT, as the recent closure of the programmes such as *Latinita* shows. Also, the possibilities for critical journalism oscillated depending on the changes in the management and leading editors of HRT, with the situation

worsening in 2007.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, there has been a strong presence of critical journalists in HRT, some of whom are also gender sensitive.

Furthermore, feminist media advocacy was more intense in Croatia than in Serbia. The women's NGOs, such as B.a.b.e., created good relationships with a number of prominent journalists, some of whom worked for HRT which has been the most powerful broadcaster until recently. Also, members of women's NGOs appeared in the popular programmes, such as talk shows, and were able to utilize to some extent the state institutions for gender equality to pursue their media activism, holding media institutions to account publicly for the ways in which they fulfill their legal obligations to promote gender equality. The most prominent case of this type of activism was the work of the Committee for the media, established at the initiative of women's NGOs as an independent body that should monitor and enforce the implementation of gender equality policies in the media. While the Committee's abolishment by the Governmental Office for Gender Equality shows the limited power of such bodies to exercise their independence from the Government, the work of the Committee presents an important contribution to feminist media activism in Croatia, as it has raised the visibility of the issue of gender equality in the media and repeatedly put pressure on the media-related public institutions to follow the legal requirements concerning gender equality.

In Serbia, women's NGOs and feminist politicians have achieved many important legislative changes and established some state institutions for gender equality but their main initiatives, the Gender Equality Law and the National Policy for Gender Equality, were unsuccessful until 2009. The legislative, political and institutional activities with regard to problems such as violence against women or sex trafficking did result in their greater media

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<sup>65</sup> In 2007, Hloverka Novak Srzić was appointed as the Editor-in-Chief of the News, which raised many protests by HRT journalists, as she was very prominent at HRT in the nineties when the channel was a mouthpiece of HDZ.

coverage. But gender equality politics was still marginalized because of the crises such as the assassination of the Prime Minister in 2003, very high levels of political instability and the political establishment's preoccupation with the questions of the nation-state, triggered by the secession of Montenegro and Kosovo. Accordingly, feminist concerns and sources have been less present in the popular talk shows I examined, and more limited to the pro-feminist programmes. Also, 'women's issues' are not discussed in politicized terms in the popular programmes. That is, there are no explicit political agendas involved or investigations of the failures of institutions to combat gender discrimination or violence against women.

Furthermore, the transformation of RTS into the public service broadcaster was followed by bigger legal irregularities, cruder forms of government control and more political continuity with the previous regime than in Croatia, as I showed in Chapter 3. Therefore, there have been fewer opportunities for critical journalism there and the coverage of NGOs has not been a part of the concept of public service even in limited ways as in HRT. In Serbia, the opportunities for critical and gender sensitive journalism were better at the commercial television channel, TV B92, which is an atypical commercial channel as it was created as a television version of the highly politicized, oppositional radio station in the nineties. Although the channel has undergone waves of commercialization after its inception in 2001, the interest in critical, investigative journalism still survived in its documentary programmes. This enabled gender sensitive journalists to pursue the topics that they were interested in as well. But in terms of viewership, TV B92 is well behind RTS and TV Pink, which are the main competitors for ratings, whereas HRT has had a more powerful position in the television scene of Croatia.

While some Serbian women's NGOs also established links with interested journalists and spurred their gender sensitive initiatives, there has still been a lack of a sustained attempts to

introduce gender sensitive journalism into the television media with the national coverage. In addition, feminist media advocates from women's NGOs, whom I interviewed, largely avoided appearing in the mainstream television programmes, such as talk shows, because of their hostile and confrontational formats. Also, they could not use state institutions and policies for gender equality for their media advocacy and their attempts to utilize media laws and institutions were unsuccessful. Coupled with the previously described problems in the areas of gender equality politics and television media, the less intense feminist media advocacy is yet another reason why gender sensitive journalism was advanced to a lesser extent than in Croatia.

Consequently, it is perhaps not that surprising that my research has uncovered an interesting pattern concerning the influences between the two countries in the area of feminist media activism: they only go in one direction, from Croatia to Serbia. Part of the reason for this is to do with the different pace at which activists in the two countries were able to utilize the political opportunities and financial resources available in the course of EU integration processes after 2000. This influence has come through regional projects which were either initiated from Croatia (such as EQVIWA, a regional project started by the Croatian women's NGO B.a.b.e. and involving Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina) or by various European donors, such as Norway backed programme Women can do it (see Chapter 8). In addition, Croatian NGOs have influenced their Serbian colleagues indirectly, as some types of projects in feminist media activism were done earlier in Croatia than in Serbia and therefore could serve as a starting point for Serbian activists in developing their projects. While these are certainly important reasons that explain the one-directional character of the influences between the two countries, more research is needed into this question. Such an inquiry, which is beyond the scope of my thesis, would need to explore this issue with regard to the recent history of ex- and post-Yugoslav feminism in

the region and the different effects that ex-Yugoslav wars have had on the collaboration between feminists from Croatia and Serbia.

### 9.5. In Fine

My thesis has contributed to the fields of feminist media studies, journalism studies, and feminist and media research on contemporary Serbia and Croatia. By systematically interrogating feminist normative ideas about gender equality in the media at the levels of feminist media scholarship, advocacy and journalistic practice, I pulled together rather scattered feminist arguments and addressed the central debates in this area. As a result, I identified the major features of gender sensitive journalism as a feminist normative ideal and the main problems associated with it. I also provided a more nuanced understanding of some typical feminist demands from the media, such as the calls for more coverage of ‘women’s issues’ or more ‘realistic’ and ‘positive’ representations of women. While Gill (2007) and Macdonald (1995) have already argued that the latter demand should best be understood as a demand for more diversity, I have added that a demand for more realism should be understood with regard to female audiences’ needs to recognize their local, historical experiences in media representations of women, as evidenced in D’Acci’s (1994) research on female audiences of *Cagney and Lacey*.

My further contribution to feminist media studies relates to the research on gender and journalism and feminist media advocacy. More specifically, I engaged with the feminist debates about the relationships between the structural professional and institutional constraints of journalism and feminist agency. In contrast to feminist media scholars, such as Van Zoonen (1989, 1994), who have emphasized the power of institutional and professional constraints over pro-feminist journalists, my research confirmed the findings of other feminist scholars, such as

Barker-Plummer (2000), Byerly (2004), Freeman (2000) and Mills (1997) who have argued that journalists sympathetic to women's movements often used exactly their professional identity and values to argue for a greater coverage of women's and feminist issues. However, I have also found that while they were often able to negotiate the professional constraints at the more immediate level of their day-to-day practice, the possibility to influence the programme or channel policy was much more limited as it depended on their overall power within the channel and the channels' support for critical forms of journalism. By researching the impact of both internal and external feminist media advocates, I have also filled in a gap in feminist media studies since feminist media activism that seeks to change the mainstream media is still an underresearched area, as Byerly and Ross (2006) point out.

In the field of journalism studies, I have particularly dealt with the ways in which different types of journalism, such as neutral and committed, institutional and popular, affect the opportunities for gender sensitive journalism. This topic is closely related to the recent debates between the media scholars who criticize the effects of tabloidization and commercialization on the so called serious journalism and others who argue that popular journalistic genres and entertainment also contribute to citizenship and often do more for the media participation of marginalized social groups (See Sections 2.2 and 2.4.2). While I have principally argued against the dismissal of the popular genres such as talk shows in terms of their contribution to citizenship and gender equality, my findings suggest that although these different types of journalism are mixed in almost all of the examined programmes, only the strong presence of the institutional and committed journalistic orientations resulted in the politicized and critical approaches to gender inequality.



This is not to say that there were no examples of critical popular journalism, as the talk show *Latinitsa* is a good example of such an overlap. Moreover, when popular journalism is coupled with critical and institutional orientations as in *Latinitsa*, it is able to address a broader range of ‘women’s issues’ as it is not limited by the public/private division that informs some activist programmes in informative genres. Also, elements of popular journalism were used with critical purposes by most of the interviewed activist journalists, who emphasized personalization as the best way to provoke audiences’ empathy with victims of gender discrimination and violence. But in other talk shows, the lack of critical journalism resulted in the inclusion of sexist and anti-feminist views as legitimate positions in the debates about gender inequality, and the lack of institutional orientation resulted in individualized and psychologized coverage of gender inequality.

In addition, my thesis is the first full-length study in the areas of gender and journalism and feminist media activism in Serbia and Croatia. Feminist media research on the two countries in the post-authoritarian period after 2000 has been very scarce. It has mainly consisted of small, often activism-driven quantitative studies that register marginalization of women and ‘women’s issues’ in the media (Gallagher, 2005; Isanović 2006; Jemrić 2003a; Jovović 2004; Milivojević 2004; Peščanik 2006; Spears and Seydegart 2000; Vasiljević and Andjelković-Kanzleiter 2008) and a very limited number of papers that cover particular issues, such as sexism in advertising (Kostić 2002), pornography in tabloid press (Kronja 2006), sexist language use (Savić 2004), press coverage of sex trafficking (Dekić 2004), violence against women (Jemrić 2003b; Sarnavka and Kunac 2006; Veselinović 2003) and debates about hate speech against women (Minić 2009). My thesis thus provides the first systematic examination of the gendered character of television journalism and feminist media activism in the two countries. It is also the first to

address these issues by examining the impact of the post-authoritarian political contexts, characteristics of the television scenes and official gender politics on the possibilities for gender sensitive journalism in Serbia and Croatia.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the possible limitations of my research and suggest further areas of inquiry that my work on the thesis led me to. While my findings are based on the extensive sample of television programmes, interview data, other primary sources and secondary literature about Serbia and Croatia, I cannot claim that they exhaust even the complete corpuses of the particular programmes I have studied, e.g. some of the talk shows have had hundreds of episodes, let alone the production within individual television channels or the Serbian and Croatian television scenes. For instance, I have not studied the most popular Serbian commercial television channel, TV Pink, because it lacked the types of programmes that I chose as my main data. Still, TV Pink is a powerful communicator of discourses about gender through other types of programmes, such as reality TV or celebrity talk shows. Nevertheless, as my thesis has sought to identify the typical ways in which the three identified factors inform television journalistic approaches to ‘women’s issues’, participation and representations, my data has been adequate for such analytical purposes. Coupled with the insights from the secondary literature on the Serbian and Croatian television media and gender politics, it also enabled me to establish relationships between my findings and the broader political contexts in the two countries.

During my work on this research, I also became aware of another possible way to approach my research questions. My thesis has had television journalism at its center and looked at feminist media activism only with regard to its influence on the examined programmes and television channels. But my approach could have been the other way around as well. In that case, I could have researched the possibilities for gender sensitive journalism in the television media

by focusing on the successes and failures of women's media activism more generally. In addition to those forms of women's media activism that I already explored in my thesis, such a project could have looked at a greater range of women's NGOs' activities in this area. As I explained in Chapters 4 and 8, Serbian and Croatian feminist media advocacy is varied and in addition to the forms I studied it also involves: media monitoring; daily interaction with journalists and PR activities; alternative media production; award for gender sensitive journalism; and attempts to act through state institutions and use media laws. While I could not focus on these areas presently in any detail as that would go beyond the scope of my thesis, some instances of activism in these areas present interesting problems for the future feminist media research on Serbia and Croatia.

In particular, I would single out two issues worth of researchers' attention. Firstly, given the recent gender equality laws, policies and institutions in the two countries, which have also addressed gender equality in the media although at a very different pace in Croatia and Serbia, feminist media research is needed on whether and how these developments empowered and affected women's media activism in the two countries. Secondly, as the increased attention to feminist issues has opened the media space for some feminist sources, it would be worth studying different women's NGO's responses to such opportunities. This has been a particularly relevant issue for Croatia, as the new opportunities for the mainstream feminist activism have resulted in bitter divisions among women's NGOs.

Possibly, this will be the scenario in Serbia as well now that the National Policy has been finally adopted in 2009. The most recent developments with the media coverage of gay and lesbian NGOs suggest such a possibility. Because of the new Law against Discrimination and the plans for Gay Pride in 2009, these NGOs received huge media coverage. However, the coverage unleashed disagreements among activists about the 'best' way to represent the LGBT

community, where some activists prominent in the media soon became attacked as unrepresentative. While this dynamic was already found by other researchers of the media coverage of social movements elsewhere, it would still be a very current problem for feminist media research on Serbia and Croatia given the recent increase in the media exposure of feminist and LGBT activism. Through my research on gender sensitive journalism, I have tried to make an initial contribution to this field of knowledge.

## **APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

### **Questions for journalists:**

#### **About programme:**

1. Could you tell me something about the history of the programme?
2. How would you describe this programme?

#### **Women's and gender-related issues:**

3. Do you remember some episodes that dealt with 'women's issues'? (Can you tell me something about them?)
4. Do you remember some episodes that dealt with gender-related issues? (Can you tell me something about them?)
5. How do you approach these themes?
6. Do you remember any anecdotes or discussions from working on these themes?

#### **Guests:**

7. What are the criteria according to which guests or sources are selected for the programme?
8. What kind of a combination of guests is a good combination for your programme?
9. Do you pay attention to having both men and women in the programme?
10. Does it happen sometimes that a guest says something offensive about women or any other social group? Do you react to that?

#### **Work process, profession, and environment:**

11. What kind of a team does your programme have?
12. Could you describe to me the process of the production of an episode?
13. What is professionally important to you when you make this programme?
14. What is important to you in relation to the TV channel that broadcasts the programme?
15. In relation to the audience?
16. Does your TV channel influence your programme and how?
17. How much are ratings important to your programme?

#### **Gender and journalism:**

18. Did you experience situations where your gender was relevant in your work?
19. Did you attend any seminars or trainings about gender-sensitive journalism?
20. Do you cooperate with women's NGOs and in what ways?
21. What should gender sensitive journalism entail, in your opinion?

### **Questions for feminist media advocates:**

#### **Activities targeting the media:**

1. Could you tell me about your activities and projects which aim to change the media?

2. Could you tell me about your organization's relations with the media?

**Experiences and Strategies of Advocating Feminist Positions in the Television Media:**

3. Have you had experiences of participating in television programmes? What was it like?
4. What are your strategies when you present feminist positions to the general public?

**Cooperation and relations with other organizations, institutions, and agents regarding feminist media advocacy:**

5. Have you collaborated with other women's NGOs in your feminist media activism?
6. Have you collaborated with journalistic organizations?
7. Have you collaborated with state institutions?

**Understanding of gender sensitive journalism:**

8. What is gender sensitive journalism in your opinion?

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Activist 12. Interview with an ex-member of the Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality, Serbia. 03 Oct 2007.

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Note 4. Note on my conversations with the interviewed producer of *Speck of Respect* and her colleagues at RTS. 30 Nov 2006.

Note 5. Note on my conversation with the interviewed member of staff of the Serbian Governmental Council for Gender Equality 18 Jan 2007.

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Note 14. Note on my conversations with producers and reporters of *Latinitsa*. 15 May 2007, 18 May 2007, 24 May 2007.

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