

# NEGOTIATING SCHOLARSHIP AND ACTIVISM: AN ANALYSIS OF CROATIAN FEMINISTS' NARRATIVES

By  
Mirjana Markovinović

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Supervisor: Professor Elissa Helms

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## **Abstract**

This study was designed to explore how feminist scholars negotiate scholarship and activism in contemporary Croatia. I have conducted semistructured interviews with seven Croatian feminist scholars that work in Zagreb, at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and/or at the NGO Women's Studies Center. Basing my ideas on Allaine Cerwonka's concept of traveling feminist thought and the analysis of interviewees' narratives, I argue that the particularity of Croatian context, with the legacy of socialist feminism and the influence of civil society initiatives in post-state socialist period, has produced a type of feminist scholar that resists the "professionalization" of feminism that has come under severe criticism in the West. The implication of this case study is that the establishment of independent gender studies at universities in Croatia will be a fascinating story to follow that might provide an optimistic view of the future of academic feminism in general.

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## Introduction

The question on how to negotiate a career in academia and being a feminist has been discussed since the late 1960s, when women's studies in the USA and Western Europe started entering the institutions of higher education. The issue arises from the premise that being a feminist implies engagement in direct-action political activism for the purpose of changing existing patriarchal social norms, while being an academic is the opposite, a theoretical deliberation in the comfort of the ivory-towered institutions. Furthermore, the academic environment is more often than not a stronghold of androcentric thought, oppressive hierarchy and heedless competitiveness, while the demands of the academic profession leave little time for participation in direct-action initiatives (Groot and Maynard, 1993; Lowe and Benston, 1991; Stacey, 2000; Wiegman, 2002; Yee, 1997; Zimmerman, 2005).

The topic of being a feminist in academia or being an academic feminist has not been exhausted in the context of Croatia since there are no women's nor gender studies at the university level. At the present time, women's studies in Croatia can be studied only at the non-governmental organization Women's Studies Center in Zagreb (*Centar za ženske studije*), while there are individual courses and gender related studies at several Croatian universities. The non-existence of a systematic, independent program thus makes impossible to research the implications of how, e.g. a gender studies department has adapted to an academic environment. The primary interest of previous research has been to explore the circumstances of the time and the possibilities for integration of the Women's Studies Center's program into the higher education system (see Barada et. al., 2003). Apart from discussing the pressing question of establishing a degree program at the university, Croatian scholars have also approached the question of negotiating theory and practice, both on a theoretical level (Jelavić, 2007) and through research (Barilar et. al., 2001). In the case of the latter, the book presents an extensive amount of results of women activists' experiences with working in various nongovernmental organizations and civil society initiatives.

Yet, few studies have integrated all these topics, i.e. analyzed the negotiation of scholarship and activism and pointed to the implication of the results for the future of feminist scholarship once gender studies are introduced into the higher education system in Croatia. Sanja Potkonjak's work critically engages with the relationship between feminism and women's/gender studies in Croatia (in Arsenijević et. al., 2008), pointing to feminism's contemporary duality as both a social movement and a type of scholarship. It incorporates the analysis of the legislation on gender equality and education, as well as interviews with five Croatian scholars and activists. However, as the study was published in 2008, it misses the perspective opened by the 2009 regulation that officially recognized gender studies as a valid field of study in Croatia. Thus, Potkonjak's study ends with the proposition for the regulation, and my study starts from the implementation of the regulation. This research adds new information on how feminist activism and theory is done in the university, three years after gender studies were registered as an official field of study. Furthermore, it introduces a new perspective on contemporary feminism in Croatia, putting it into a broader context of the awakening of civil society initiatives in the last three years.

This study was designed to show that the body of literature, mentioned in the first paragraph, on the relationship between feminism and academia in Western context does not represent the actuality of academic feminism in all contexts. Basing my study on Cerwonka's (2008) concept of traveling feminist thought, I argue that the particularity of the Croatian context, with the legacy of socialist feminism and the influence of civil society initiatives in the post-state socialist period, has produced a type of feminist scholar that resists the "professionalization" of feminism that has come under severe criticism in the West. My hypothesis is that the combination of theoretical feminist education conducted in the Women's Studies Center for the last seventeen years and a lively activist scene that has intensified in the last three years has brought about a feminist scene that is competent in theory and engaged in activism, i.e. that successfully blends scholarship and activism. The implication of this hypothesis is that the establishment of independent

gender studies at the university in Croatia, if or when it happens, will be a fascinating story to follow that might provide an optimistic view of the future of academic feminism in general.

In order to explore the character of feminist scholarship in relation to activism, I have conducted interviews with seven Croatian feminists that consider themselves both scholars and activists. The questions that have generated the study are, first, how they experience being a member of the academic community and how they view their role in it. Second, how they conceptualize the notion of activism and how they negotiate it with scholarship. Third, how they distinguish between the terms “women’s” and “gender studies,” what is the relation of feminism to both, and how they look at the prospect of reviving the initiative for establishing these studies at the university. This thesis will show that Croatian feminist scholars, due to the context in which they shape their ideas, engage in feminist theory and practice in a way that bridges the divide between scholarship and activism.

The thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter will provide context that has played an important role in shaping the specific position between activism and academism feminists in contemporary Croatia hold. In it, I also present the theoretical framework that underlies my analysis. In Chapter Two, I describe the methods used in the research, as well as the issues I have dealt with before and during the research process. In Chapters Three, Four and Five, I present the analysis of Croatian feminists’ narratives, comparing the research results with the relevant literature throughout.

I will show in the third chapter that the interviewees, although experiencing some of the constraints academia imposes on scholars, still hold a substantial degree of autonomy and critically approach their academic surroundings. Furthermore, they live in their everyday lives the changes they want to see happen. I will argue that the impetus for the change within academia is the active participation of the interviewees in civil society initiatives.

I will address the debate on academism and activism in the fourth chapter. I will argue that the relationship between academism and activism does not need to be one of opposition, and that

Croatian feminist scholars are an example of negotiating academism and activism in a variety of ways that open the possibility to reconceptualize the notion of being political.

In the fifth chapter, I will revisit the question of introducing women's/gender studies in the higher education system as a separate, systematic program. I will address the issue of terminology, which is a necessity in order to enter into the integration debate since it affects feminist scholarship in terms of the question of subjectivity. Last, I will discuss the interviewees' ideas on the future prospects of women's/gender studies in Croatia.

## Chapter One: Background

During the 1990s, Croatia underwent turbulent transformation from state socialism to democracy, experiencing in the process the dissolution of Yugoslavia and subsequent war, transition to market economy, and substantial social changes. This chapter will outline the context that has played an important role in shaping the specific position between activism and academism held by feminists in contemporary Croatia.

Section one gives a brief overview of feminism during socialism and immediate post-state socialist period in Croatia. It shows that the Yugoslav type of state socialism that was more open to international influences and ideas than other variants of state socialism made it possible for feminism in Yugoslavia, and therefore in Croatia as well, to acquire a strong theoretical foundation like the one developed in the West. Furthermore, the war that broke out in the beginning of the 1990s compelled feminists to organize themselves and engage in prolific activism. This section also deals with the generational aspect of Croatian feminism in a post-state socialist context, relying on Allaine Cerwonka's (2008) theory of traveling feminist thought.

Section two gives a brief overview of the formation of the NGO Women's Studies Center in Zagreb and its subsequent attempt at integration in the university system. It also touches upon the difficulties NGOs face in neoliberal capitalism, such as balancing between political activism and funding-oriented projects. The critique is based on Sabine Lang's (1997) text on the NGOization of feminism in Germany.

Section three presents the theoretical foundation for the concept of civil society and its manifestation in post-state socialist Croatia. It gives a summary of three major civil society initiatives in Zagreb in the last three years that have stirred Croatian society. Due to participation of several feminists, both activists and scholars, in civil society initiatives, this section highlights the initiatives' impact on the future of feminism in academia.

## 1.1 Legacy of Socialist Feminism

In 1978, an international feminist conference *Comrade-ess woman: Women's issue – new approach* (*Drug-ca žena: žensko pitanje – novi pristup*) was held in Belgrade and an organization *Woman and Society* (*Žena i društvo*) was founded as a part of the Croatian Sociological Society. These two milestone events came to be remembered as the beginning of the intense feminist activity during the 1980s in Yugoslavia (Kašić, 2003; Knežević, 2004; Lóránd, 2007). The proliferation of feminist activity continued in 1987 and 1990, when two other feminist conferences were held in Yugoslavia that addressed the question of the role of women in society and politics (Einhorn and Sever, 2003). However, the beginning of the 1990s and the start of war in the region, with the increase in nationalist discourse and strong re-patriarchalization of society, affected the Yugoslav feminist movement.

The women in Croatia who were a part of the Yugoslav feminist movement heavily criticized the changes in society brought about by war and were especially pointing to the problem of wartime rape, trying to avoid the nationalist discourse while focusing on the issue of gender. Five Croatian feminists, Dubravka Ugrešić, Slavenka Drakulić, Rada Iveković, Jelena Lovrić, and Vesna Kesić, who were speaking about wartime rape as a crime of men against women, regardless of their ethnicity, were persecuted by the mainstream media for not being patriotic enough in these delicate times. The infamous event, that forced several of them to leave Croatia, was dubbed “the witch trial” (Lóránd, 2007). Despite the negative public attitudes toward feminism due to the representation in the media, which created the image of feminism as “Yugonostalgic,” subsequent war years brought the intensification of feminist activities. Feminists organized themselves in various ways, establishing safe houses for female refugees and SOS hotlines (Bijelić and Kesić, 2002).

Lukić interprets the Yugoslav feminists' opposition to nationalist discourse of war and their subsequent activism during the 1990s as a result of the particularity of Yugoslav feminism that thrived, both in the production of theory and in activism, in a socialist environment that did not

“exclude nonsocialist ideas and theories from the sphere of culture. Hence, in addition to other relevant social and critical theories of the time, the main ideas and theories produced within second-wave feminism were already present in the late 1970s” (2011, p. 537). Thus, Croatian feminism has been formed on the legacy of Yugoslav feminism with strong international theoretical foundation that was set during the 1980s, and activism of the war period of the 1990s. The legacy of the interlacing of scholarship and activism among a relatively small circle of people during socialism and the immediate post-state socialist period in Croatia would have a significant impact on the question of academic feminism in contemporary Croatia, and especially on the younger generation of feminist scholars that reached adulthood at the height of transition and after.

The generational aspect of Croatian feminism relates to the “wave” paradigm of feminist movements that has been used in the West to describe the successive nature of feminisms (first, second, and third wave feminism) with different sets of issues, agendas, theoretical frameworks, and practical strategies that chronologically follow one after the other. While it can be argued that socialist feminism in Yugoslavia, and even Croatian feminism until the end of the 1990s, was in line with the theory and practice of the second wave, the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century brought about theoretical frameworks and activist practices that do not strictly “fit” into the wave paradigm. Therefore, in contemporary Croatia there is a strong co-presence of characteristics attributed to either second or third wave feminism, such as the use of poststructuralist theory and the need to organize women as a unified political subject in relation to the worsening position of women workers who have fared poorly in the transition. Graff (2003) points to a similar situation in Poland where feminists are still dealing with issues commonly associated with the second wave, such as abortion rights or the integration of women’s studies programs in the university system, yet they are also dealing with activist practices and theoretical frameworks such as queer theory that are a strong marker of third wave. Graff thus notes that Polish feminists are “either ‘lost between the waves,’ or what [they] are building calls for a description that goes beyond the wave metaphor” (2003, p. 103).

What is necessary in both Polish and Croatian case is a different concept that is appropriate for these two specific contexts.

The specific context for Croatia is that it has undergone major political, economic and social changes in the past two decades that have “opened old wounds” and created new ones, i.e. issues that were not dealt with during socialism and the emergence of new ones due to nationalism, re-patriarchalization and neoliberal capitalism. Thus, instead of claiming that post-state socialist Croatia lags behind the developments of feminist theory and practices in the West, it is far more useful to look at Cerwonka’s (2008) concept of “traveling feminist thought” (p. 809). She argues that many feminist scholars emphasize the differences between feminisms in the West and in Central and Eastern Europe, while they “[fail] to recognize the ‘traveling’ character of ideas and the way in which ideas are transformed in specific locations” (p. 811). Cerwonka uses the concept of transculturation by Mary Louise Pratt, i.e. the way in which “people in specific contexts engage and reshape hegemonic ideas” (p. 824) to move beyond the West/East dichotomy and point to a more nuanced approach to feminisms in Central and Eastern Europe. In this way, feminist scholars can examine how various ideas that emerge in one context are reshaped and applied in a different one. Cerwonka’s proposition is especially helpful for bridging the divide between what are still often referred to as the second and third wave, and surpassing the issues that accompany it, such as the misunderstandings regarding what counts as “proper” feminist activism or the debate on women’s vs. gender studies. The way these issues are dealt with in Croatia, in particular how some contemporary Croatian feminists negotiate concepts that in the wave paradigm often stand in opposition will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

## ***1.2 Seventeen Years of the Women's Studies Center***

The Center was founded as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) on the initiative of twelve feminists, activists and scholars in 1995. They are: Aida Bagić, Rada Borić, Nadežda Čaćinović, Sanja Iveković, Željka Jelavić, Biljana Kašić, Jasmina Lukić, Nela Pamuković, Karmen Ratković,

Vesna Teršelić, Neva Tölle, and Maja Uzelac. Three of them, Borić, who is the head of the Center, Čačinović, and Jelavić, have been interviewed for the purpose of this thesis. After years of activism during the war period, the establishment of an educational program in women's studies was seen by its founders as a step forward. It was a necessary step since the academic community of the time was not interested in critically addressing the issues in post-war society, especially the question of patriarchy and gender inequality (Jelavić, 2007). The Center was primarily founded for the purpose of educating and empowering women, as well as exploring feminist epistemology. However, since 2011, they have started including male students and teachers in the program. Over the years, the Center has positioned itself as an activist organization and as “academia outside academia” (Arsenijević et. al., 2008, p. 74).

At the beginning of the 2000s, a reform of the higher education system in Croatia was announced, and therefore the Center decided to launch a study about the possible institutionalization of women's studies in Croatia, hoping that the reform would open a possibility for the integration of women's studies into the higher education system. The information gathered in the research was supposed to pave the way for negotiations about integration. As part of the study, the Center sent 174 letters to several addresses, including the Ministry of Science and Technology, and the Universities of Osijek, Pula, Split, Rijeka, Zadar, and Zagreb, with questions about the prospects and possible strategies for incorporating women's studies in the university system. The Center got only 48 responses, but among them was the proposition from the dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb to arrange meetings and discuss the possibility of integration. The meetings started in June 2002, but were not fruitful due to several reasons, one of them being the lack of professors at the Center with all the necessary academic requirements to teach at the university. Despite the failed integration into the University of Zagreb, soon after the Center managed to achieve collaboration with the University of Zadar and the University of Rijeka, where they helped to establish Cultural studies (Barada et al., 2003).

Although the official transition from socialism to neoliberal capitalism opened up the possibility for Croatian feminists to form an NGO and engage in civil society initiatives in a way that was not possible during socialism, a negative side effect accompanied the new neoliberal context. Lang (1997) points to the problem of NGOization of feminism, i.e. the transformation of once radical social movements into bureaucratized organizations financially dependent on state budgets. In the case of Croatia, NGOs mostly depend on EU funds. Thus, NGOization distorts the once politically driven, independent feminist action into a professionalized job focused on projects that depend on and are therefore driven by outside funding. The Women's Studies Center has not remained unaffected by the perils of NGOization. As Sloane (2008) has shown in her case study on the issue of NGOization in Croatia, coping with advantages and disadvantages of foreign project funding has been an internal struggle of many Croatian feminists. Sloane's case study also shows that many Croatian feminists, aware that NGOization is mainly a product of Croatian educated women's need for a paid employment, have high expectations for the younger generation of those who resist neoliberal models of operation. The resistance to neoliberal capitalism in Croatia has been intensifying since 2009. Its connection to NGOs will be discussed in the next section.

### ***1.3 Awakening of Civil Society Initiatives***

In the last three years, there have been three major social movement initiatives in Zagreb, Free Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (*Slobodni Filozofski*), Academic Solidarity (*Akadska Solidarnost*), and the Flower Square – Varšavska Street protest, that are connected to a more visible emergence of civil society discourse in Croatia, i.e. the notion of civil society in post-state socialist context. As Cohen and Arato (1992) argue, the concept of civil society “focuses on (...) new, generally non-class-based forms of collective action oriented and linked to the legal, associational, and public institutions of society. These are differentiated not only from the state but also from the capitalist market economy” (p. 2). The term has been largely used in Croatia to describe the society

“as it should be” in contrast to the events that accompany the process of transition from state socialism to democracy.

The first two initiatives are connected to the problem of neoliberal model of education, i.e. the global trend of the commercialization of higher education. In April 2009, the student body of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb started an open rebellion against the introduction of tuition fees, demanding free education as a basic right of every citizen. They stated that paying for education leads to the class polarization of society, and to the corporatization of universities in which the primary drive is profit. The blockade lasted for 35 days, during which alternative educational and entertainment programs were held, as well as plenary sessions based on direct democracy (“About1,” n.d.). The leadership of the blockade was based on a participatory model of democracy: “[Active] participation in ruling and being ruled (...), and also in public will and opinion formation” (Cohen and Arato, 1992, p. 7). Based on the same attitudes toward commercialization of higher education and the mode of organization, a labor union of academic workers called Academic Solidarity was founded in January 2010 to formally fight against new laws on scholarship and higher education. The initiative for the union came from the workers of the University of Zagreb, but it soon spread to other Croatian universities. Academic workers went into a 10-day strike in July 2010, at the height of exam season, which forced the Ministry of Science, Education, and Sports to postpone the laws (“Who are we?,” n.d.). Hrvoje Jurić, a professor at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, is one of the most prominent members of Academic Solidarity and he has been interviewed for this thesis.

The third significant initiative was the Flower Square – Varšavska Street protest led by initiatives The Right to the City (*Pravo na Grad*) and Green Action (*Zelena akcija*) against the exploitation of urban zones for private interests, and in this specific case the building of a shopping mall in the city center (“About2,” n.d.). The protest lasted several months during 2010 and 2011, with a large number of protesters camping at the construction site. Many public figures supported

the protest and it has been called “one of the most successful and visible civil society [activities] in Croatia in recent years” (“Right to the City,” n.d.).

The underlying idea behind all three of these initiatives can be seen as the difference between “economic, individualistic society and a civil society based on solidarity, protected not only against the bureaucratic state but also against the self-regulating market economy” (Cohen and Arato, 1992). The notion of civil society in post-state socialist Croatia refers precisely to Cohen and Arato’s definition, and namely to “progressive” groups of people, and the NGOs that usually lead the initiatives, that react against the disorder in market economy in (post)transitional Croatia. It is also important to note that, since Zagreb is a relatively small city, the civil society initiatives are mainly supported by the same set of people. The abovementioned initiatives form a majority of the scene, including the Women’s Studies Center, since feminism in Croatia is an important element of “progressiveness.” The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is commonly regarded as a disseminator of progressive ideas. Thus, the civil society scene in Croatia is a blend of progressive university professors, students and various NGO activists.

The interlacing of academia and activist organizations is especially significant for the topic of academic feminism. In subsequent chapters, I will argue that the above presented context produced feminists who combine activism and scholarship in their everyday lives, simultaneously participating in civil society initiatives and working at the university. The specific position of Croatian feminists between academia and activism has a deeper impact on the general notion of academic feminism and often-debated perils that integration in the higher education system entails for the future of feminism.

## **Chapter Two: Doing Feminist Research: Conducting Interviews with Croatian Feminist Scholars**

The aim of this research is to look into the narratives of two groups of Croatian feminist scholars who work in mainstream academia and/or in a non-governmental organization (NGO). The main question that generated the study was how they experience being a feminist in a state institution that is The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb, and at the NGO, the Women's Studies Center in Zagreb. Furthermore, I was interested in how they conceptualize the notion of activism and how they negotiate it with scholarship. Last, I inquired how they distinguish between the terms "women's" and "gender studies," what is the relation of feminism to both, and what was the prospect for reviving the initiative for establishing these studies at the university.

In this chapter, I will present my research design, the people I have interviewed and the issues that I have contemplated before doing research. I will also discuss how I have dealt with these issues during and after the research. The research strategies and methods I have employed in my research are based on the principles of feminist research, i.e. I have done research with people instead of on them, the study is based on valuing people's experiential knowledge and the research has not been a disempowering process for the interviewees (Reinharz, 2002).

### ***2.1 Research Design***

The research is geographically focused on the city of Zagreb. Firstly, the Women's Studies Center, which is the sole and most important feminist educational institution in Croatia, is located there. Secondly, the University of Zagreb is the largest university in Croatia, with the largest number of departments in humanities and social sciences, located at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, which, as some of the interviewees also noted is considered the most suitable environment in mainstream academia for feminist scholarship. Thirdly, Zagreb is the largest and the capital city of Croatia, as well as Croatia's intellectual and academic center. I am aware of the existence of

other programs similar to gender studies in other Croatian universities (e.g. at the University of Zadar or cultural studies at the University of Rijeka), which could provide valuable information for a study on feminist scholarship. However, I am not conducting an all-compassing analysis of academic feminism in Croatia since I was limited by time and financial resources. Thus, the purpose of my research is not to generate quantitatively representative data that will serve as a recommendation for policy makers on gender studies in Croatia. It is rather, as Stake (2003) puts it, an intrinsic case study, i.e. a study that is interesting in itself because of the individuals participating in it, rather than its generalizability. I am not excluding the possibility that this particular case study of doing feminism in Croatian academia can be generalizable to other cases in different cultural and political contexts. However, other cases can only serve as a backdrop for the peculiarities of this particular case with particular historical context and individuals who participated in my research.

I have conducted seven semistructured interviews with scholars who identify as feminists and employ feminist theory in their academic work. What I mean by semistructured interviews is based on a combination of structured and unstructured interviews discussed in Fontana and Frey (2003). I have followed their proposition of preparing a set of questions that address the thematic fields I have intended to cover in my study. The questions were topical open-ended questions that functioned as triggers for more spontaneous answers, i.e. questions that “[allowed] interviewees to volunteer their own accounts, to speculate on matters, and have enough time to include all of the material they think relevant to the subject” (Ritchie, 1995, p. 67). As I have envisaged the interview process as a casual conversation, therefore, I have allowed the interviewees to be more flexible in answering the questions, i.e. I have not interrupted their answers even if they diverged from the original theme of the question. However, I have tried to repeat the same question in a different manner later on during the interview if the previous answer was not “satisfactory.” I have not asked the same questions all of my interviewees, since they have different academic backgrounds and personal histories, i.e. they differ in age, gender and level of education. Therefore, not all questions were applicable to all interviewees.

## 2.2 *The Interviewees*

The interviewees are, in alphabetical order: Marija Bartulović, Rada Borić, Nadežda Čačinović, Ankica Čakardić, Branka Galić, Željka Jelavić, and Hrvoje Jurić. Two pairs have the experience of only working at the university or in the Women's Studies Center, respectively, and three of them have worked in both institutions.

Marija Bartulović has been a junior researcher at the Department of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences since 2007 and is currently doing a PhD, participating in a larger research project called "Intercultural Curriculum and Education in Minority Languages." Her interest in feminist theory developed after she started teaching a course in Intercultural Pedagogy, but her feminist identity was shaped by her personal experience of being a young woman and a scholar at a department with specific power relations and with little understanding for feminist theory. She has been chosen to participate in the study because she belongs to a younger generation of avowed feminist scholars that has no previous experience in women's or gender studies.

Rada Borić is the executive director of the Women's Studies Center in Zagreb and she was one of its founding members in 1995. She has disciplinary background in Croatian language and comparative literature. In 2010, Borić was named one of the seven most influential feminists in the world by Forbes magazine. She worked at universities in Finland and the USA. As one of the coordinators of the postgraduate seminar "Feminisms in Transnational Perspective" and a teacher at the Women's Studies Center, Borić is one of the core members of the Croatian feminist academic community.

Nadežda Čačinović has been working at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences since 1976, and holds the position of tenured professor since 1998. She is one of the founders of the Women's Studies Center, where she has also been teaching since the beginning of its educational program. Čačinović is not only one of the leading Croatian feminists, but also one of the most prominent Croatian intellectuals and public figures.

Ankica Čakardić has been working at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences since 2010, and currently holds the position of assistant professor. She has worked at the Department for Cultural Studies in Rijeka, and has been teaching in the Women's Studies Center and Center for Peace Studies in Zagreb for several years. She is one of the prominent young intellectuals in Croatia and an anarcho-feminist.

Branka Galić has been working at the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences since 1991, and currently holds the position of the Head of department. She has been engaged in dealing with feminist issues since she was a student. The courses she teaches include Sociology of Gender, Sociology of Family, and Feminist Theories. She has conducted several sociological studies on gender equality and the position of women in Croatia.

Željka Jelavić is one of the founders of and teachers at the Women's Studies Center in Zagreb. Along with Rada Borić and Nadežda Čačinović, she was one of the chief negotiators with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb about the integration of women's studies. She holds a master's degree in Gender Studies from Central European University in Budapest and is currently working on a doctoral dissertation. She is a feminist and women's rights activist. She is also working at several other cultural and educational institutions.

Hrvoje Jurić has been working at the Department of Philosophy at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences since 2000. He is one of the leading young intellectuals in Croatia, a prominent public figure, and an activist. Jurić is one of the founders of the labor union Academic Solidarity, which is an initiative launched in 2011 against the commercialization of higher education. Apart from other academic interests, he is engaged in feminist and gender theory, and considers himself a feminist. He teaches at the Women's Studies Center in Zagreb.

### ***2.3 Issues with Doing Feminist Research***

Now that I have discussed the focus of my study and the type of interviews I have conducted, as well as provided the biographical data on the participants, I would like to address the practical

issues of doing feminist research. My position as an in-group member, i.e. my thesis topic implies to the interviewees that I am also a feminist, works in favor of resolving these issues, but this kind of position also creates certain controversies that need to be addressed in the wider context of ethical considerations in relation to my position as a researcher.

First, I did not have problems with contacting and accessing my informants. My in-group position proved to be helpful with this part, some interviewees noting that they would participate because it was for a “good cause.” However, I faced the risk of not being able to gain trust through email correspondence and in a short period of time, and consequently lose the opportunity to collect empirical data of any value. What the interviewees knew about me before we met in April, i.e. that I am a Croatian student of gender studies at an international university, has already created a number of assumptions about my motivation and ambitions that influence the relationship between the interviewees and me. However, I feel that all of my interviewees have warmly welcomed my research project, and that they have been highly cooperative and helpful.

Second, Fontana and Frey (2003) propose that in structured interviews the interviewer should remain in a completely neutral position, while in unstructured interviews the researcher is encouraged to “put him- or herself in the role of the respondents” (p. 60). Thus, I feel rather ambiguous about the level of neutrality I have kept while conducting semistructured interviews, trying to avoid the pitfall of “becom[ing] a spokesperson for the group studied” (Fontana and Frey, 2003, p. 60). The issue raises ethical considerations regarding how much I should reveal about the group, exposing the vulnerabilities of particular feminist groups in Croatia or covering them up under pressure to present the interviewees in a favorable light. I have tried to remain unbiased and open to new ideas throughout my research, and present the interpretation of the material academically while maintaining my own voice.

This issue leads up to what is called interpretive authority (Borland, 1998; Shopes, 2007), i.e. the question of who decides, the interviewees or the researcher, what is going to be presented in the research. It is the question of who “lay[s] claim to a given work: the subjects of the work wish

to present a positive view of themselves, the [researchers] wish to adhere to professional standards and maintain a certain intellectual dispassion” (Shopes, 2007, p. 152). Although Portelli (1998) sees an advantage in the confrontation of the informants’ story and the story of the researcher, claiming that “the confrontation of their different partialities – confrontation as ‘conflict,’ and confrontation as ‘search for unity’ – is one of the things which make oral history interesting” (p. 73), I see it rather as a disadvantage, especially in a position of unequal power relations. A significant amount of attention in scholarly works on conducting interviews is given to the power of the researcher over the interviewees, however, as Shopes (2007) notes, the power of the interviewees should not be ignored. In my research, the power imbalance has been in favor of the interviewees, who could have, among other things, manipulated the interview by holding back information or veto the publication of the excerpts in the project.

The issue over interpretive authority is linked to the question of transcripts. The question whether the interviewees should be allowed to revise and edit transcripts has been much-debated (Borland, 1998; Mazé, 2007; Shopes, 2007). Although I agree with Mazé’s (2007) claim that editing and for that matter even transcribing an oral text creates a new text, since the most essential characteristic, orality, cannot be transcribed and therefore is lost, I cannot ignore my personal conviction that the interviewee has the right to approve the text that will be subjected to the researcher’s interpretation. I believe that in formal interviews people often experience a degree of stress, and are more likely to express themselves in an awkward manner, which does not necessarily carry hidden meaning. Therefore, I have asked all of the interviewees if they wish to read the transcripts, and those who have, have been sent the transcript. Fortunately, none of the interviewees expressed a strong desire to omit parts of their narrative. Thompson (1998) points out that controversies over “choos[ing] between the responsibility to their informants and a responsibility to history and society” (p. 592) is challenging for researchers. However, he does not give a definitive answer to what the researcher should do in a situation of choosing between being ethical and being devoted to the research project. As can be seen from K’Meyer and Crothers (2007), who published

a study on a deeply traumatic topic for their informant, researchers evidently easily find justification for doing a fascinating research. I find such actions being in opposition to the principles of doing feminist research. I believe I have remained ethical throughout my thesis project and that I have adhered to the principles of feminist research.

Another issue that needs to be taken into consideration is the fact that the interviews were held in Croatian. Thus, the transcripts have been translated into English. This process alters the text on yet another level, i.e. not only are the interviews transcribed but also translated. I have translated the interview excerpts, and I have tried as much as possible to render the interviewees' words in a way that stays as true to their original meaning as possible. Using direct quotes leaves my interpretation of meanings open to criticism and debate.

The last issue I would like to address in this section is the question of subjectivity and intersubjectivity. I have already touched upon this topic when I wrote about my position as a researcher and my relation to the interviewees. As Abrams (2010) notes, an interview is always a conversation between two subjectivities that constitute each other through the process of interviewing. Therefore, it should be kept in mind that every interview I have conducted is a performance on both sides, and that my performance has influenced the performance of the interviewee. It is my duty as a researcher to "[be] actively aware of and reflecting upon one's own presence in the research process" (Abrams, 2010, p. 56). As a part of my self-reflexivity, I have kept in mind that my gender, class, age, and educational background have influenced the interviews and the research as whole, i.e. the intersection of these categories has elicited the particular interpretation of the narratives I have received from my interviewees. Therefore, as a younger woman and a researcher on a lower academic level than my interviewees, I acknowledge the possibility of being somewhat in awe towards them.

To conclude, the process of conducting interviews is a delicate task with many theoretical, practical, as well as ethical issues that need to be taken into consideration beforehand. In this section, therefore, I have tried to address the particular issues that have emerged during my

research. Interviewing is a skill that can pose difficulties even for an experienced researcher and therefore the discussion about the issues that emerge during research is a valuable source of information for future studies that employ interviews as a method of qualitative research.

## Chapter Three: Academia as a Site of Change

This chapter will address the issues of Croatian academia as a traditional androcentric hierarchical place marked by conservative unwillingness to accept new ideas and approaches to science. The interviewees especially attributed these characteristics to the University of Zagreb, one of the oldest universities in Croatia. Using examples from the interviews, I will show that feminists working at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb are critical towards the conservativeness of the academic community but still recognize that certain changes have been occurring in the past ten years, that is since the Women's Studies Center's failed attempt at integration into the higher education system. Furthermore, I will show that the interviewees are not just critical towards academia but actually represent and live in their everyday lives the changes they want to see happen. I will argue that the impetus for the change within academia is the active participation of the interviewees in civil society initiatives, one of them being Women's Studies Center in Zagreb.

### 3.1 *The Change*

The University of Zagreb operates under well-established modes of thinking and approaches to scholarship. When the interviewees were approached with the subject of "freedom" in academia, what many feminist scholars have argued since women's studies first entered the higher education system (Groot and Maynard, 1993; Lowe and Lowe Benston, 1991; Stacey, 2000), i.e. the pressures to conform and be uncritical towards certain practices seemed to be true. Some of the interviewees' narratives were particularly reminiscent of the cautionary words by Lowe and Lowe Benston (1991):

All of the pressures in the university run counter to feminist theory and practice. The way of viewing the world is simply different, and if we integrate ourselves too much into the mainstream, it may be hard to resist the pressures. In order to maintain our ability to raise new questions, to question the structure of knowledge, we must retain some status as outsiders. (p. 59)

This statement is in line with what interviewees Rada Borić, Željka Jelavić and Branka Galić have said about their experience with academia. Galić, who has worked at the university since 1991 at

the Department of Sociology, stressed the struggle she had to endure, and the struggle with the system that other feminists in her opinion also face:

Of course the climate is not in favor of feminists anywhere, and so it is not [favorable either] at the university. Some women somewhere perhaps have it easier, but they have to fight for their position (...) I had to endure a lot of it and be persistent in my endeavor to do what interests me.

Feminists who work outside the University of Zagreb especially highlight academia's traditionalism. Rada Borić, the executive director of the Women's Studies Center and one of its founders, said the following about the attitude of the people who work in the Women's Studies Center:

We all think, not only in connection to women's studies that do not exist at the university...we think that academia is not something very progressive or very creative, especially not Croatian academia, having in mind academia in the real sense of the word and the university. We think it is too traditional.

Her thoughts are shared by Željka Jelavić, one of the founders of and teachers at the Women's Studies Center. This is what she said about one of the reasons why the attempted integration of women's studies into the higher education system fell through:

Some argued, holding onto the strict patriarchal principles within the academic community that [women's studies] are something completely unnecessary because science as it is, that is the system of science as it is, is truly satisfactory. (...) as you know, the University of Zagreb is the largest university, it's very slow, very conservative and basically uninterested in anything new.

Both Borić and Jelavić speak about the University of Zagreb from the experience of dealing with it in the early 2000s, i.e. the fruitless negotiations that they have led in the name of the Women's Studies Center about the integration into the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Their experience of academia's conservativeness and disinterested stance towards feminist approaches to scholarship has also been shared by university professors who had to defend their master's or doctoral dissertations a decade or two ago. Ankica Čakardić, who defended her doctoral dissertation in 2008 at the Department of Philosophy, experienced academia's cold shoulder in the following way:

So what happened...my mentor didn't have any problems with my thesis, in which I clearly expressed my anarcho-feminist attitudes, you know, problem with the state, marriage and so

on, but the chair of the [doctoral defense] committee described my thesis as presumptuous and cute, like, this is very nice but it's not dealing with a serious issue that philosophy aims at.

Branka Galić defended her doctoral thesis nine years prior to Čakardić, in 1999. About the experience, she said the following:

After my master's degree, I went to do my doctorate which was in a way conditioned in the sense that I was not permitted to deal with a topic directly related to feminism. So I did my doctoral thesis, as well as my master thesis, on some other topic. (...) I was actually thinking about and working on feminism outside the time dedicated to my formal academic career, but I did it all simultaneously.

Borić, Jelavić and Galić share a similar experience with feminism in the academia in the late 1990s and early 2000s. However, it is evident from Čakardić's statement that in some ten-year's time, the atmosphere has slightly changed. Although her feminist topic came under criticism at the doctoral defense for not being "scholarly" enough she still managed to write the thesis in her own way and defend it, whereas those who went through the system earlier were openly prevented from even taking up feminist topics. The change of atmosphere at the university towards feminism is evident in the fact that Čakardić not only defended her doctoral thesis that was written from an anarcho-feminist perspective, but also was employed first as a junior researcher and now holds a position of assistant professor.

The change that academia has undergone in the past ten years is recognized by Hrvoje Jurić as well. He has been working at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences since 2000, and currently holds a position of assistant professor at the Department of Philosophy. He noted that significant changes have occurred in the past decade:

When I say there has been a significant improvement, this can be seen on several levels. Above all the improvement on the theoretical level because feminism emerged as a relevant theoretical strain in Croatian academia.

Marija Bartulović, a junior researcher at the Department of Pedagogy who has been working at the university since 2007, is also aware of the changes since the early 2000s. When asked about the negotiations on integration of women's studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, she replied:

I am not exactly sure what is going on [regarding this topic] at the moment, is there even an interest [to do it], when you take into consideration the changes that have been happening, for example, that these issues are now dealt with at many departments.

It is interesting to compare the narratives of struggle and incompatibility of feminism with academia in Croatia that Borić, Galić, and Jelavić professed with Bartulović, Čakardić, and Jurić's narratives, which paint a different, and more optimistic picture on doing feminist theory in Croatian academia. I interpret the words of all of them as acknowledgements that academia indeed harshly judges scholars who deal with feminist theory, as some of them have experienced in their professional life. Yet, their surroundings, and in this case especially the Department of Philosophy, has begun changing and has changed since they first started working there.

Čakardić, Jurić and Bartulović all talk about the gradual acceptance of feminist theory and a feminist approach to other disciplines that academia has been exhibiting since the beginning of the 2000s. To put it more precisely, the turning point of this change in academia is the late 2000s, an argument that is corroborated by a significant state regulation in 2009. On 30 September 2009, a regulation that recognized gender studies as an interdisciplinary field of study in the qualification of arts and sciences has been introduced (Regulation on scientific and artistic domains, fields and sectors, 2009). The regulation was an important act since it officially recognized gender studies as a valid academic field of study and made it possible for scholars to introduce this aspect in their academic work without the threat of being dismissed for dealing with pseudoscience.

The regulation, however, did not affect the personal attitudes of some members of academia, and therefore Bartulović's words on the general atmosphere at the Department of Pedagogy come as no surprise:

When it comes to the department of pedagogy, we are still a stronghold of androcentrism in which specific rules rule and there is little space for feminist thought.

The state regulation in 2009 thus opened the door for greater acceptance of feminist theory in academia, but it has not resolved all the issues surrounding it in practice. While some departments prove to be more susceptible to novelties in theory and approaches to academic disciplines, others hold onto more traditional, conservative points of view.

On the one hand, the transformation of attitudes on feminist theory in academia can be explained in a twofold manner. Academia becomes a site of change from the outside and from the inside, i.e. the change of attitude is induced by state regulation and by the young scholars, who witness the change and are participating in it. On the other hand, the regulation might be viewed as the effect of the change, which made it possible for such a regulation to be passed in the first place. The latter explanation thus implies that feminists in academia have greater agency in transforming the system. The varied level of acceptance of feminist theory at different departments speaks in favor of the transformation from the inside as well. This argument will be discussed in the next section.

Despite the debatable level of transformation, an undeniable shift has occurred since the late 2000s. The Department of Philosophy represents a fine example of the transformation that academia is able to achieve. This fact is visible in the interviewees' narratives discussed above, and it is further supported by Nadežda Čačinović, who has been working at the university since 1976, at the Department of Philosophy:

The department of philosophy was a traditionally male department. When I came, there was basically no other [woman] here, later Rada Iveković returned from the department of indology and so on (...) but among these new ones, today's generation of junior researchers and assistant professors, they're all women.

When asked if she thinks that academia is changing, Čačinović assuredly replied:

It is changing. It is truly changing; I'm not trying to sugar-coat it. It is changing.

I interpret the way in which Čačinović said this statement, i.e. the repetition, as an affirmation that she is truly perceiving the change in academia.

### ***3.2 Living the Change***

As it has been discussed above, the attitudes towards doing feminist theory in Croatian academia have transformed in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and especially since the late 2000s. The question of who or what induced the change poses itself. The 2009 regulation that recognized gender studies as a valid scientific field of study undoubtedly facilitated and gave a boost to

feminist scholarship, yet it has hardly been the sole cause of the greater acceptance of feminist scholarship in the Croatian academic community. The fact that the level of acceptance of being a feminist and doing feminist theory in academia varies across different departments at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences supports the claim that feminists in academia are the ones who give impetus to the transformation. Therefore, those departments that employ more feminist scholars have undergone greater transformation. Rather than being co-opted and assimilated into traditional androcentric modes of thinking, the few of them have managed to create a feminist space in the academic community.

Čačinović, Čakardić and Jurić at the Department of Philosophy represent an example of “transformative self-direction” (Abrams, 1999, p. 835), i.e. a kind of agency that is “reflected in resistance aimed at formal political or legal institutions by individuals or groups” (Abrams, 1999, p. 836). Although Abrams mostly associates transformative agency with fighting against oppression in the sphere of women’s sexuality, she also acknowledges the possibilities this type of agency opens in various domains of social life. Feminists in academia, or more precisely feminists at the Department of Philosophy in Zagreb, represent a group of people who have through their “efforts challenged popular conceptions of groups consistently devalued under dominant gender-based norms” (Abrams, 1999, p. 837). From Čačinović, who was the only feminist and even the only woman at the department in 1976, to Čakardić, who in 2008 wrote a doctoral dissertation from an anarcho-feminist perspective, the transformation of the Department of Philosophy is evident. I argue that the change came, apart from changing times in general, from constant feminist activity at the department since the 1970s onwards that produced a set of students and future scholars at the Department of Philosophy who by the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century form a strong, albeit small, bastion of feminism in academia.

The transformative potential of agency feminists in academia have is recognized by Bartulović, who is aware of the pressing need for group effort and transformation from the inside, something that she as a feminist lacks at the Department of Pedagogy. Bartulović said:

I think that when women and men who do [feminist pedagogy] at the university come together and realize that it is in our interest to do it, the initiative would then come from the inside, and that would be in harmony with feminist values because we would empower ourselves, that is we would transform ourselves by ourselves.

By being under the threat of co-optation in her academic surroundings, which regard doing feminist theory in a quite different manner from the Department of Philosophy, Bartulović strongly perceives the necessity of both individual and group effort. As Abrams (1999) notes, “both the ability to glimpse an explanation rendered unintelligible by existing practices and the ability to act on that insight to change those practices are forms of agency” (p. 837). Thus, both Bartulović’s recognition of the “hostile” academic environment she is working in, and Čačinović, Čakardić and Jurić’s ability to act freely in a “friendly” environment are forms of agency that have transformative potential. The question of transformative agency leads into the discussion on the relationship between feminist scholarship and activism, and the reconceptualization of the notion of activism that will be elaborated on in the following chapter. However, I would first like to turn to the last theme I will discuss in this chapter, i.e. the source of the transformational incentive.

### ***3.3 The Incentive***

As it has been argued in the above section, the transformation of academia to be more receptive to feminist theory came predominantly from the inside, i.e. from feminist scholars who have wedged themselves into academia while refusing, some more openly than others, to compromise on their beliefs and modes of thinking. The question that poses itself is how these Croatian academic feminists have managed to retain this radical potential and instead of being neutralized by academia, to continue to challenge its modes of operation and thinking. I argue that the main reason for the case is the participation of academic feminists in question, i.e. the people I interviewed, in various civil society initiatives, the most prominent two being Women’s Studies Center and the labor union Academic Solidarity. Jurić, who explains what being a part of the academic community means for him, nicely illustrates the level at which one’s academic career is a part of a larger picture, i.e. the participation in making changes in academia and in society in general:

To be a part of the academic community is to not only do scholarship and teach [at the university], but also it demands dealing with academia itself. I personally do my bit through the work I do in the labor union for higher education Academic Solidarity. (...) We gathered to fight against the laws that the Ministry [of Science, Education and Sports] is imposing [on the higher education system], but we went on to deal with other vital and strategic issues related to scholarship and education. (...) I feel this [community] to be my “natural habitat,” something that is my choice, my vocation, and that I have to contribute to it in any possible way.

Thus, it is evident that Jurić does not perceive his academic career as only a job that is detached from himself as a person. The work that he does in academia, as a feminist and a member of Academic Solidarity, does not seem to run counter to what Lowe and Lowe Benston (1991) claim, that “women’s studies was developed primarily as one of the strategies for [social] change” (p. 48).

Čakardić further supports the claim that gender studies, or academic feminism since there is no gender studies at the university level in Croatia, is actively participating in making social change. Croatian academic feminism is thus not an isolated entity detached from reality, but in fact deeply entrenched in a larger framework of civil society initiatives:

[Feminism] needs a good program that has to impose itself more on the Left, not as a side issue but as an essential element, and as I can see from my own experience, this has been happening in the past three years. This has genuinely been happening...I mean, in the student movement, in journalism, in labor unions, in relation to workers, in relation to women’s studies and peace studies, these subjects have started to cooperate more. Where exactly this will lead us, I don’t know, but I’m trying to be as optimistic as I can because we cannot go any further [without cooperation]. But the point of entrance [of change] has been three years ago, there’s no doubt about it.

Čakardić’s career is a fine example of how participation in civil society initiatives subsequently has effect on the transformation of academia. Her feminist activity started during her student years in Anfema, the organization for anarcho-feminist activity, and after graduation, she began teaching at the Women’s Studies Center and the Center for Peace Studies. Her experience in civil society initiatives has thus spilled over into her academic career. Rada Borić noted the influence of civil society initiatives on academic feminism as well:

Women [who work at the Women’s Studies Center] were given the opportunity to shape courses related to women’s or gender studies, and now *post festum* (...) they give these courses at the university. (...) Every year, in various types of educational programs, over one hundred women go through the Center, young women, who will write in their CV that they have completed women’s studies. These same women, our former students, for example Mislava Bertoša who teaches at the department of linguistics gender criticism of

language, [have established themselves in academia]...so in a way the circle has been nicely closed.

As the excerpts from the interviews illustrate, Croatian academic feminism does not appear to be comfortably ensconced in academic “ivory tower.” The people I interviewed, some of whom are affiliated with civil society initiatives that boost their radical position, constantly question and challenge issues of great importance for gender studies and its place within academia. Some of them have greater or fewer possibilities to speak about these issues, depending on their position in the unavoidable academic hierarchical system. Nevertheless, all of them exhibit awareness of agency they have and the ways in which they can employ it. Although the interviewees do not explicitly name who or what caused the change of attitudes towards feminism in academia, their individual narratives that repeat the story of transformation point to the fact that their each individual small contribution, or “transformative self-direction” (Abrams, 1999, p. 835) has brought the change about. However, academia as a site of change is a feminist’s work never done. Čakardić, completely aware of the threats feminism in academia faces, said the following:

[Academia’s] systematic pacification constantly wishes to reduce antagonisms and resistance to partnerships. There is no healthy political relationship without antagonisms. It is a good thing that there are groups that exert pressure; that’s what I’m saying.

The radical potential of Croatian academic feminists therefore is yet to be revealed in subsequent years, especially bearing in mind the prospect of establishing gender studies at the University of Zagreb. The theme of revisiting integration will be discussed in Chapter Five.

## Chapter Four: Scholarship *and* Activism

The introduction of feminist theory into mainstream scholarship and the establishment of numerous graduate and postgraduate programs based on feminist theory within universities around the globe has provoked anxiety among some feminist scholars. According to Wiegman (2002), this anxiety arises from an apocalyptic view of the future of academic feminism, which will cause the end of all feminism, unless it returns to political activism. The fear comes from the view some feminist scholars have of academia, and therefore also of women's and gender studies in academia, which "appear to many contemporary feminist scholars as more academic than feminist, which is to say more bureaucratic, hierarchical, and careerist than ever before" (Wiegman, 2002, p. 19). In this chapter, I will address the endless debate on scholarship versus activism in the context of Croatia. I argue that the relationship between scholarship and activism does not need to be one of opposition, and that Croatian feminist scholars are an example of negotiating scholarship and activism in a variety of ways that open the possibility to reconceptualize the notion of being political. Furthermore, I argue that all these variants of activism can and should coexist and cooperate, for the benefit and the future of feminism in academia.

### *4.1 Bridging the Divide*

The dichotomy between activism and scholarship is often problematic for those feminist scholars who see academic feminism as a product of the political activism of second-wave feminists. Stacey (2000), who considers herself one of the second-wavers whose "sit-ins, demonstrations, petition drives, and vigorous direct-action efforts" (p. 1190) have made academic feminism possible, expresses disappointment with the lack of subversiveness and political action among contemporary feminist scholars engrossed in poststructuralist theory. Stacey's arguments represent a view of the evolution of women's studies into a field of study detached from reality, a view of the deradicalization of women's studies shared by many second wave feminist scholars (see Groot and Maynard, 1993; Lowe and Lowe Benston, 1991). The debate on activism and academism can be

related to that on “wave politics.” In both cases, the problem is looked at through the lens of binary opposition, in which there are only straightforward unambiguous definitions of the polarized notions. Although several authors (see Gillis and Munford, 2004; Henry 2003; Snyder, 2008) have argued for the dismantling of the second/third wave binary, pointing to the similarities between the two and their coexistence, few feminist authors have undertaken the task of rethinking the notion of activism in the same manner in order to show that academism and activism do not have to be contradicting terms. Thus, I am using the wave paradigm to illustrate my argument that despite the generational and conceptual differences among Croatian feminists, their specific ways of doing feminism, i.e. of being both activist and academic, can coexist and cooperate.

Looking at the narratives of two of the interviewees – Marija Bartulović who was born in the 1980s and started doing feminist theory only a couple of years ago, and Nadežda Čačinović, who was born in the 1940s and has had a fruitful feminist career for many decades – the generational divide in the way they conceptualize activism seems unambiguous. Bartulović represents a feminist scholar who shatters the academism/activism dichotomy by completely redefining the notion of the political, expressing her belief that doing theory is a form of activism:

I think activism is inherent to feminism (...) I think that engaging with feminist questions on a theoretical level has a very clear, on a personal and general level, transformational potential, which, if we deal with this seriously, has to be manifested, has to be shown. Even working at this university and dealing with these issues is activism for me.

Bartulović’s claim stands in opposition to the beliefs of those who see activism in a traditional political sense of the word, which then leads to the conclusion that academic feminism is, again in that traditional sense, non-activist. When I say traditional political activism, I refer to direct-action publicly visible initiatives.

Čačinović, whose age and experience positions her in the second wave generation, expresses a viewpoint on academism and activism that is quite different from Bartulović’s:

My academic career is not my feminist career, I’m not here as a...I haven’t become a tenured professor at women’s studies, my feminism has always been activist. When I teach I smuggle in what I like because I can, but...my feminism has always been activist.

I interpret Čačinović's words at first glance as a clear division of the two spheres – the academic life and the feminist, i.e. activist one. The feminist part is thus equated with activism, but these two are not equated with her academic career. However, Čačinović mentions that she introduces feminist topics into the material she teaches – it is my impression that she underestimates the extent of her impact and expresses a reluctance to acknowledge that this kind of intervention in academia is in fact activist work. The fact that she uses the expression “smuggle in” points to the conclusion that Čačinović is to some degree aware that introducing feminist theory into the curriculum on her own accord is a subversive act.

Juxtaposing Bartulović's and Čačinović's narratives creates an impression that it is the generational divide between the two that generates the divide in the way they define activism in academia. However, the ambiguity around the clear-cut dichotomy emerges in Čakardić's narrative. While she is generationally closer to Bartulović, her ideas on theory and activist practices reveal a bricolage of Bartulović's and Čačinović's claims. Čakardić thus said the following:

Activism is...let's first sort this out...it is not necessary for activism and theory to be joined together. It is a fact that theory is one thing, and activism another. So, they are not one of those programs that fulfill each other, that is one thing. The other thing is that there are extremely poor feminist theories and theoretical texts, and extremely poor practices. I don't see the purpose in feminist activism that boils down to women occasionally marching in the streets with whistles. That is not what is considered a kind of strategy or practice, tactics that could emerge from activism. Therefore, what I personally see as activism is definitely theory on the one hand, and on the other, certain alliances based on solidarity with other sub-political subjects that together form a collective that can only then act, let's not say revolutionary, but as a larger group that blocks existing dominant forms. And, I am not a pacifist, so I don't see the law as the primary way of fighting.

It is fascinating that Čakardić on the one hand separates theory from practice as not necessarily complementary domains, yet on the other hand explicitly says that for her doing theory is a form of activism. Furthermore, she does not see the point in “occasionally marching in the streets” type of activism that I interpret as Čakardić's caricature of activism in the traditional sense of the word. I interpret that doing theory for Čakardić is a political act because it is a well-organized methodical strategy that has far-reaching results, rather than a group demonstration for the sake of demonstration. In this sense, doing theory is activism because it has greater transformational

potential than poorly executed direct-action activism. However, Čakardić also argues in favor of direct collective action based on solidarity between different political subjects, which is activism in its basic political form. Thus, it can be said that Čakardić embodies the very coexistence of different notions of activism. As a member of both mainstream academia and the NGO the Women's Studies Center, she is an example of two conceptual frameworks coming together that bridge the academism/activism divide. Furthermore, Čakardić says one striking remark that corroborates Cerwonka's (2008) fascinating idea on traveling feminist thought in Central and Eastern Europe:

If we deal with feminism seriously, then we should analytically explain [what is what] and it will be clear that feminism is not only about women's issues. Although I think that it would be good to have [women as a political subject], and it would be useful. (...) Our tactics need to be organized clearly in order to get rid of the marginalization of women's issues and women's topics in general; women workers, academic women, women on any other margin, they need to have a joint feminist program that will strengthen the already marginalized issues, and of course, [we need] alliances with other political subjects.

As it is evident from Čakardić's view on women as a category that needs to be deployed for strategic purposes the lived experience of Croatian feminist scholars does not abide by the rules of the wave dichotomy since it does not correspond to the needs they have in their contexts. Similarly, the academism/activism dichotomy also does not correspond to their contexts. As it is unconvincing to force Čakardić into categories of second or third wave, since generationally she would belong to third wave feminism yet her politics is closer to second wave, so it is impossible to distinguish who of the interviewed Croatian feminists is an academic and who is an activist. Jurić further supports this claim with the following:

That is I guess one of the first commandments that is not perfunctory; to work constantly on linking theory and practice. Yes, it sounds too general but people do that in their personal everyday efforts. The Women's Studies Center is a good example. They have all the activities, that are let's say theoretical work, but they have also opened up this space, this activist rubric, so to say, that should not be ignored.

Jurić is pointing to the fact that the Women's Studies Center is merging academism and activism into one, and thus the participation of the interviewees, who also work at the university, in the Center is one of the crucial contextual reasons for the interlacing of theory and practice in their work at the university as well. Furthermore, the demands of the academic profession that do not

always go hand in hand with direct action have induced them to reconceptualize what being an activist in academia is. Thus, as Henry (2003) claims that wave position is always a political choice and not a position determined by age, I would claim, by analogy, that being an activist, in academia or anywhere else, is also always a choice, i.e. a chosen subversive position that is not determined by a set of prescribed rules. Activism is anything that has a transformational impact, on a larger or smaller scale. For Čačinović and Čakardić it is the effort they put in the functioning of the Women's Studies Center, and part of that effort transplants into academia. For Bartulović it is the open identification as a feminist at a non-feminist department. As Cerwonka (2008) notes, instead of emphasizing differences between various ways of doing feminism, it is more fruitful to look at the ways in which ideas are negotiated and reshaped to suit the needs of individuals in various contexts.

#### ***4.2 Academic Feminism for the Future of Feminism***

While the previous section demonstrated that Croatian feminist scholars conceptualize activism and the notion of being political beyond the binary opposition of activism versus scholarship, in this section, I will discuss the question of why the coexistence of these various notions of being political is beneficial for the future of feminism in academia. Redefining and expanding the notion of activism is in line with what Wiegman (2002) puts forth, i.e. that there are “various notions of the political that Women's Studies in the future might come to need” (p. 34), and therefore “much more attention needs to be paid to the ways in which academic feminism's institutional position, indeed its power, can be organized in relation to struggles that cut across various domains” (p. 33). Čakardić is one of the interviewees who articulates the value of academic feminism's institutional position, especially in Croatia where there is a strong opposition to the policies that push toward the commercialization of the university. She says the following:

What is most important about [academic] work...that is working at the university is in so far good because it is still included in the public sector. In that way the discomforts that women and men face in neoliberal capitalist variants are here evaded. (...) the Philosophy of Gender that I teach here has certain autonomy; I don't have to account for the material I teach to anybody. Therefore, the academic position is a position of autonomy. [Being a member of

the academic community] is important because [academia] is one of the fundamental places of struggle, resistance to dominant practices, patriarchal forms, etc.

Čakardić emphatically expresses the way in which she sees the power of being a feminist in academia. Academia is one of the rare places where feminists have visibility, power and autonomy at the same time. This excerpt adds another level of support to the claim that academism and activism truly are not an oxymoron. The autonomy one has in academia opens the possibility to employ various modes of struggle. The presence of feminists in academia, and their impact on the public social sphere is becoming more prominent since they are no longer on the margins of, but within powerful institutions such as the university. Therefore, the expanding of the notion of activism, if we do not wish to relinquish the idea that there is no feminism without activism, is more useful for feminism in general than engaging in continuous debate on the value of different modes of being a feminist. Furthermore, insisting on binary opposition diminishes the potential power academic feminism has for the future of feminism, as Wiegman (2002) notes. Jelavić noticed as well that the academism/activism dichotomy is used as an attempt to undermine feminism once again:

What I would like to point out is...for me it seems crucial that the relationship between academism and activism is constantly questioned. I would like to see if the divide between the two truly exists or is it an imaginary divide, a figment of someone's imagination in order to prevent some things from happening. I would like to know who makes these barriers. (Formal interview, 23 April 2012)

It is interesting that Jelavić expresses bewilderment with the fact that a debate on the academism/activism divide is constantly forced into the discussion on academic feminism. My interpretation of her words suggests that she does not see such dichotomy on the example of Croatian feminists, and therefore wonders where such claims come from and what the motivation behind them is. Indeed, as the excerpts from the interviews discussed in the previous section have shown, feminists I have talked to do not exhibit feelings of concern over their position as academic feminists, i.e. over a supposed belief that they are not being feminist enough. Furthermore, some of them stressed the importance of their subversive position that is facilitated by the power and autonomy academia grants. It is their personal choice in what way to exploit the power they have

and for what means. As Čakardić has poignantly remarked, doing systematic theoretical work often has greater transformational potential than disorganized direct-action activism.

To recapitulate, the strength of academic feminism in Croatia lies in its interlacing of mainstream academia, Women's Studies Center and forms of activism that go beyond the academism/activism divide. The anxiety around the future of academic feminism only perpetuates the notion that feminism is a fossilized set of rules, i.e. the propositions for "saving" feminism in academia from deradicalization were all formulated from the standpoint that there is one strict notion of what feminist activism is, and therefore what academic feminism should be. Recent developments in the field of gender studies and academic feminism have shown that feminism is in a constant state of flux, and that new approaches, ideas, and theories (such as queer theory, which entered the academy only some ten years ago) are emerging all the time. As Henry (2003) puts it, "when all our voices – and all our various ways of being feminist – can be a part of the dialogue, feminism will truly move forward" (p. 228). Thus, one way of employing academic feminism for the future of feminism is to generate a larger number of case studies, such as Graff's (2003) on Poland that shows how Polish feminists combine theories and practices that are attributed to both the second and third wave feminism. Such studies could help us to break away from the divides by showing that academic feminists do not operate in abstract spaces, but in different contexts in which various negotiations and strategies emerge.

## Chapter Five: Revisiting Integration

The previous two chapters addressed the current situation of interviewed feminist scholars, i.e. their position within the institution, their attitudes towards the concept of activism within academia, and the influence of the Women's Studies Center on academic feminism in Croatia. An important contribution of the Women's Studies Center was the attempt to integrate women's studies into the university system a decade ago. Although the negotiations were unsuccessful, the idea has lingered on. Thus, in this chapter, I will revisit the question of integration once again, providing a humble contribution to resolving this sore spot for feminism in Croatia.

In the first section, I will address the issue of terminology in women's and gender studies, which is significant for the institutionalization of this field of study in Croatia since it affects feminist scholarship in terms of the question of subjectivity. Terminology opens the debate on who is the valid subject of scholarship, and consequently affects theory, methodology and the prominence of issues each field of study deals with. In the second section, I will discuss the interviewees' ideas on the mode of integration and on the question of initiative for integration.

### *5.1 Terminology in Women's and Gender Studies*

Women's studies in Croatia have emerged from a long feminist tradition and the work of a non-governmental organization, the Women's Studies Center in Zagreb, while the study of gender, as a more encompassing term, was introduced in recent years at several departments in Croatian universities. During the interviews I have conducted in Zagreb, these two terms were used interchangeably, although it should be noted that feminists who teach at the Women's Studies Center used "women's studies" more often, which is logical since this is the term mostly used at the Center and in their work. The distinction between "gender studies" and "women's studies" was made and explained in a more elaborate way only when my questions specifically targeted this issue. It should also be noted that the interviewees acknowledged that the word "feminism" is a very broad term, yet for the purpose of easier communication it was used throughout the interviews,

encompassing both doing feminist theory and activism. It should also be pointed out that the “feminist” character of either of the two, gender or women’s studies, was taken for granted throughout the interviews. Again, the relation between the terms “feminism,” “gender studies,” and “women’s studies” was debated only when a specific question targeted this issue.

The interviewees’ attitudes towards the varied terminology in this field of study can be divided into three groups: first, “gender studies” is an evolution of “women’s studies,” second, the terminology does not matter, as long as these studies correspond with feminism, and third, “women’s studies” is a preferred term due to political reasons. It should be noted that some of the interviewees argued for more than one option, i.e. they were not categorically dismissing all other possible solutions for the terminology question.

Marija Bartulović was one of the two people that looked at the question of terminology in an evolutionary, chronological way. She said:

The field of gender studies is more related to a variety of identity categories, including women, but in the first place, to people whose gender identities do not fit into heteronormative discourse, and I think that postmodern, poststructuralist theory is more prominent [in gender studies]. I would say that women’s studies are more...actually they are a predecessor or a foothold to the development of gender studies, they have a clearer historical connection to the women’s movement.

Bartulović thus makes a distinction between the two terms as one being the predecessor to the other, i.e. women’s studies, which are in Bartulović’s opinion more related to a social movement and paved the way for the development of gender studies, which are more related to theory. As I already mentioned, during all interviews the terms “gender studies,” “women’s studies” and “feminism” were all enmeshed, along with the concepts of theory and practice, when the question was not directly targeted at the issue of terminology. Thus, I find it interesting that subtle differences in the way Bartulović sees the distinction between gender and women’s studies emerge, i.e. “gender” being more related to theory and “women’s” to social movements. She also points to the broadening of the subject areas of gender studies, which I interpret as Bartulović’s way of expressing improvement, i.e. the evolution of women’s studies into a more sophisticated field of study. Galić is

of a similar opinion, stating that gender studies represent a historical development of women's studies from the second wave onwards:

I wouldn't insist on exclusively women's studies because first of all any studies that exclude others are a double-edged sword. I think there were more arguments to have women's studies back in the day when they were first established, in the second wave, than today.

Galić and Bartulović's claims are in line with de Groot and Maynard (1993) who note that the terminology in this area of study has significantly changed in the past twenty years and scholars, influenced by postmodernism and poststructuralism, now predominantly use the term "gender," considering "women" as a relic of the past. Thus, the evolution of women's studies into gender studies is in these two examples perceived as a chronological evolution of scholarly thought.

The question of terminology revealed a fascinating view that three of the interviewed people expressed – it is not the question of naming the field of study, but the question of its character, that according to Čakardić, Jelavić and Jurić has to be feminist. Jurić said the following:

There are good and bad gender studies, of good quality and poor quality. Those that do not incorporate feminist approach and [do not deal with] women's issues are not gender studies at all.

Jurić is more inclined towards gender studies, which will be more elaborately discussed in the next section on integration, yet he does not approve of gender studies that are not closely related to feminism. Thus, it can be interpreted that his attitudes, although not explicitly stated, are in line with the above discussed chronological evolution that implies women's studies and feminism as the foothold of gender studies. This argument has often been explored in literature that addresses the issues arising from terminology. Zimmerman (2005) thus sees gender studies as a hazard for feminism, noting that "gender studies might or might not be feminist" (p. 37), and Yee (1997) puts forward an argument that scholars interested in dealing with gender do not necessarily have to be feminists and may in fact "reject feminist theory and methodology as a framework" (p. 49). Čakardić and Jelavić insist on feminism even more vigorously, arguing that gender studies are as radical as women's studies, and therefore suggest the introduction of feminist studies. Čakardić said:

I wouldn't make such a distinction between women's and gender studies, because the similarities between them are much larger than between them and feminist studies. (...) If we want to deal with topics that are broader than these identity and political dimensions, [we need feminist studies].

I interpret Čakardić's words in the sense that feminist studies go beyond the usual quarrels between women's and gender studies advocates. Feminism could function as a uniting force that would benefit common goals of all subjects. Jelavić is pointing to feminism as "common language" between different subjects as well:

Asking the same question repeatedly, [women's or gender studies], is in fact a way to avoid addressing the real problem. Let's have both, why not? Let them be feminist studies, it really doesn't matter. Maybe it would be good to have feminist studies; they would have the most powerful political force, and subversive force.

I would argue that the difference between the first point of view put forth by Bartulović and Galić, and the second by Čakardić, Jelavić, and Jurić is in the fact that the latter three are involved in direct-action type of activism. Thus, their primary agenda is that the people who will work in the field in the years to come do not forget that feminism as a social movement made the development of the studies in Croatia possible. Jurić confirmed this claim explicitly:

We could not even speak about integrating gender studies at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb had there not been for the long-standing and vigorous work of the people who deal with these issues. In other words, most people [in Croatia] would still think feminism is an absurdity. Today they don't or are at least polite enough not to say so.

In this excerpt, Jurić is referring to the effort that Croatian feminists have put into both activist and theoretical work that led to the emancipation of gender studies as a separate field of study in Croatia. Bearing in mind that the discussion about terminology is held prior to integration, some Croatian feminists probably worry about the character future department/graduate studies might assume.

In the interviews I have conducted, this concern especially emerged in Borić's and Jelavić's narratives. Jelavić said:

I think that the question of terminology is extremely important because it determines subjectivity and the visibility of those who are running the program.

Subjectivity and visibility have been extensively debated in Western literature as well. De Groot and Maynard (1993) express the concern regarding the trend of substituting women for gender, arguing that “once again, women’s lives as legitimate subjects for research disappear from view” (p. 153). The major concern that Jelavić points out is also the loss of visibility for women, that in her opinion would be absorbed, along with a feminist agenda, within the overarching study of gender.

Of all the interviewees, Borić expressed her attitude on the terminology issue in the most straightforward manner:

The constantly changing terminology has been blurring these issues. I think that [at the Women’s Studies Center] we insist on women’s studies, not on gender studies. (...) When [people] ask why there are no masculinity studies, well, let men do that for themselves, who stops them. Why should we do that? (...) I think women are very generous, and we easily merge with other groups, we are very understanding. (...) Just like women who wash socks for their men in revolutions, that is how it is with gender. We are not yet done with “women” to transform into “gender” so suddenly. But what we do in women’s studies, if you take a look at our curriculum, it is full of topics that interlace women’s issues with gender, or only gender [related topics], or topics related to queer theory and LGBT rights, really a lot of it this year.

Borić thus explicitly states that Women’s Studies Center is called “women’s studies” for a reason, i.e. this is a political decision that puts women’s visibility in the foreground. The conceptual framework of women’s studies, in her opinion, does not have to differ from the one of gender studies, but it should be clear who the primary subject of these studies is. Borić expresses the fear of women being marginalized once again, and as Yee (1997) points out, the threat of removing women from the name of the field of study that will open the possibility to “not only [include] men, but focus exclusively on men and masculinity” (p. 50).

It should not be neglected, despite the strategic reasons, that the term “woman” is problematic. Braidotti (2000) acknowledges that the term has been highly debated by post-structuralist feminists who question the epistemological value of the term, and Yee (1997) points out that the term is “admittedly unstable, fragmented” (p. 62). However, both Braidotti (2000) and Yee (1997) stress that “women” in women’s studies can encompass the complexity of the lived experience of particular women, and at the same time give prominence to the political aspect of women’s studies. Yee (1997) argues,

[Its] value is in its capacity to keep “woman” on the table as a contested visible, and a complex category of analysis that validates the existence of women as a group in society and addresses sexism and racism directly in the production of feminist scholarship. (p. 61)

Both Yee and Braidotti support Borić’s claims on the plurality of subjects in women’s studies, yet it seems that all these subjects in women’s studies that Borić is propagating are still exclusively women, and that certain uneasiness towards including masculinity studies in the field exists. It should be taken into consideration that when Borić is arguing for women’s studies, she is distinctly speaking about the Women’s Studies Center, and is completely aware that in case of integration at the university the studies would most likely be called gender studies:

In case of establishing something at the university, which is antagonistic towards the word feminism, it would have to be subsumed. First, they would have to be named gender studies, which I understand. If they would be named women’s studies, I don’t know how men would enroll, if they even wanted to. Like [in other countries] they would most definitely be named gender studies, fair enough...somehow it seems to me...if something would be called feminist studies, not many men would apply, and not even women, ask today’s young women if they are feminists and they will say no for some reason.

Borić is talking about what Yee (1997) explains as a survival strategy in academia, which might not approve of feminist or women’s studies but would give recognition to gender studies because of its all-inclusive character. Thus, Borić’s comment in my opinion nicely summarizes the probable outcome of the various deliberations on terminology that have been discussed in this section. Despite the individual approaches to understanding “women’s studies,” “gender studies” or “feminist studies,” integration will ask for strategic decisions.

## ***5.2 Future prospects***

As the previous section shows, there still exists a lively debate on the question of terminology in this field of study that the interviewed Croatian feminists envisage under the names of “gender studies,” “women’s studies” and “feminist studies.” Despite their individual attitudes, there is a recognition that in the case that such studies are integrated into the higher education system “gender studies” would probably be the most suitable term because it is the most encompassing and the least controversial one. The questions that have been debated during interviews regarding future

prospects of integration were related to two topics: first, the mode of integration and second, on whose initiative.

The mode of integration refers to two most common attitudes that the interviewees expressed, i.e. first, that a gender related perspective should be integrated in curriculums across all departments and second, that there should be gender studies at the university and women's studies in Women's Studies Center. Thus, in the latter instance, the question of terminology surfaces once again, revealing that some interviewees see "gender studies" as more suitable, due to reasons previously discussed, for the university. Borić and Čačinović expressed a clear desire for the integration of gender perspective in curriculums across departments. Borić said:

Maybe it is not necessary to have a separate department for women's or gender studies because then we are returning to the old modes of [higher] education – everybody sitting in their own niche. Maybe it would be better to have intersectionality, so whoever is teaching history is teaching gender in history as well. That is how I see it. Of course, why not, it would be nice to have a complete program [at the university].

Borić is not explicitly against establishing a department at the university, yet she is not vigorously propagating that one should exist, which is understandable due to her position in the Women's Studies Center. I interpret her reluctance to support the establishment of such a department at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb as a slight fear that the educational program in the Center would consequently lose its appeal and legitimacy, especially if the Center, i.e. the people who work there are not included in the integration.

Čačinović, who has a long-standing career at both the university and the Center, is also aware of the disadvantageous position the Center has in the question of integration. Since the attempted integration led by the Center has already failed once, a second attempt, which might be initiated by a different set of people, could lead to the Center's marginalization. Čačinović noted the following:

I think that a study from the first year of the undergraduate program until the end [of graduate studies] would not give the best results. My idea is to include this aspect everywhere, and not to have separate women's studies; this aspect should become a part of the general academic knowledge. (...) For me it would be extremely hard to do anything against [the Center's] will, but eventually something will have to be done. There will be new younger scholars that will cooperate and think of something for themselves and they will

probably do it [found a department]. Me, personally, I wouldn't like to do that, I wouldn't like to steal [the program?] from [the Center].

Čačinović seems to be aware that the educational program in the Center, which now has an exclusive right to teach the only systematic program in women's studies in Zagreb, would not benefit from the establishment of separate gender studies at the university.

Čakardić and Jurić argued in favor of the second mode of integration, i.e. that there should be a coexistence of educational programs at the university and at the Women's Studies Center. Jurić said:

My vision is to have gender studies at the university that enrolls both men and women, that has male and female professors, and that doesn't address only women's issues. (...) I would like them to be gender studies that include masculinity studies, queer theory, etc. (...) But the focus should remain on women, not only because of their position in society but also because of the history of gender studies that first developed as women's studies. (...) I think that programs in gender studies could coexist at the university, with mostly the same people who teach at the Center, and at the Women's Studies Center, which could then be exclusively for women because the question of education at the Center is not only about education but also about empowerment and self-empowerment.

Jurić is making a clear terminological distinction and all that it entails. Gender studies, going beyond women's issues, would be more acceptable to the establishment and therefore more appropriate for the university, while the Center could remain a venue for women's empowerment. However, it should not be neglected that Jurić repeats on several occasions that gender studies must retain its connection to feminism and women's issues as well. Thus, he is not, in my opinion, claiming that gender studies are less feminist. His preference for gender studies is a result of his own gender identity, which is "the other" in women's studies. I believe that the feeling of exclusion from women's studies that he as a man has experienced until recently motivates his advocacy for gender studies at the university, while he respects the Center's decision, and the right to manage the educational program they provide in their own way, although the Center has started enrolling men into their program since 2011.

Čakardić supports the establishment of studies at the university and their independence at the Center as well. In her own words:

I think women's studies should be institutionalized. (...) An independent program that deals with [feminist theory] systematically and seriously has to exist. (...) [Institutionalization] would give these issues credibility on some level. On the other hand, independent studies are much more politically powerful. (...) But I don't see why we wouldn't have the coexistence of both.

Contrary to Jurić, she does not use the term “gender” but “women's studies.” The explanation behind it is twofold. First, I have asked the question using the term “women's studies,” and second, she is actively participating in the Center's educational program, thus the term is closer to her experience. As it has been mentioned earlier, Čakardić does not see a relevant difference between those two terms, and in fact supports feminist studies.

Čakardić is aligning herself with what other scholars have pointed out, that integration generally leads to the loss of autonomy and deradicalization of feminist activity and therefore should be approached with caution (Lowe & Lowe Benston, 1991). I believe that Čakardić, as is Jurić, is interested in giving the field more visibility and legitimacy, as well as intensifying the scholarly production in this field, which is something that a position in the university can provide. By keeping independent women's studies at the Center as well, feminist scholarship could have a “control mechanism,” i.e. a dialogue between the integrated and the autonomous model of feminist education would be maintained.

Although the interviewees discussed the issues surrounding terminology and the mode of institutionalization of gender studies into the university system with enthusiasm, the question of who should initiate integration once again produced somewhat discouraging answers. The interviewees who work in the Women's Studies Center and who led the negotiations about integration in early 2000s are firm in their belief that they will not lead the initiative once again. Jelavić said:

I think that the academic community now has to undertake the responsibility [for initiating integration]. (...) I expect [the people who work at the university] to solve this problem. Why would it be [the Women's Studies Center's] burden and responsibility? (...) It is evident that an NGO doesn't have the power to intervene into the [university] system, and I think that the circumstances at the university have changed since the time [the Center] tried to do it. There are several courses at different departments at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences now, and there is a defined field of study in the national classification of science.

Jelavić is pointing to some of the changes that I have discussed in previous chapters, yet these are not, in my opinion, enough to revive the integration initiative. The chapter on academia as a site of change has shown that there has emerged a group of feminists in academia and that the academic community's support towards them has increased in recent years. The increased number of courses related to feminist theory at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the introduction of "gender studies" into official classification of science are all manifestations of these changes. Yet, what is still missing for the reviving of the integration initiative is greater cooperation among scholars and one crucial person who would motivate others. Jurić said:

There is a group of people [at the university] that would support the proposition to establish a department of gender studies, but [somebody] should organize them. I am now being critical towards us [feminist scholars in the university?]; perhaps one of us should initiate things, but at the moment I am not that person. (...) The atmosphere at the Faculty [of Humanities and Social Sciences] is quite favorable now, and if somebody would put forth a good plan, I think the management would approve.

As Jurić notes, the time for reviving integration initiative is more favorable than ever before and therefore I think that the issue will not remain at a standstill for long. As there is still a lack of initiative among feminist scholars at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, I would like to think that I have also contributed to their organization through this research. Conducting these interviews has been a mode of intervention into the academic community. By asking questions on academism and activism, cooperation, and integration, I have at least revived these issues in the minds of people who can act on them.

Once gender studies become a part of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, I believe, based on arguments I put forth in previous chapters, that they will only help resolve the problems some Croatian academic feminists encounter today. Čakardić's words encourage this belief:

[Integration into the university system] is not the same story in all contexts. Budapest [CEU] has its own story. I have to point out that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb is one peculiar oasis, it is a context...you know, I have been at several universities in Europe and the world, and none of them has something like our student club, where you have gatherings and revelries until morning, which tells a lot about the university as a public space. There are so many gatherings during the week that you don't know which one to attend first; to go read Susan Woodward or about women's issues in Yugoslavia or about

political economy, etc. (...) I think there are groups that insist on feminism and will not let it go, at least how I see it, the older and the younger generation. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is very specific and even if women's studies [are integrated] this will be one interesting story, not as usual as in other places because there is no commercial interest in it. (...) It has a politically motivated impulse, and that should be used somehow.

Thus, as Čakardić notes, the peculiarity of context in which gender studies might come to be institutionalized points to the conclusion that gender studies in Zagreb will have the ability to resist the threats and pitfalls of integration, i.e. they will not lose its feminist character and political subversiveness.

## Conclusion

This study began with a hypothesis that Croatian feminist scholars successfully negotiate scholarship and activism. The hypothesis was based on two points. First, feminism in Croatia has a strong theoretical foundation, as part of the legacy of socialist feminism and through educational programs that have been conducted in the Women's Studies Center for the last seventeen years. Second, feminists in Croatia form a rather small community and the people who engage in theoretical scholarship have been engaged in a lively activist scene that began intensifying during the war period. In recent years, feminist activism integrated into a wider context of civil society initiatives.

In order to explore this hypothesis I have analyzed narratives of seven prominent Croatian feminist scholars. I have used Cerwonka's (2008) concept of the traveling feminist though and juxtaposed it to the dominant literature on academic feminism produced in the West in order to look into the peculiarities of the Croatian context. In this thesis, I have argued that the particularity of context has brought about feminist scholars that resist the "professionalization" of feminism that has come under severe criticism in the West.

I have shown that Croatian feminist scholars perceive themselves as agents of change in the academic community and that they see their position in academia as a position of power that has great transformational potential. Contrary to the dominant literature on academic feminism that points to the lack of activism among feminist scholars, Croatian feminists are actively engaged in civil society initiatives. Furthermore, the way in which they conceptualize the notion of activism, i.e. expanding the meaning of it, bridges the dichotomy between scholarship and activism on a deeper level. The understanding of the terms "women's" and "gender studies," which most interviewees see as interchangeable, yet inseparable from feminism, further supports the fact that Croatian feminist scholarship has not been depoliticized.

The implication of these results is that the establishment of independent gender studies at universities in Croatia, if or when it happens, will be a fascinating story to follow that might provide

an optimistic view of the future of academic feminism in general. Although this case study gives a new dimension to doing feminism in academia, it is limited to a specific context, as well as by the number of analyzed narratives. This thesis is a product of intense, yet short research period and therefore a more comprehensive study of the topic could be beneficial. Making a comparative analysis of the different experiences in the region, i.e. in ex-Yugoslav post-state socialist countries, with integrating women's or gender studies into the higher education system and the effects it had on negotiating scholarship and activism would be a fascinating project.

Nevertheless, this study is a contribution to the debate on the future of feminism in academia that goes beyond the Croatian context. The production of more case studies could facilitate the dismantling of the binary opposition between scholarship and activism by showing that academic feminists do not operate in abstract spaces, but in different contexts in which various negotiations and strategies emerge.

## **Appendix I**

List of interviewees, in alphabetical order, with the date the interview was conducted:

Marija Bartulović, 25 April 2012

Rada Borić, 17 April 2012

Nadežda Čačinović, 18 April 2012

Ankica Čakardić, 27 April 2012

Branka Galić, 13 April 2012

Željka Jelavić, 23 April 2012

Hrvoje Jurić, 26 April 2012

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