

Whose Sex? Public Opinion on Sexual Education Initiative in Serbia

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Abstract

The sex education initiative was introduced in 2013 by the Serbian Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth as an elective course in Serbian high schools. This type of project has not yet been recorded in Serbian education, therefore it received an enormous amount of attention. In this thesis, I look at the discourses of sex education in contemporary Serbia, through a content analysis of media texts, political statements and social media, as well as by analyzing interviews conducted with parents in the capital of Serbia, Belgrade during April 2015. In my thesis I argue that the narratives around sexual education reflect the nationalist ideas, as well the ongoing debate on “Europeanization” in Serbia. By presenting the role of women's body in the nationalist rhetoric, I examine the topics on women, reproduction and nation through the analysis of perceptions of sex education in Serbia. Later on I present how the narratives of sex education reflect the idea of East/West, tradition/modernity in Serbia. My case study contributes to existing scholarship on gender and nationalism in Serbian context, adding sex education as an angle for the analysis.

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Introduction

This thesis analyzes the public perceptions and narratives of the sex education initiative in contemporary Serbia, arguing that these narratives contribute to the larger discourse of nationalism and Europeanization. The initiative has been introduced in 2013 by the Serbian Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth in form of an elective course in Serbian high schools. Introduction of the topic as a official school curricula has not been recorded recently in Serbian education, thus the pilot project of the regional government has received an enormous attention of the public. Since the first news about the planned launch was published, the initiative and its aims became a compelling topic of various narratives. According to the provincial minister for sports and youth, who is one of creators of the project, the goal of the sexual education initiative was to help with prevention of unwanted outcomes, raise the awareness of sex differences and sexual health among young people, but also teach them to be self-aware when it comes to their bodies (Blic, 2013). The program started as a pilot project for ten high schools in the territory of the northern Serbia, Vojvodina, but after receiving a vast amount of positive reviews from students, as well as parents, in the 2014-2015 school year, around 66 high schools expressed an interest in participation in the project. This number amounted to most of schools situated in the Vojvodina region. Due to a great interest of parents, teachers and students for such education, the Serbian Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth planned to initiate the amendment of the Law on Primary Education, in order to include sexual education at least as an optional subject in all schools.

The sexual education initiative has definitely reached great success in its first year, nevertheless the topic of sexuality has been still perceived by certain groups as a taboo, part of the private sphere of societal life (RTS, 2013). When such topic enters the public domains, the responses from different groups in society can manifest in various ways. The sexual education initiative, as expected, received mixed criticism throughout many conservative media sources, from newspaper articles to social media, television and finally on the official websites of political institutions, in a form of statements.

This thesis examines the narratives which emerged around the initiative, arguing that they reflect nationalist ideas while at the same time ideas of Europeanization in Serbia. The thesis aims to gain insights into how the current initiative of sexual education is perceived by the public through the media and official political statements in terms of two main issues—nationalism and Europeanization. Also, it examines the attitudes and views of parents and students towards topic of sexuality, as well sex education.

Throughout April 2015, I conducted research in the capital of Serbia. During this period, I interviewed parents regarding sex education, but also had informal interviews with students of different academic backgrounds. Though my main interview group was parents, the conversations with young people helped me understand the larger discourses of Europeanization, nationalism, gender and sexuality in Serbia.

In order to prepare for the research, I studied various literature from different disciplines, engaging in interdisciplinary study of theories from sociology, gender, sexuality and nationalism studies. The scholarship I engaged with covered the concepts of nationalism and

Europeanization, progressiveness and backwardness, the East and West dichotomy which later helped me in answering to my research questions.

The first chapter of my thesis gives a theoretical framework, providing a summary of the theories and studies of gender, sexual education, sexual citizenship, nationalism, which are relevant for my analysis. In the second chapter, I examine the background of the sex education initiative, as well as the context of textual sources and narratives analyzed for the research purposes. In the third chapter, I discuss about the methodology used for my research, explaining why particularly these methods were used, as well as describe the limitations and difficulties, faced during the research process. In the fourth chapter, the main analysis is presented, divided into two subchapters. In the first subchapter, I focus on how the narratives around the sex education initiative reflected nationalist ideas in Serbia, while in the second subchapter, I explore, through the filter of sex education, how the debate on the EU Serbia versus the non-EU Serbia has been reinforced in the country. By attempting at this, I hope that my work contributes to the scholarship of sexual education, set of theories of nationalism, gender and sexuality. My research presents how sexual education is perceived and understood through lenses of nationalism and East/West dichotomy in modern day Serbia.

Chapter 1 – Literature

This thesis aims to examine how the narratives around the sex education initiative reflect the ideas, that I argue promote a type of Serbian nationalism, as well as the debate on Europeanization. The chapter that follows constitutes the theoretical foundations of the thesis. Here, I examine a set of theories that draws from studies of gender, nationalism, sexuality and sex education.

Investigating this topic, questions continued to arise about the position of a sexual health program. First, how do the narratives about the initiative reflect nationalist ideas in Serbia? How do they demonstrate the debates about the EU accession of Serbia? How do parents I interviewed perceive the introduction of sex education in regards to their children? How is the idea of tradition expressed in their narratives? What kind of gendered nationalist ideas are reflected within the narratives? How the perceptions shape idea of sexuality in Serbia? How the topic of Europeanization is brought up in the sex education narratives? How are the narratives gendered? How is the sex education perceived in the pro-EU narratives; and how is it supported? How is it argued against by pro-nationalist groups? What values and whose values the sex education initiative represents according to the narratives? These questions drove me to the overview of academic work that follows.

1.1 Gender, Socialization and Sexual Education

Perception of the parents I interviewed in regards to the sex education was one of the narratives I explore in my research. In order to understand their perspective, I also questioned their views on children's socialization in contemporary Serbia. Children's socialization is based on already socially and culturally constructed stereotypes, which later shape children's idea of what they are

and what they may do. Such socialization builds boundaries between sexes, producing feminine and masculine personalities and what is determined to be “appropriate” behavior for each sex (Millett, 1971). This so-called appropriate behavior is determined by main stakeholders in child’s upbringing. Chodorow (1995) argues that to change both parents need to be equally involved in children’s socialization, for a complete understanding of perspectives. I would not completely agree with that statement, as child learns from different socialization agents, educational institutions being yet another one that reinforce gender divisions and teach children to ‘do’ gender. This is done through the ‘hidden’ curriculum, which presents the gender norms and values of the society (Heaton and Lawson, 1996). However those methods show exactly what types of female and male traits are desirable in the predominant of ones nation. West and Zimmerman in their work “Doing Gender” (1987) raise an idea that gender is a product of social doings, as well as social interactions and rule of conduct. In their opinion, gender is not what we are, but what we do. As in the research, I am looking into public discourse of sex education, West’ and Zimmerman’s approach becomes core thinking of gender socialization. As gender is an achieved, in other words constructed status, it conceptualizes and forms depending on societies’ views on gender and sexuality. In a country like Serbia, which promotes a certain type of traditional gender norms rooted in nationalist understandings of sexuality, socialization and thus education become tools for a certain type of socialization¹. Therefore in these circumstances, sex education would be usually constructed in ways desirable by the dominant groups in society or in other words, by hegemonic masculinity (R.W Connell, 2005)². Looking into sexuality and education, Croatian scholar, Alexander Stulhofer, in his study on sexuality in late adolescence, analyzes how the rate of sexual permissiveness, egalitarianism and

¹ Many others categories, besides gender and sexuality influence children socialization (race, class, disability), however for my study, I look only at these two.

² For more information about hegemonic masculinity see R.W.Connell (2005)

responsibility of universities' freshmen changed between 1998 and 2003 in Croatia. The analysis showed the decline of sexual permissiveness of young adults, but as well the increase of religiousness in 2003, what Stulhofer explains as influence of retraditionalization of Croatian society. The rise of religiousness and the introduction of *vjeronauka* (religious education) to school system in Croatia impacted on attitudes towards sexuality (Stulhofer, 2004). In my research, I have not concentrated on the religious aspects in narratives of sexual education or religious backgrounds of my respondents, nevertheless in the narratives of sex education opponents, religion has been used as a tool to dismiss sexual freedom and different kinds of sexuality. Referring back to Stulhofer, in his research, the decline of sexual responsibility, or in other words, 'sexual literacy'³ (Stulhofer, 2004) has been in negative correlation with rise of religious nurture. Even if analyzed periods are relatively close in time, the study shows that traditional and religious, but also non-traditional values had a great influence on sexual awareness of young people in Croatia. More than ten years after, I noticed similar indicators in Serbia. Majority of interviewed parents who are from similar social background as Stulhofer's respondents⁴ found very important to be involved in their children's education, in order to carry over their experiences and knowledge. The reason for this is probably a relatively short period of between two measurements, which could hardly expect more, socio-cultural changes triggered by shifts in the behavior and attitudes of students. In addition, as Stulhofer noted, it would be naive to think that the increase in sexual permissiveness and egalitarianism, as well as their own culture of individualism on which it is based, can be expressed as a linear process. From my research, even if my respondents' attitudes towards sexual behaviors could be perceived as permissive, the opposition of sex education initiative deviated from the same narrative, denying

³ Broader knowledge of sexuality, different kinds of protection to kinds of diseases (author's example)

⁴ Mainly middle, upper class, educated urban citizen

different kinds of sexualities. Meanwhile pro-initiative narratives supported sex education, also looking through heteronormative matrix, but bringing European countries as examples of permissive societies, as transformation path Serbia should follow.

Another scholar, who researched sexuality and mainly sex education and citizenship in Croatia, Roman Kuhar used the case study on Health Education, to analyze ways in which the Roman Catholic Church in its discourse is securing patriarchal values as exclusionary in relation to sexual citizenship. In Croatia, as in all the region of former Yugoslavia, the Church has been segregated from the State in 1940s of XX century, causing the practice of religion to be restricted to the private sphere. After the collapse of Yugoslavia and with process of democratization, during 90s, the Church regained its position as influential institution. It also “became a marker of national identity, strengthening nationalism and – in the context of the armed conflicts in the nineties – preserving a separate Croat identity” (Kuhar, 2014, 86). The rehabilitation process development gradually, by 1997, the Catholic Church addressed the need to include religious education in public schools. Meanwhile the Church has been receiving more power, using its influence in social and political spheres to start “a process of the re-traditionalization of society” (Kuhar, 86). In 2012 it was announced by center-left wing government that Health Education is to be re-introduced in schools, with addition of topic on sexuality, the Church supported by few civil organizations campaigned against the initiative. The main reason for the protest was inclusion of LGBT issues and the narrative of tolerance of sexual diversity. Once the Church proclaims non-reproductive sexual acts as immoral it secularizes society to those morally accepted and outcasts. Similar narratives are dominant in religious domains in Serbia. The Orthodox Church publicly shamed citizens who do not enter relationship between man and a woman. As Kuhar writes, the Church supporters in Croatia, called out sexual education initiative

to be one to spread “homosexual propaganda” in schools. The Church accused the initiative of naturalizing homosexuality. Similar narratives I have observed during my research, when opponents of sex education initiative justified their dismiss with God and Bible morality, shaping Serbian citizen as mainly heterosexual being.

While Kuhar and Stulhofer researched perceptions, attitudes and narratives around sex education, there has been prominent research on information in area of sex education of Western societies, Jacquelynne Eccles, an American educational psychologist, writes about the positionality of sex education in socialization of gender roles and sexual attitudes in early stages of children’s lives. She looks at the understanding of reproduction in Western countries, using as an example Sweden, where she notices three positions when it comes to sex education of children: ignore, minimize or cultivation of their interests (Eccles in Allgeier’s ‘Changing Boundaries: Gender Roles and Sexual Behavior’ 1983). In her research, Eccles shows that sex education as a formal class was supported by majority of parents, but also that their contribution was rudimentary and this could be a reason for children to start relying on their friends’ information, insufficient in equal ways. From anecdotes that storks bring babies, to depiction of the topic as shameful to talk out loud, early socialization of humans is mostly spent in the misinformation. As sexuality is learned and taught, from media sources, to through socialization with peers, a concern is that American culture is failing at teaching sexuality (Allgeier, 1983). Further to that, the author argues how this “fear” (high rates of rapes, pregnancies, diseases) alarmed the society to increase mandatory formal sex education or, to another extreme, to increase sexual repression. Her argument could be applied in my research as well, as similar debate of sexual freedom/repression is traced in the sex education discourse in Serbia, which will be presented in Analysis Chapter.

While Eccles looks how topic of sex is being taught to younger generations, popular feminist activist, Jessica Valenti in her book “The Purity Myth” (2009) analyses the discourse of sexuality in the 21st century United States. She observes the US’s obsession with virginity, and the ways various discourses support chastity and discourage early sexual activities of women. She argues that most programs of sex education promote abstinence-only education, which, according to the author, creates a negative image of early sexual activities, repressing female sexuality. The author argues that conservation propaganda, abstinence education as well as popular culture reinforce the ideas of female purity and virginity, teaching women “to use virginity as an easy ethical road map” (2009, page 26).

The abstinence education which Valenti analyzed in her book, is part of the larger set of nationalist ideas of female reproduction in the nation. Similar set of ideas is behind Serbian sex education initiative. The initiative is supported by the narrative that by provision of meaningful education, Serbia will benefit of an increase of ‘proper’ reproduction of future population. In the larger media discourse in Serbia, the initiative is strongly connected with the Serbian nation, as the aim is not only to educate young people, but also to teach them specifically about ‘right’ ways to reproduction. Valenti, as well as the scholars mentioned before, helped me understand the sex education narratives in the region, and also the Western countries, such as Sweden and the USA. It is beneficial to have certain knowledge on content of sex education and the discourses around it, as it helped me understand better the intersection between sex education literature and theories on nationalism. Interestingly enough, in terms of the sex education, similar concerns emerged in the USA, is traced in Serbian narratives, causing certain paradox, if looking at it through gender/nationalist theories. Puar’s homonationalism (2007), coined to describe shift in American nationalist politics towards more “tolerant” and “progressive” path in response to

“backward” Others, definitely fails it’s definition, as promotion of abstinence and female purity is traced in both Serbian and American narratives. Usage of virginity in national narratives as “ethnical road map” and model behaviors does not set these two countries as polar opposites, but next to each other. Valenti speaks up about the situation of sex education in the US, arguing that narratives are teaching students that their sexuality is shameful, equating it with disease (2009, page 120).

Discussions on female reproduction clearly has been integral part of nationalist politics, why I am also reviewing literature on nationalism and gender when examining sex education discourse in Serbia.

1.2. Gender, Reproduction, Nation

In the following sections I examine the theories of national identity and nationalism in order to position them in the sex education narratives in my study. Moreover I am interested in how nationalism is gendered in the narratives, as well as how sex education theories and my research are connected to nationalist discourse of female reproduction.

The various scholars studying nationalism and national identity, demonstrated how practices of nationhood are gendered, therefore women and men share different roles in their nation (Peterson, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997, Nagel, 1998; Calhoun 1997). McClintock emphasizes that one of the ways nationalism is constituted is as a gendered discourse, and for that reason it must be studies by using a theory of gender powers (McClintock, 1993). She argues that “if nationalism is not transformed by an analysis of gender power, the nation-state will remain a repository of male hopes, male aspirations and male privilege” (McClintock, 1993, 77). In that sense, she criticizes the exclusion of gender as an analytical category in studies of nationalism. The one of directions, McClintock uses in her works, is research on family trope

usage in major nationalist narratives. From her point of view, a nation presented as a family of Man imposes the idea of nationalism as a social hierarchy within a unity, “naturalizing” female subordination to man (1993). As per McClintock, the national gender hierarchy may be found in many examples in history – in post-revolution France⁵, women were incorporated in the nation as citizens indirectly through men, positioning them as dependent members of family. Their participation in the nation was exercised through the social relation with men. Furthermore, it was a woman’s role as a wife and a mother that was used in a construction of female national identity. Even if McClintock’s example is specific to the country and time period, I argue that her core idea is still present in most of nation-states, Serbia included. According to Anthias and Yuval-Davis, there are five major ways of women’s participation in a nation (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989). First and foremost, women are seen as reproducers of new members of a nation. In the same nationalist discourse, women have a role to transmit the national identity to next generations, to reproduce the values and traditions of their community (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, page 7):

- “1. as biological reproducers of the members of ethnic collectivities
- 2. as reproducers of the boundaries of national/ethnic groups
- 3. as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture
- 4. as signifiers of ethnic/national difference — as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories
- 5. as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles.”

⁵ The French Revolution (1789-1799)

All five of them were closely linked with the idea of reproduction, however the question arises whose reproductive capacities are valued in “imagined community”⁶. In my research, media narratives were predominantly based on heteronormativity, positioning women as reproducers, and almost excluding male role or significance of sex education to men. Yuval-Davis in her book “Gender and Nation” (Chapter 2, 1997) goes further on looking not only on roles women play in nation, but the ways state has control over female, male bodies and reproduction. She argues that female body is commodified by state as a result of nationalist discourses of woman’s reproductive role in the nation. Same argument is shared with another scholar, Gisela Bock, who supports it by delivering a chronological analysis of, what she refers to as “racist sexism” and showing how during Nazi Germany, the state decided that some women were more preferable reproducers than others (1983).

She showed female oppression not only through analysis of gender and nation, but racism and sexism as well. Bock clearly presents hierarchy of inequality, still showing how the Nazi state policy affected all women, yet “with different experiences” (Bock, page 420). This argument is very significant for my research, as as even if the sex education initiative is not govern by the state directly, it was created by the state’s branch and has a clear message of target group and desired pregnancies. Bock shows two sides of nationalist politics of Nazi Germany, first, how the reproduction policies control not only unwanted pregnancies, and second, how the same policies control reproduction of ‘valued’ women, in this case ‘pure’ German women. Even if Bock concentrates on analyses of Nazi state politics of reproduction control, she indicates that globally, some national family policies influence on bodies to reproduce or stop reproducing.

⁶ This concept was created by Anderson (1983), where he describes nation as a socially constructed community. In such communities, people live imagining shared experiences to identify themselves with other people living in the same community, and to differentiate themselves from those who do not belong to it.

The categorization of people as desirable or unwanted, as well as control over their lives and bodies was not only part of nationalist politics of Nazi Germany. It is a part of a larger nationalist discourse where traditional gender roles as well as patriarchy are perceived as desired normative society model.

The hierarchy within a nation does not simply position women inferior to men, but how certain groups of women are perceived in nationalist narratives as more desirable than other, as well as in the same logic some men are more privileged than other men.

Modern states exercise the power through commoditization of human bodies, measuring the human value through intersections of gender and sexuality⁷ (Bock, 1983). Every nation has its own socially structured hierarchy of human lives and how much they matter. As mentioned previously, the feminist scholars showed the unequal treatments in a nation, in relation to gender and race, therefore introducing the idea that nationalist narratives are not only gendered. Additionally, both, Bock and Yuval-Davis mention in their works national discourses not only on reproduction, but as well work/family balance, in which female traditional roles of a mother and housewife are being promoted and valued, but states still require from women to enter a labour market and contribute as paid workers.

Dealing with sex education in this thesis, I believe it is important to look specifically at the ways sexuality is represented in nationalist narratives. In similar way as in gender hierarchy, a white male is on the top of the pyramid, in terms of sexuality, majority of nationalist narratives are first and foremost heterosexist. Again, going back to Anthias and Yuval-Davis, the most significant part of female participation and contribution to a nation is as biological reproducers.

⁷ Class, race and many others as well, however for my study I concentrate only on intersections of gender and sexuality

In regards to sexuality, this signifies that only certain groups of women are seen as valued participants, those who are positioned as heterosexual members of a nation.

1.3 Gender and sexuality and sexual citizenship

As Katja Kahlina states “the nationalist logic that places reproductive heterosexuality at the forefront of national survival at the same time conceives of non-heterosexual individuals as “immoral” and “foreign” to an imagined national tradition and essence (Kahlina, 2014, 1; Nagel, 2003). Kahlina is arguing that nationalist thinking promotes only sexuality of reproduction. Sex that does not reproduce or promote national growth is understood as deviant. Heterosexism is naturalized by “reification of the (patriarchal) ‘family’ as ‘pre-political’” (Peterson, 1999, 40). The intersection of gender and sexuality in the analysis of such discourses show how new hierarchies are created within one community⁸. Women are positioned as the tools and objects through which the heterosexual nation is maintained and continued. The nationalist politics that determines which men and women are desirable reproducers, sets heterosexual reproduction as a model for the society. Those who do not fit in the model become second degree citizens.

The position of women and minorities in a nation is becoming one of key discussions when analyzing sexuality and discourses around it. Kahlina examines how in western national discourses, discussions about an unequal citizenship among minorities and women started emerging during 1960s. She notes that one of the reasons behind political debates, emerging at that time in Western countries, was a “democratic political system ideology of (individual) liberalism, capitalist consumerism, and the positive socio-cultural climate created by the multiplicity of other anti-discrimination movements that peaked in the 1960s” (2014, 2).

⁸ About these intersections I write in next subchapters of Literature Chapter

Discussions about female participation in a nation also brought with them questions of sexual minorities and their rights. Following the changes in sexual politics in the West, countries in the EU have adopted a perceived “more” accepting stance toward non-heterosexual people. In this train of thought, then a new nationalism appeared in which Western countries positioned themselves as more righteous in a way than their Eastern counterparts. Topic of sexuality, and more importantly topics of non-dominant sexualities became part of nationalist politics, but at the same time creating the distinction between progressiveness of western nation and backwardness of the others. Jasbir K. Puar in her book “Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times” noted that in the post-9/11 USA, there was a shift in the national narrative of sexuality, when “gay tolerance” started being used as a marker of progressiveness and modernity in the country (2007). This new discourse was conceptualized by Puar as homonationalism, and it presented how through incorporation of tolerance in their nationalist politics, the Western countries created a division between “progressive” them and homophobic Others. While Puar analyzed homonationalism in American context, similar discourses are found in many EU members countries, such as the Netherlands, the UK and Germany (Kahlina, 2014). Incorporating “gay tolerance” in nationalist politics means also adopting a narrative that the rights of sexual minorities are actual marker of a national progress. In this manner, Western countries position themselves as superior “imagined communities to “homophobic” Other⁹ (Kahlina, 2014).

The same concept of progress is present within Europeanization debates in Serbia, especially the ideas which emerged during my research. In analysis of textual sources, pro- and anti- Europeanization narratives described the sex education initiative as a product of

⁹ By the Other, it is implied not only non-EU countries, but as well immigrants, which come from such “imagined communities”.

progressiveness, which would position Serbia one step closer towards the EU. In the context of Serbia, narratives of sexuality have become more open, however, this only applies to heterosexuality.

Narratives around sexual education in Serbia mainly represented “heterosexual Serbian tradition”, using family trope as a tool for a support for initiative. Similarly these narratives draw a picture of desirable masculinity and femininity within the community, excluding others. While promoting traditional views on gender roles, topics of sexual education at schools are seen in narratives of protestors, as a way to oppose them. As schools are considered as important institutions in shaping national identity and gender socialization, therefore sexual education becomes an important subject for regulating sexual citizenship.

Before analyzing what kind of sexual citizenship is promoted in narratives both of supporters and those against sex education, it is important to look at concept of citizenship, but also what has been defined as the EU citizenship. Feminist studies on citizenship show how the concept is gendered as “a more total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging” (Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999, p 4). Gendered public/private divide and the family trope influence the position of a citizen in a nation. As the result, women and minorities access to their full citizenship rights rather later than majority heterosexual men. Therefore, sexuality becomes important topic of studies on citizenship. Sexual citizenship as a concept emerged recently and various authors contributed in their ways with creation of definition. In their work titled “The Sexual Citizen”, scholars Bell and Binnie claimed that “while we are all sexual citizens, in that citizenship is a particularly contextualized enunciation of identity which must take account of sexual

identity”(2000, page 33). Indeed, this means that sexual identity is inherently tied to our citizen status and what it means to be a citizen.

Further, Weeks defines the sexual citizen as “a hybrid being, breaching the public/private divide which Western culture has long held to be essential” (1998, 36). I disregard his focus on “Western culture” to argue that this is held true for liberal democratic states that possess similar laws. Thus, even though Serbia is mostly understood as “Eastern” or Balkan, the status of the citizen is similar, especially as Serbia continues on the path to EU accession. If using his definition and EU membership as a criterion, Serbian culture becomes a part of Weeks’ understanding of “Western culture”, as this divide is present among the citizens. Some scholars argue that this public and private divide is challenged by sexual citizenship (Hobson and Lister, 2002). Richardson (2000) addressed that “ideas of citizenship are based upon assumptions about sexuality, in particular hegemonic heterosexuality” (page 257). She also argues that concept of ‘good citizen’ was reproduced by discourses of heterosexual citizenship. Such type of a citizen is an individual whose values are interconnected with an image of heterosexual family (Richardson, 2000). Returning back to discussion of nationalism, model of a good citizen as heterosexual being is promoted through many nationalist discourses in Serbia. In my research I came to finding that ‘Europeanization’ of sexual citizenship in Serbia reinforced the idea that gay tolerance threatens ‘Serbian values’¹⁰. In narratives of opposition of the sex education initiative, EU model of citizen is shaped as vulgar, “immoral” and threatening to Serbian family and reproduction of nation.

¹⁰ Kahlina writes about this, saying “the discourses produced by the EU officials and local pro-EU elites have reinforced the already existing perception common among anti-gay-rights protestors that the new conceptions of sexual citizenship represent values that are foreign to local contexts, and thus can be harmful for its identity and tradition” (<http://www.citsee.eu/citsee-study/lgbt-rights-and-eu-accession-process-southeast-europe>)

1.4 Reproductive heterosexuality and Europeanization

Robert Kulpa (2013), recently, introduced the concept of leveraged pedagogy, which illustrates the West/East discourses of rights of sexual minorities in European context. In his words, it serves to present a power distribution between nations, contributing to binaries such as West/East, modern/traditional and progressive/backward:

“leveraged pedagogy is a discourse of unequally distributed power between the one that supposedly knows better, and assumes itself in the teaching and dominant positions (West/Europe), and that who is discursively overpowered, and is framed as backward, thus in need of being educated up (CEE) by the former. It is a leveraged relation of inequality, as the ‘pedagogy’ remains within the remit of a binary-oppositional framework, which is structurally fraught in that it sustains the vertical realities of inequality and power, resisting the acknowledgment of horizontal relationships of partnership” (Kulpa, 2013, page 441).

This kind of method has been adapted as a part of the EU integration process, representing a form of requirements and conditions, which the accessing countries need to meet in the path towards “Europeanization” as it applies to sexuality rights and how countries protect (or do not protect) their LGBT citizens. At the same time, “leveraged pedagogy” creates a dichotomy between the EU and Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), framing the latter “as as permanently ‘post-communist’, ‘in transition’ (i.e. not liberal, yet, enough), and, last but not least, homophobic” (Kulpa, 2013, 432). The problem arises, how to include such topics like rights of

sexual minorities in states “in transition” without being perceived as manifesting the moral superiority of those that are supposedly more progressive, who have “achieved” tolerance in their imagined communities. Serbia is one of those countries, in which such “leveraged pedagogy” has been met with great indignation from certain dominant groups.

Pride Marches held in Belgrade are example, as instead of solidarity, the Pride, organized in support of sexual minorities, was met with resistance and violence from homophobic groups. The majority of Serbian society saw the Pride not as a march for equality and support of sexual minorities, but as a tool of the EU to interfere in country’s politics (life) (see Mikus 2010). On the other hand, the state was reluctant to take a responsibility for the event and protect the participants, therefore supporting the main nationalist narrative of the Pride being a tool of “leveraged pedagogy”. Homonationalist ideas conflict with influential Serbian nationalist politics. As Kahlina (2014) argues, this politics is based on heteronormativity, driven by anti-Western discourse:

“It may be argued that the strength and relative success of nationalist politics based on heteronormativity, which became extremely influential in Serbia, largely lies in the way it integrates the ethno-nationalist conceptions of community and belonging from the 1990s, the widespread hostility towards sexual minorities, and the existing anti-Western discourse into a unified political project.” (page 8)

Kahlina notes that within these nationalist discourses, female reproduction once again is used as a tool for oppressing sexual freedom. The spread of “White plague” or so-called decrease in birth rates is a narrative used often in nationalist politics, with main purpose

to point out “insufficient reproduction of ethnically pure Serb-citizens.” (page 8). Similar notion was used in the narratives of the sex education initiative’s supporters, claiming that such program could be used as a tool to avoid insufficient reproduction. These narratives fall under “heterosexual Serbian tradition” that stands in opposition to the “Western immorality” and “decadence” which have been imposed in the context of EU conditionality” (Kahlina, 2014, page 8). The same term “white plague” has been present throughout the Serbian media during post-Yugoslav war period, mainly by nationalist conservative political groups (Helms, Jansen, 2009)¹¹. In current narratives of sex education, there is a shifting point, in which the supporters’ arguments of “white plague” are taken into the new context by the opposers, who argue that the initiative wants to inflict the European immorality to Serbian children, thus deny “heterosexual Serbian tradition” and attempting to destroy the Serbian nation. I analyze in more details these arguments in Chapter 4, however here I would like to emphasize the relevance of Kahlina’s arguments in my research on the sex education narratives. I support her idea that current Serbian nationalist politics is predominantly based on heteronormativity, which makes projects such as the sex education to narrow their programs only towards the dominant sexuality.

As seen here, the Serbian nationalist discourses represent “heterosexual Serbian tradition” using family trope in their narratives. Similarly they represent certain masculinity and femininity within the community, very vocally excluding others. In such narratives, which promote traditional views on gender roles, topics of sexual education at schools are seen as a way to oppose and eliminate them. As schools are

¹¹ For more about gendered “white plague” rhetoric in the Balkan region please see Jansen and Helms “The White Plague: National-demographic Rhetoric and its Gendered Resonance after the Post-Yugoslav Wars” (2009)

considered as important institutions in shaping national identity and gender socialization, sexual education becomes an important subject for regulating women and men participation in the nation. A push back toward a leveraged pedagogy in which those with nationalist sentiments go against a perceived “invasion” of sorts from the EU.

Going back to the idea of reproductive heterosexuality as a national model of desirable at the forefront of national survival, Ann Stoler in her article “Making Empire Respectable” (1989) shows on the example of the Netherlands Indies and French Indochina “the ways in which colonial authority and racial distinctions were fundamentally structured in gendered terms” (page 635). By doing that she presents how intersections of class, race, gender and sexuality create the sexual domination of ones and the sexual submission of the Others.

Stoler examines the position not only of the states but, of the concubines and the European women, as well as the men. She shows how these men were urged to marry local women, “the concubines” in order to acclimatize quickly, but later with the jeopardy of the Homo Europeans supremacy, the men were pressured to uphold and preserve the white prestige (Stoler, 1989). However the pressure was not only on them but on the European women as well, who were positioned now as the guardians of the prestige. With the European women’s migration to the colonized states, rise of racist beliefs evolved. The category of race became more evident, with creation of the image of the colonized men as primitive savages. Similar approach was seen in Wendy Bracewell’s article (2000), when she shows the nationalist Serbian discourse, during the collapse of Yugoslavia, of Albanian men as deviant savages in comparison to “more European” Serbian masculinity. In her article “Rape in Kosovo: Masculinity and Serbian Nationalism”, Bracewell talks about the Milosevic nationalist discourse, which placed Albanian masculinity as inferior to Serb’s, calling for Serb men to prove their superiority by protecting their women and

the nation. Both Bracewell and Stoler do not see women as passive actors in Serbia and the colonies, respectively. Bracewell writes that women were used as a tool in masculinity crisis discourse. The image of women as combatants was employed to point out the crisis of Serb masculinity. It was used to emphasize male patriotic duty as defenders of a mother-nation, rather than to promote women's participation. In 1988, the photographer Mile Jelesijevic took a picture of a woman carrying a child as well as a gun around Prekale village. This image showed that a mother of a nation is "forced to defend herself and her children...because those who should do so (her menfolk, the state) cannot or will not" (Bracewell, 2000, page 575). It can be argued that in Serbian nationalist discourses, if masculinity fails, a mother takes a task to defend her nation. However that is a threat to patriarchy, and men are understood to need to take back their patriotic role of defenders in order for the mother-nation to survive. While Bracewell discusses Serbian woman as a representation of masculinity in crisis, Stoler, on the other hand, writes about European women in the colonies who had to represent European culture and values. The European women were playing a central role in keeping the men civilized, they were expected to be a moral and pure, them working as prostitutes in the colonies was unacceptable as it has been seen as an act of degradation of the European prestige (Stoler, 1989). Similar idea is seen in John Lie's article, where Japanese women are seen the reproducers of pure Japanese nations and they were pressured to bear children. As mentioned earlier, Bock in "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany" showed how the Nazi state did the same thing to German women, pressuring them to give birth to pure Aryans, while controlling the reproduction of the Other women (Bock, 1983). Returning to Stoler, in her article she looks at not only the Otherness of the colonized, but of colonials too. She explores the pressure put upon the Europeans living in the colonies to preserve the European purity in the uncivilized settings. They become less European than European

metropolitans. With the state politics changing in favor of European women over the local, the European men were expected to avoid sexual contacts with the women of color. The European women in that community were supposed to help them with that. They were supposed to be “angel in the house”, preserving “order, peace, hygiene and economy” (Stoler, 1989, page 649). The reproduction was seen as these women’s responsibility and duty, similarly as it presented earlier in other scholarships.

These authors present ideas of, inferior and superior masculinities/femininities in different contexts, but also relevant for my research. They all stress out how different nationalist discourses used female reproduction as a tool of organizing and grouping members of the nation into stratified layers of inferiority and superiority. In my analysis, I come back to these studies, while discussing nationalist ideas emerged from the sex education narratives.

When analyzing nationalism and sexuality, a model of a good Serb as heterosexual comes up as being promoted through many nationalist discourses in the country. As mentioned before, ‘Europeanization’ of Serbia reinforced the idea that gay tolerance threatens ‘Serbian values’¹². In these discourses, the Serb masculinity is presented to be in crisis if external masculinities become accepted by citizens. In order to preserve the superiority of dominant masculinity, the State spreads the so-called ‘moral panic’ to its citizens. One of the examples was nationalist politics during the 1980s, when Serbian nationalist projects structured the idea of Serbian masculinity. Such type of masculinity, which was promoted by the president at that time Milosevic and fellow nationalists, “helped reinforce male privilege in Serbian society and subordinate or marginalize Serbian women” (Bracewell, 2000, page 584).

¹² See Kahlina (<http://www.citsee.eu/citsee-study/lgbt-rights-and-eu-accession-process-southeast-europe>)

When discussing Serbian nationalism, masculinity becomes one more of key aspects of discussion, considering that country's nationalism is rooted in patriarchy (Bracewell, 2000; Greenberg, 2006). In order later on to analyze the sex education narratives and how they reflect nationalist ideas of gender and sexuality, it is significant to mention also intersections of nationalism and masculinity in Serbia, connecting it with the scholarship on East/West divide. In nationalist politics of 80s and 90s desired masculinities were representatives of the violent, macho, backward types. Therefore, in the transitioning Serbia of that time, these types linked to Milosevic's era were perceived as deviated from a 'normative', progressive' and more European new masculinities. Jessica Greenberg, using similar methods as I have in my study, analyzed through textual sources, media discourses in Serbia around and after the death of the Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic. Her main focus was on media representation of Serbian dominant masculinities, and the ways they were shaped by nationalism, gender and sexuality. Greenberg examines how Djindjic represented European, democratic, urban masculinity, opposed to the uncivilized, nationalist masculinity of Milosevic and his supporters (Greenberg, 2006). Greenberg's article shows the division of identities in Serbia, which I later discuss more in my analysis while looking into narratives of Europeanization, as she presents two different type of national identities, first—democratic, urban, progressive, the representations of the 'European community', and the other—nationalist and aggressive, the representation of 'intolerant' and 'homophobic' Serbia. The distinction of east/west was also one of the subjects of discussion in article "East and West Kiss: Gender, Orientalism, and Balkanism in Muslim-Majority Bosnia-Herzegovina". Elissa Helms portraits, on the example of Bosnia and Herzegovina, how gender is used in orientalist and balkanist representations of the region. She showed how women are often used as a symbol or a figure of Balkan backwardness, in the sense that oriental representation of

women focuses on repressed sexualities (heavily covered women in veils). Helms resents how “the various gendered reconfigurations of east/west, Islam/Europe, tradition/modernity ultimately reaffirm such dichotomous representations, masking a much greater complexity of global, regional, and local dynamics at play” (2008, page 90). In her discussion she draws back to Maria Todorova’s concept of “balkanism” contrasting it to orientalism, as it is also shaped by practices and prejudices which construct the idea of West/East, where first is superior to the backward other. Referring to “balkanism”, Helms writes that “the term for the derivative but distinct project of constructing the Balkans as “the other within” Europe, more a backward and primitive “self” than an alien “other.” Furthermore, while Said’s orientalism was tied to (histories of) direct western colonization, balkanism was built on much more diffuse and indirect relationships of domination and subordination vis-à-vis “the west.””(2008, page 90). Even if in terms of Serbia, the discussion of Europe/Islam are not represented in East/West discourses, since Serbian nationalism is predominantly based on Christianity, which is regarded as part of the West, nevertheless, the concept of “balkanism” (Todorova, 1997) definitely describes the less progressive and more inferior position of Serbia in the EUrope/Western Balkans discourses. I will come back to Todorova’s concept in Analysis Chapter, but here I would mention why both Helms and Greenberg’s articles are significant for my own. Firstly, both of the authors examine nationalism through analysis of media narratives, one looking into the media discourse of masculinity, the other – gender and femininity. In the end, they both recognize positionality of Western Balkans/Serbia in the east/west dichotomy, which later supports my arguments about Europeanization.

In the following section, I will present the background information, relevant for my thesis, and later proceed to analysis of the research, returning to the theories and works mentioned in this chapter.

Chapter 2 – Background

In previous chapter, I examined certain theories which combine topics of sexuality, gender, nationalism and education itself, but in order to move towards the main argument, I will conduct an empirical evidence to support my study. On the following pages I am presenting the background of Serbian initiative to introduce sexual health in schools, and the narratives which have formed around the project, also drawing back to topic of Europeanization and Serbian nationalism, reinforced by these narratives.

When the initiative was publicly introduced, it gained vast attention, as it recognized importance for the preservation of their reproductive health and fertility and education of youth about facts related to the reproduction and sexual relations (Blic, 2013). In addition to the significant importance of the introduction of reproductive education in schools, the importance of participation of parents in the sexual education of children receives the attention of the print and electronic media. However in order to understand the narratives and perceptions of the initiative, one has to look into the context in which the sex education project was born.

During the political changes of the past couple of decades in the former Yugoslavia region, public's perceptions of sexuality and sexual diversity have fundamentally changed, gaining more space for discussion and recognition with each decade (Sremac, ND). Consequently, there is no surprise that sexuality has become a crucial category in the analysis of nationalism in Serbia. As discussed in Chapter One, the scholars (Kahlina, Stoler, Yuval-Davies, etc.) discuss how certain types of sexuality were used with different purposes in national logic of reproduction, identity, citizenship. In order to reflect on these theories in my study, further on I

am presenting a social background of the initiative, when and how program was introduced in Serbia, but also I providing more insight into the resulted narratives.

Defined by the World Health Organization, sex education refers to a course “that contributes to the creation of a solid personality able to recognize and understand social, moral, psychological and physiological traits of individuals by sex and thus create optimal interpersonal relationships with individuals of both same and opposite sex” (Vrublova, 2014, page 5). In the WHO definition, it is clearly stipulated that such course should comprise different types of sexuality and identity. Sex education or in other words Reproductive Health Education has been defined in various sources differently, in following part I present Serbian framework and perceptions arisen around the program. The sex education initiative was introduced in Serbia in 2013 as a part of school curricula. Previously, such initiatives existed, but only in form of workshops or additional activities, separated from official educational curricula organized by external teachers and nongovernmental organizations. One of such examples is Serbian Red Cross, who provides classes about gender equality and sexuality within their course on Human Rights. During my research period, I had a chance to meet with employees of Serbian Red Cross who presented to me their projects on education, and shared with the information about general public satisfaction with their programs. These were more informal conversations, but they inspired me with an outline of my own research, in which direction to take my study. From my discussions with the Red Cross employees, I noticed that the programs oriented towards youth across Serbia are highly prioritized by the organization. As an example, the Serbian Red Cross realized the project titled “Promotion of Human Values”. The aim of the project was to reduce violence among young people (children aged 8 to 14 years), by discussing with them issues such as tolerance, gender equality, prevention of discrimination and stigmatization, non-violent

communication and peaceful conflict resolution and personal and cultural identity, respect for diversity. This project, by its main goal and the structure is organized through peer education and interactive work, and is not a part of formal school curricula (from discussions with Red Cross employees, 2015). The course as stated in its title, aimed to tackle social issues of modern youth and bring more awareness to less spoken topics. Speaking with employees of Serbian Red Cross and reading more about their youth-oriented programs, I became interested with youth education and decided to move from non-governmental and international organizations' discourse and examine how similar topics are introduced to Serbian education by state institutions.

During my research, I noticed that sex education has not been introduced in Serbia as an official educational program, but always integrated in workshops similar to ones organized by the Serbian Red Cross, or within official school textbooks of subjects such as biology or psychology (Labris; Damnjanovic, 2014). Labris, lesbian human rights nongovernmental organization from Belgrade published in 2014 an analysis of discriminatory content of public high schools' textbooks. Their research only covered those textbooks which showed existence of discriminatory content in them. It was presented through pathology of homosexual orientation and reinforcement of negative stereotypes and prejudices. For an example, from analysis of biology textbook for students of first and second grades of high school (approximate age of 15-16), it was found that homosexuality has been characterized as deviant personality trait, grouped in the same category as propensity to crime or suicide and use of alcohol or drugs (Labris, 2014). Labris study showed to me that that even small part of sex education within biology or psychology does not disregard different sexualities, but presents them as deviant and unnatural. Further to the study, it is significant to see how these issues have been presented in the sex education initiative's narratives.

As subject about sexuality and sexual health has not been implemented in schools, workshops done by NGOs were only occasion when these topics were discussed, but again to certain extent. The initiative for separate course about sex education was introduced by the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth of the regional government of Vojvodina. Geographically my research has been concentrated on Belgrade, the capital, however as the initiative has started by the Provincial Minister, in the following sections, I will present the scope of the project, shifting later to the narratives emerged around it, once the news of the project became public.

The initiative firstly started as a pilot project organized as an informal addition to the curriculum of ten high schools, located on the territory of the northern Serbia, Vojvodina. The project was justified to public by the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth as being on high demand, and “more than 60 percent of donations and funds for projects were related towards reproductive health” (taken from the interview with the provincial minister for sports and youth for the Rts¹³, 2013). In the same interview, the provincial minister, who was main person behind the initiative, noted that the other reason for having such program in Serbia at that point in time was a fact that majority of students have been familiar with sex topics primarily through social networks, however this kind of knowledge was labeled by the minister as insufficient and misleading, resulting in the “white plague”, or in other words, the decrease in birth rates, and growing number of abortions in Serbia (RTS, 2013).

The implementation of the pilot project started during 2013-2014 school year, and reached the scope of 1200 students, in 40 classes of ten high schools in Vojvodina (RTS, 2013). Even if the pilot was focused on high school students, the provincial minister for sports and youth in few different interviews stated that a plan is widen the scope of the sex education to preschools and

¹³ Radio Televizija Srbije – one of main public broadcasters in Serbia (author’s note)

elementary schools across Serbia. In the media, it was stipulated that the preparations for the pilot were ten months long and included in itself combination of various disciplines, experts of areas, such as psychology, pedagogy, gynecology contributed in the formation of the curricula. Based on the various media sources, the project was successfully implemented in ten high schools, where sex education was integrated to the curriculum as an elective course. (RTS, 2013)

The positive publicity resulted with increased interest of Serbian people towards the initiative and for the following school year, around 70 schools expressed interest to participate in the project, 66 of which passed the requirements set by the initiators and introduced sex education as an elective course titled “Reproductive health education”. During media analysis, I noticed the fact that the positive publicity came from some influential and most read and viewed Serbian newspapers and television network most likely contributed to the increased interest of public towards specifically to this initiative. Even though the project has been designed and implemented by local government of Vojvodina, Belgrade based RTS (Radio Televizija Srbije)¹⁴, one of most popular and politically involved Serbian television broadcasters was among prominent media supporters. The widening of the media scope, also meant that the program triggered various political stakeholders to take part in the discussion. While the citizens started to receive information through different channels, the initiative also grew and expanded.

Around 80 percent of all high schools in Vojvodina introduced Reproductive health education; therefore almost the whole northern Serbian region was involved with the neophyte initiative. In the official statement of the provincial ministry, it was stated that the classes were held entirely by psychologists and pedagogues, appointing to those roles people that already worked in the schools, but also employing new professional staff. In the first weeks of 2014 school year, it was

¹⁴ Radio Television of Serbia

stated that all of them have undergone trainings organized by the Institute from Public Health of Vojvodina (from the interview with the provincial minister for newspapers Blic, 2014). Around the same time, in the media it was presented that the introduction of sex education received the support from the parent association, but also from teachers and students, which encouraged to start an initiative of alternation of the Law on Primary Education, in order to include sex education at least as an elective subject in all schools across the country (Blic, 2014).

According to the interview of the provincial minister for sports and youth, the course of sex education was designed and structured on a prevention strategy. Prior to starting the initiative in newly selected high schools in 2014, the provincial minister has stated that during that school year “students will learn about sexual protection, sexual risk behavior, sexually transmitted diseases, but also how to cultivate a friendly relationship when entering into a sexual relationship” (insert from Blic, 2014). During the other interview, taken a year earlier for the public broadcaster of the Serbian province of Vojvodina, Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV), the provincial minister Marinika Tepic discussed in more details the structure of the course on sex education titled “Reproductive Health Education”. She explained that a first part aims to cover an explanation of human rights, sex and gender differences, and sexuality. The goal of this section is to raise the awareness of students not only about their bodies, but also to teach them how to relate to other people and their preferences, to understand differences and respect diversity (RTV, 2013). In that sense, the idea of the course is to integrate not only physical, but also psychological aspects of sexual relations. According to Tepic, “Reproductive Health Education” covers problems of both boys and girls, as among topics on female reproduction, undesired pregnancies, abortions and contraception, the course also includes discussions about urological problems found in men. In the interview for the Radio Television of Vojvodina

(RTV), Tepic addressed that the team who worked on the project especially paid attention to boys, “as when there is a talk about of ‘reproductive health’, the majority of people think first of girls, and their undesired pregnancies, contraception, while urological problems in men are overlooked like they do not exist, that is why [the initiators] are paying a special attention to male issues” (taken from the interview for RTV, 2013).

Introduction of the reproductive health project in high schools of Vojvodina opened a door to many other opportunities. Soon after the launch of the program, the Provincial Secretariat for Youth and Sport funded the project “Golden Bridge” (Zlatni Most), within which workshops’ curriculum was structured in 20 elementary schools based on a book “Sex for Beginners” (Sex za Pocetnike) written by Jasminka Petrovic (2000). This book was published in 2007 as a children’s literature, therefore sexuality is discussed in a way understandable for children of elementary school age (8-14). With these workshops, the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth started the introduction of sex education to much younger audience, children of age from eight to fourteen. Both the workshops in elementary schools and weekly classes held in high schools were included in comparative analysis of the sex education project in May, 2015 in order to review and evaluate the overall initiative. The results are to be presented to the Ministry of Education with the request to include sex education in the official school curricula as an elective course. Such actions were based on the more than positive performance of the project in Vojvodina, therefore it was expected for the provincial Ministry to demand to expand the course to educational system throughout all country.

In the interview for the Radio Television Pancevo (RTV Pancevo), in November, 2014, the provincial minister addressed the latest addition of younger students to the project, by saying:

“Classes and workshops, are implemented in 20 elementary schools across Serbia, majority still in Vojvodina. However, my colleagues report that other elementary schools showed the interest in participating in our initiative, therefore we are intensively seeking for an additional dates in which to include them. Thus, we will probably, from the second half of the year, include additional elementary schools in our project” (insert from the interview, RTV Pancevo 2014).

The provincial minister, Tepic also addressed the methodology of approaching high school students and elementary school pupils, arguing that it greatly differs:

“In high schools, the working principle is one lecture per week, or a double class every second week, depending on how the schedule is adjusted. The elementary school is something else. It is a one-day workshop. Therefore, it only occurs once in three segments: one workshop only with children, the other only with adults, where both parents and teacher participate, all on a voluntary basis, and the third workshop includes all of them together and is prepared to help them overcome the taboos, to name “those things” their own names, and to avoid the obstacles, by creating the space for open discussion” (from the interview for RTV Pancevo 2014).

While the project started gaining a positive reception from the majority of parents, students and teachers, participating in the initiative, there were the emerging groups of opposers who argued against sex education. Their main arguments of the opposition were that the project is not in accordance with their moral and religious beliefs. These types of arguments were voiced in the latest political discourses in the country.

The local branches of pro-nationalist groups, the Dveri Movement and Democrat Party of Serbia (DSS)¹⁵ revolted against the introduction of sex education in Serbia, arguing that this teaching is not in correlation with *their* (Serbian) parenting style, moral and religious beliefs. The DSS party even went further with their message, requesting the resignation of the provincial minister for sports and youth, Marinika Tepic. The justification of their request was that the content of textbooks on sex education, in the party's opinion, propagates homosexuality (Blic, 2013). Soon after the statement was released, the provincial minister responded to the party by saying that the sexual education initiative contributes to good family planning, an important defense from the so-called 'white plague', the decreasing population rates (Blic, 2013). If looking at both statements reported in the media, it is definite that narratives of a counter side and the author of the initiative fall into heteronormative discourse. If the opposers, who stand for views which reflect patriarchal values on family and traditional sexualities, act against the initiative with the statement that it represents everything they are against, the initiators of sex education do not defend their choices to include other sexualities in sex education, but reinforce in their response female reproductive role and heterosexuality. These narratives fit into nationalist discourse of the traditional family, not challenging the problematic statement by DSS.

Returning to Dveri Movement's narratives on sex education, these discussions fit their framework of Europeanization, sexual minorities and nationalism in Serbia. Already since the Movement was founded in 1999, it was a right-wing Christian organization consisting mostly of young people who are anti-West and devoted to Serbian nationalism. Sex education, being a space for discussion of sexuality, does not seem to fit anywhere in their vision of Serbian society. In narratives of the Movement, Serbia is perceived between the EUrope and Russia, as it must

¹⁵ Demokratska Stranka Srbije

turn from “the EU’s lethal path and walk towards Russia and Eurasian integration” (taken from the official website of the Dveri Movement, 2015). This example shows the emerging narratives – anti-EU or anti-Russia. Dveri’s narratives lead to divide between what is perceived as ‘the East’ and ‘the West’. In these cases, ‘the West’ is perceived as opposition to Serbian traditionalism.

The Dveri explain their support of ‘the East’ by publishing following:

“With Russia we have a better and fairer calculation than with the European Union! Not only because Russians have never bombed us, but we are close with them in spirit, history and culture, and also our common sense says that Russia is in the best interest of Serbia!” (taken from the official website of the Dveri Movement, 2015).

Their attitudes towards the EU are clearly expressed in their statement, where the EU is portrayed as an enemy of Serbian nation and the path towards failure. The path towards a progress is seen through Serbia’s separation from the European nationhood and the country’s turn towards the relationship with the East. The other narrative which stands out in their discourse of anti-Europeanization is of collective victimhood of the nation.

On the official website, the Dveri Movement addresses to Serbia citizens with the following (2015):

“For years, you are accused, as are we, that Serbs are scapegoats (*dezurni krivci*) in the Balkans. They are blaming you, Serb (*Srbine*), those who are truly guilty. Why are they doing this? Because the defendant may not complain about the position in which he is positioned. Serb, brother (*Srbine, brate*), it is not your fault for the collapse of the country, nor you are to blame for the sanctions, the bombing, the privatization thefts and

loss of a job. It is not your fault that they told you one story before the elections, and later performed another” (Dveri, 2015)

In this paragraph, the Movement presents a Serbian man and the nation as victims of the conflicts in the region, corruption in the country and the pressure of the West. It addresses a Serbian man, whose masculinity is threatened by the accusations and antagonization coming from the West. Their statement is completely directed towards a male citizen, by addressing a reader with *brate* (brother), the female presence is missing. Another statement, which is specifically dedicated to an image of woman in Serbia, addresses a female participant in the nation. However the Movement’s views on a woman in Serbia reinforce the nationalist ideas of female position in a nation as a biological reproducer:

“Fake feminism has led women to unnaturally difficult situation: identification with men, work from morning to night in the company, with all the motherly and family needs that are waiting at home, instead of entitlements, it brought a woman in a disempowered position. Dveri believes that Serbian woman deserves more privileges, as a mother, as a worker, and as an employer. State authorities must allow a woman to normal working hours to be able to dedicate himself to his family. Dveri claims: Serbia is a female (*Srbija je ženskog roda*)” (2015).

Women are positioned in these narratives, as workers, but most importantly mothers, who, according to the movement, lost their true purpose (true calling) due to “fake feminism”. In this narrative, Serbia is gendered, in order to support the nationalist idea of a femininity of “motherland”.

Peterson, in the study on sexing political identities writes about gendering a nation:

“The metaphors of nation-as-woman and woman-as-nation suggest how women – as bodies and cultural repositories – become the battleground of group struggles. The personification of nature-as-female transmutes easily to *nation-as woman*, where the Motherland is a woman’s body and as such is ever in danger of violation – by ‘foreign’ males/sperm” (Peterson, 1999, page 48).

Gendering Serbia in these narratives, emphasizes to the significance of female role as a biological reproducer of future Serbs. By presenting Serbia as a woman, the Dveri Movement reinforce the idea that women as “motherland” need to be protected by their men, not only from the external enemies of nation but also from those who are not true Serbs, by adopting the European identity.

Interestingly, Dveri’s criticism of sex education initiative becomes only one part of their larger discourse, but I will come back to their attitudes and perception of Europeanization and the initiative more in Analysis chapter. Returning to the sex education initiative, the recent events clearly show that when it comes to topic of sexuality in schools, it is important to keep in mind how sensitive this issue is in the region, where number of elements intersects, essential for understanding the community. This topic brings up others, such as tradition, morality, rights of individuals, reproduction, and most significantly, the relation between an individual and the society, private/public divide. The sex education initiative became a subject of disputes between liberal and conservative groups in the country.

Nationalist discourses, as seen in the previous chapter, very strongly promote reproductive heterosexuality as a survival of a nation, as well as control over bodies and moral health of the nation. Thus, sexuality as part of education in schools is not just perceived as topic for young people and their needs, but as a place of struggle of many groups in the society. Interestingly enough, in nationalist narratives, sex activity of women is usually treated as a tool to draw attention on alarming state in the country, where always male sexual activity is never under question. Further on about this issue, and others, I will discuss in the Analysis chapter.

Chapter 3 – Methods

The question driving this thesis and the research conducted focuses on how gender and sexuality have been discussed in relation to sexual education in Serbia. Because of the research goals, I used a mix-method approach to data collection, with the primary method being semi-structured and open-ended interviews. I wanted to understand the narratives around sex education in Serbia, so it was important for me to pursue data that allowed me to understand the views of the stakeholders involved. In order to understand these perceptions, I focused on qualitative research methods: I conducted semi-structured interviews with individuals (either who were university-aged adults or adults who had children), I used a questionnaire on sex education that was sent to parents and I conducted a content analysis of media articles focusing on sex education programs in the country. This chapter serves to provide my argument of the reasons behind these methods as well as to discuss limitations to keep in mind for the research.

My primary research method came from qualitative data collection (semi-structured, open-ended interviews) because I sought to understand how sexual education was being digested and understood by local people. Thus, their perspectives were invaluable to informing my conclusions. Further, it allowed informants to contribute to the study from their own experience and knowledge related to the topic of sex education. Also, such a type of method allows the researcher to gain subjective knowledge of the topic at hand (Depner, 1981). A focus was placed on interviews especially because I attempted to minimize only my voice in the analysis, which was inspired to create a more egalitarian relationship between the respondents and myself. For my study, I was interested to receive subjective knowledge and opinion from each person interviewed because of the personal nature of gender and sexuality. A questionnaire provided contextualization to what was being discussed by my informants in the interviews. This also

offered more reach in my sample size since the questionnaire was available to a link that could be shared.

Content analysis of textual sources and qualitative research

The data collection period was throughout April and May 2015. For the interviews, my target group were parents who lived in Belgrade with children of school age, thus from seven years of age and older. During this particular time frame, I conducted thirteen interviews. Due to various reasons, some of people who agreed to participate in my study could not be available for an interview while I conducted the research in Belgrade, therefore I created an online questionnaire, where I included my questions, with few additional sub-questions in order to receive more detailed answers. This open-ended survey format helped me to reach even more people than planned. In the end I received an additional eleven responses in written format, through the questionnaire which served to provide more insight into how parents understood sexual education.

The interviews took place either in person in various cafes in the central Belgrade, during their lunch break or in the evenings. All my interviews (in person and over phone) were recorded with the permission of respondent; however, I also took notes after each conversation, mapping the main ideas and my observations. From all the respondents, the majority of interviewees and questionnaire participants were working mothers with one or two children in average. Three women identified as stay-at-home moms and housewives. Only two of the interviewees were men. Because of the limited number in my sample, I have not taken in consideration the sex of my respondents, as I do not have enough data to do adequately extrapolate from.

The age of the respondents varied between late twenties to late forties. All of the respondents identified as heterosexual, with most having an opposite-sex partner. Only two of the women I spoke to were single mothers, and both were divorced. Before the interviews as well in the online questionnaire, I asked questions related to the respondent's social position, in order to learn respondent's view of social reality, and to understand their construction of life actions. Most of my respondents had one or two children. Four of them had three, and one woman was a mother of four. All of my respondents came from a middle or upper class background; therefore their perspective on the topic is shaped by their more privileged positionality in Serbia. The information, gained from the research served to contribute to my knowledge gained from the scholarships, as well as analysis of the media. With the data collected from interviews and web-survey, as a researcher, I aimed to present perceptions of parents on the topic of sexuality and sex education in relation to their children. Therefore during the research, I was looking for opinions and views of respondents, to understand their positionality without intervening or influencing their answers.

In some ways interviews were constructed as a guided conversation between my informants and myself. As they were semi-structured, I tried not to fully direct the course of conversation, but to allow room for my respondents to mention those topics they found very relevant for our discussion. Because of this, there was a possibility to ask additional questions and to expand on certain points throughout each interview. Of course, not all informants were very eager to be interviewed regarding these specific topics, their answers were short and disengaged, which lead me to follow the structure of planned format, without receiving much detailed information. Few of women I talked to, seemed very happy to talk about sexuality and sex education, sharing with their stories of being a woman in Belgrade, especially a mother.

Therefore the answers I received show an incredible scope of intersections, my interviewees had not only come out as parents, but their gender, class as well marital status played important part in shaping their responses.

As mentioned previously, during the guided conversations, I engaged with the respondents, leading them through the interviews, however I attempted to prevent my opinions and ideas from being imposed on them, rather I let them share their personal feelings and thoughts on an each discussed topic. Time of each interview differed, depending mostly on each individual and their engagement level, with some I talked for more than half an hour, with others 15-20min. Phone interviews were much shorter than ones conducted in person, which showed me that personal face-to-face communication increases engagement level. In order to conduct more interviews, I used snowball sampling method, finding new participants through social networks of the initial informants. Such way of finding people helped me to gain their trust much faster, and therefore higher chances of better engagement. It is important to note that every respondent were told that none of the questions were compulsory to answer, as many of given question are of personal nature. With this action, I hoped for better cooperation without any pressure and more honest responses from their side. Also, before the interview part, each of participants, after being informed about the project, voluntarily agreed to take a part in it. Even if interviewees willingly participated in the research, it was important to take into consideration the ethical issues. Their privacy was respected and the collected data remains confidential and protected “from any access by third parties” (Unite For Sight, 2001). Nobody who was part of the research was put in position of danger of any kind, physical or psychological. Each and every of participants were anonymised.

Beside the focus group of the research, during April, I also conducted a number of informal interviews with various university students, whom I met through friends. All of them come from various disciplines, such as medicine, economics, political science, sociology and others. Firstly these conversations started as just opinion sharing regarding my research, topics of sexuality, sex education and nationalism in the country. The more I spoke outside the target group, the more I found these comments valuable, therefore I decided to include them. All of them studied in Belgrade, however not all were from the capital, but other smaller towns in Serbia. These discussions were held in different cafes in Belgrade, on. These conversations provided to me different perspective on the issues, but also helped me to form my research analysis. All these informal interviews were not recorded, however I kept notes of them. The students, I talked to, are women and men studying in Belgrade. Their age is from early twenties to late twenties. Some of them, coming from sociology and gender studies background, as I am, helped me with the structure of my questions for parents, as well contributed to my choice of the topic.

I applied content analysis method as “it seeks to analyze data within a specific context in view of the meanings someone—a group or a culture—attributes to them” (Krippendorff, 1989). I use content analysis to study the media narratives of sex education in Serbia, but also I look at the official websites of certain political parties significant for my analysis, in order to examine how their attitudes on sex education and Europeanization are reflected in their narratives. This method was selected once I realized that scope of collected articles definitely needs a specific technique of interpreting data. I was interested mainly in communication of the articles, in two ways – what message and for whom it is meant. Firstly I started analyzing and comparing the contents, searching for similarities and keywords or messages. Based on these findings, I noticed

how the narratives of the articles separate into two directions. I grouped these two different contents accordingly – narratives supporting the sex education initiative and those which narrate against it. From there onwards, I concentrated not only on their messages, but on their target groups. This approach went hand in hand with the interviews, as main audience all articles targeted was Serbian parents. For that reason I also applied this method to the analysis of the blog on the internet forum. This specific online discussion was created by one of my interviewees, who wished to share my web-survey to her friends. In this blog, she posted my web-survey, for her friends, who wanted to answer my questions, but had no time to meet with me. Also some of them felt more comfortable to submit answers online. However, on the discussion page, these parents started their own debates regarding questions I had raised in the web-survey. Their responses on this kind of social media are quite significant for my analysis. To study the forum, I used a content analysis, in order to examine virtual social interactions. The limitation of such methods is that there is no face-to-face interaction, therefore all discussion was kept online, nevertheless, I actively responded to their questions and participated in the discussions, which turned to be very informative and relevant for my research.

Chapter 4 – Analysis

This chapter examines how the discourses of sexual education in Serbia reflect the nationalist ideas and the debates on “Europeanization” in the country. In the first part, I examine the ways nationalist ideas of women’s role in the nation are reproduced within the narratives around the sex education initiative, focusing mostly on media sources and interviews. The second part discusses how these nationalist narratives within sex education framework reflect the ideas of Europeanization in the country. Through the content analysis, I examine perceptions of sex education in the variety of media sources: the websites of political parties, newspapers and videos. The other data I analyze are the interviews, conducted in the capital of Serbia, Belgrade during April, 2015.

Sex education initiative was introduced approximately around the same period of time during 2013, in two countries of the Former Yugoslavia: Croatia and Serbia (Kuhar,2014). In Croatia, the initiative was received with the disagreement and the controversy, by the opposition from the Catholic Church. These events lead to the dialogue at the constitutional court. There, it was pronounced that without parents’ consultation and support, the project must not have been introduced and in conclusion the initiative was suspended. In Serbia, however, the project was piloted in the Northern region of the country, Vojvodina with the success, nevertheless, together with the support, it also received accusations resembling the ongoing Western Balkans/Serbia and West/Europe¹⁶ debate. Since the West as a term signifies the larger geographical space, it usually refers to the USA, the EU and Europe. However in my thesis, I concentrate only on the

¹⁶ I am referring to Kulpa (2013), who used “‘European’ to indicate a predominant position of the European Union(EU) in influencing and defining the notion of Europe/European” (page 431), using the word in the same manner.

one space and that is the EU. Similarly, I focus on the Western Balkans¹⁷, predominantly on Serbia, rather than the whole notion of the East. However in some the West/EUropean discourses, the Western Balkans do not fall under the category of the East, and they are not completely recognized as component to the West, therefore the region is located ‘in transition’ in between the East and the western Europeaness. Later on, in the subchapter on Europeanization, I discuss more about European position of Serbia, as represented through the sex education narratives.

In contrast to the situation in Croatia, the authors of the sex education initiative in Serbia spent more time in preparation of the pilot project, by first and foremost ensuring that their ideas and thoughts of the program correspond with the attitudes of majority of people, not only students, but also parents. Through interviewing a large number of people regarding their project, they received a vast amount of encouraging responses and support to launch the pilot. In one of the interviews, the provincial minister for sport and youth explained the content of the program, saying that the first part of the textbook concentrates on human rights, sex rights and gender rights, to raise awareness of children how to not only think of themselves, but also how to behave towards each other. Further on, the textbook which holds the title ‘reproductive health’ covers not only issues such as female reproduction, undesired pregnancies, abortions and contraception, but also paying attention to, for an example, urology problems found in men¹⁸. Also the sex education, employed in Serbia, also includes the discussions on different types of sexuality, explaining each in consideration with the World Health Organization definitions (taken from the interview for Radio Television of Vojvodina, 2013). It is important to indicate

¹⁷ A political term to refer to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatian, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia (Author’s remark)

¹⁸ For more information, see Chapter 2

that in my thesis, I do not analyze the official content sex education program itself, but rather how the initiative has been presented in the media by its creators and the other dominant narratives which have emerged as an outcome and response. By analyzing the textual sources and interviews, I aim to examine how the narratives around sex education reflect the nationalist ideas in the country, afterwards I look at how this topic produced the dichotomy East/West (Western Balkans/EUrope).

4.1. Nationalist Ideas

When I started researching textual sources which covered the sexual education initiative, I noticed that one theme snuck into the narratives – nationalism. For that reason, during the interviews, I decided to pay particular attention to the ways parents expressed their views on sex education in the context of Serbia, in order to explore more connections to the intersection of gender and nationalism. In the following part, I present what I found during my research, how the perception of sex education came into the context of the nationalist ideas and how these perceptions are gendered. By reflecting upon the notion of womanhood, I analyze what is considered as the role of women's body in the narratives. As well, I show how through the discourses of sex education, gender and sexuality are constructed within the nationalist ideas. As seen in chapter two, there have been plenty of scholarships written about intersection of nationalism and gender (McClintock, 1993; Peterson, 1999; Yuval-Davis, 1997; Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989). When Anthias and Yuval-Davis located major ways of female participation in the nation, they emphasized that there is “no unitary category of women” (1989, page 7), as their positions differ by class, age, sexual orientation, race and etc. Starting from this point, it is significant for the further discussion to position my respondents within national framework. All people who have spoken to me during my research identify as heterosexual parents, living in

predominantly dual households and mainly of middle class background, living in urban spaces, all hold Serbian citizenship. Most of them have monthly earnings, if not than their partner is a sole breadwinner with above average income, based on profession and place of work¹⁹. Additionally, all of their jobs are of white collar professions within both private and public corporate spheres. I recognize their position as one of more privileged positions in contemporary Serbia. Interviews being only one part of the research and textual sources another, within them it is more challenging to position the group within the narratives in any particular socio-economical bucket. By looking into context of the textual sources I use in the research, one assumption is that vast majority is definitely Serbian by citizenship, predominantly heterosexual, based on their views of sexuality. In terms of class distinction, there is more diversity, but the class factor does not serve as a lens for any of examined narratives. It is in a background of all textual sources, while gender and sexuality are two primary subjects in discussions of Serbian identity and sex education. While looking at gender aspects of the sex education narratives within nationalist framework, I would go back to Anthias and Yuval-Davis. As mentioned in chapter 2, in their study of gender and nation, they observed five dominant roles women have in a nation. During my research, two of those stood out in particular; therefore further on I focus on these – women's role of a biological reproducer and female role of an active transmitter and producer of a national culture (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, pages 8-9). By looking at intersections of womanhood and nationhood, I examine how these female roles are reinforced in the nationalist ideas within sex education narratives.

Before getting to the analysis, I present what I mean by nationalist ideas, especially in the above context, referring to previous scholarship written about nationalism as gendered process.

¹⁹ For more information on Serbia average income analysis, please see Trading Economics (<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/serbia/wages>)

As Nagel (1998) points out, “the national state is essentially a masculine institution [as a result] the culture of nationalism is constructed to emphasize and resonate with masculine cultural themes” (page 251). According to this, patriotism, for example, is reinforced on the idea of male protection of the nation, which is active and masculine. Women in such narratives are pressured to occupy different roles—symbolic, traditional and supportive. These roles are central in nationalist ideas of female positionality in the nation, where they are naturalized through the family trope, frequently assigning women to biological reproduction, but also subordinating them socially and politically. In my research I look at how nationalist ideas of female reproduction emerge in the discourses of sex education. In other words, I examine the topics on women, reproduction and nation by analyzing perceptions of sex education in Serbia. First, I reflect on biological reproducers of the members of national collectivities and later, on women “as active transmitters and producers of the national culture” (McClintock, 1993, page 62).

The sex education, as mention in Background Chapter, was introduced in Serbia in 2013. Before the official pilot project kick-off, the initiative had started receiving an attention through different media sources. In one way certain coverage served as a promotion of upcoming project, a tool for slow-paced adaptation of Serbian public. Those media sources, which promoted and supported the program, gave a variety of explanations why such subject should be taught to children in Serbia. In some way, these articles at early stage played a significant part in shaping a perception what this type of sex education wants and trying to achieve.

Sexuality has been presented through their narratives as “still a taboo topic”, having this wording in titles of some articles, and declaring that by introducing the sex education, the provincial ministry is breaking that taboo in the country. The article in the daily newspapers Blic published during the announcement period of the initiative, quoted the director of the Institute of

Social Sciences, who said that “Serbia is still regarded as a conservative country, and despite the fact that the sexual activity during adolescence is increasing, parents are still passive in terms of discussion of the topic of sex education with their children” (Blic, 2013). During my research, one of my questions to the interviewees was if they talk with their children on topics such as sex and sexuality, and if yes, how they approach these subjects. The answers, I have received showed that most of my respondents do engage in these discussions with their children. For example, a mother of an eight year-old girl told me that she has extensively spoken with her daughter for already few years about sexual health. Explaining her decision to discuss this matter with her child, she continued by saying: “the child comes home with wrong information heard at school for her peers, and it is important for me to speak with my daughter about these topics, in order for her not to be misguided by friends who are equally clueless due to misleading information they catch here and there” (insert from the interview, conducted in Belgrade, in April 2015). The woman made clear to me that she supports any initiative which will stop misinformation of the youth and giving them platform to ask questions not from peers but a teacher. However she also confirmed that as a mother is also responsible for a correction of the misinformation – in other words, she must stay an active transmitter of the certain knowledge, within larger national culture. Another of my interviewees, also a mother living and working in Belgrade, said that she read different books about sex education, in order to learn how to approach and explain sex and the sexual differences to her boy and a girl. She addressed that her children hear a lot of talk about sex from their peers, and that these stories they come home with are usually completely different than a “reality”. That is why she expressed a need for the sexual education to become a part of school curricula, as in that way, all children would have a chance to learn about sex from professionals, rather than misleading each other, sharing the opinion with

the mother of a girl mentioned above. During the discussions, I noticed that both mothers spoke only about dominant sexuality, when talking of sex education, somehow different sexualities or approaches to the topic were not even taken in account. For that reason, I decided not to mention anything previously not said by them in order not to shift conversation from their experiences.

Another respondent, a parent of two boys of age 8 and 10, told me that together with her husband, they “address the topics, but only in an age-appropriate way, [they] teach [their] boys to always approach [parents] with questions and issues that interest or bother them. Sex and gender differences became one of those topics recently, as they already hear about sex from their peers” (insert from the interview with a mother in her late thirties). She shared with me about recent events, when her sons came back from school and told a new curse word they learnt – gay. When she brought up sexuality, I was interested how and from whom her boys learnt a word ‘gay’, she explained that during playtime with friends – “one of them came to [her] with the word ‘faggot’, as he heard most likely his parents calling some on TV by this name, and the child understood it as an insult”. The respondent stated that she was not surprised by the way her kids learned about homosexuality, knowing how many times people her age used this phrase in a negative connotation, as an insult. Raising this as a “problem of generations”, the mother expressed her hope that well-structured and unbiased course about human sexuality will be taught in schools. Regarding the initiative itself, she mentioned that “it should be introduced, starting from the first grade, but suitable for each age and interest”. However definitely the mother had concerns about a way different sexualities will be presented, as the media has been reinforcing heterosexual reproduction as a key word in support of arriving initiative, not providing platform for more. It is significant to notice that in conversations with other parents, these concerns have not surfaced. Definitely, all responses have shown that the parents are not only supportive of the initiative, but

that they also talk with their children at home on similar topics. Still only one of them noticed that the project is significantly constructed around heteronormativity. The reason for it may be that this woman has a strong academic background in social sciences, also an active supporter of Serbian LGBT community, becoming a token parent of my research. Nevertheless, if looking at the dominant narrative represented in the media and shared by majority of my respondents, it is definite that the results challenge the notion of Serbia being too conservative and parents being passive actors in sex education of their children. The latest statement contradicts outcomes of my analysis, as the parents were more than willing to talk on topic of sex with their children, but also open to share with me about their experiences. Many of them repeatedly emphasized that it is a necessity for sex education to be integrated in schools, and not be the topic which is discussed only at home. Yet again, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, because the interviewees come from educated and middle class background, they have a privilege to access certain knowledge, not available for all parents in Serbia, and therefore, have more open ideas towards sex education. However going back to my token respondent, she has another trait differing her from the group, awareness of sexual differences and willingness to speak to me about them.

Another mother, of two boys, expressed her opinion about the sex education, saying that “it would be useful to have a subject in schools, where children would be informed and taught on this topic”. We discussed what such program would mean for her two sons – her response was that she hopes that they would learn to treat girls in a nice way. During our discussion she had not gone into more details, arguing that her children are still too young to learn “more serious” facts about sex, I appreciated her response, as it contributes to the idea of how sex education benefits men. Even though ‘nice treatment’ response could be interpreted as traditionalist, it still contributes to the larger pro-sex education narrative. Other parent also supported the idea to

introduce the sex education, however she said that such program is needed because a lot of parents hesitate to talk about these issues, therefore many children do not have possibility to learn at home". Even if my respondents sounded open-minded about sex education and the initiative, as this woman noticed, some of her peers consider this issue still as a taboo. Her statement can be considered as certainly valid, by an example of the article which describes Serbia as a conservative place, however such opinions have not come up in my interviews. This may be again explained by the positionality of the respondents, even though almost all of them supported the sex education within heteronormative context, still the privilege of my respondents was recognized, as they do not belong to this definition of a 'place', being more educated about sexuality, they also found it important to pass the knowledge to their children.

Nevertheless, the article (Blic, 2013) is interested for me, as it brings the discourse of "Balkanism" (Todorova, 1997). This term coined by Todorova to explain the discourse of a stereotypical Other, in this case geopolitical region of the Balkans. Questioning notion of power in terms to "Balkanism", she argues that "very existence of the different Balkan states was almost exclusively regulated by great power considerations" (Todorova, 1997, page 109). There is without deny, external power on the Balkans, and its political, social and cultural spheres, however, it seems as Todorova omitted another side of the power, within the region. Definitely it could be argued that all Balkan countries have an agency of their own, which has been observed, even in my research. By stereotyping Serbian parents as being conservative in regards to sexuality and sex education in comparison to their European peers is completely superficial statement. My research definitely proved that even if I interviewed privileged groups of people, definitely they have not presented themselves as more conservative than EUropean community. Nevertheless, the narrative positions them as more backward than progressive EUropeans. In this

example, the progress is a movement towards the EU integrations, as according to the narratives being part of the EUrope, would change mindsets of Serbian parents.

Returning to the initiative's gained media attention – during the program's implementation, the articles which showed a support for sex education, found various ways to report how learning about reproductive health, or put differently, a heteronormative reproduction, is a key aim of sex education implementation in schools across Serbia. The narrative presented in several media outlets was following – that sex education is crucial addition to the schooling system, as by teaching reproductive health Serbia will have stabilized birth rate. These arguments were followed by several buzzwords, such as family, pregnancy, abortion, 'white plague', all targeting specifically women. The provincial minister for sport and youth, who is one of the initiative's establishers, said how such project gives opportunities to young people to learn more about reproductive health. In one of the interviews, she claimed that the subject contributes to 'good family planning', which in her view is a defense against 'the white plague', or in other words, the decrease of birth rates in the country (Blic, 2014). The discussion on the topic of reproductive health, or actually, more precisely topic of reproduction control is reappearing in various articles about sex education.

The article of the largest public broadcaster in the country RTS (Radio Television of Serbia) expressed the demand of the sex education by issuing the following:

“Serbia is at the top of the list of European countries by the number of teenage pregnancies and abortions. Annually in our country, more than 5,000 girls from 15 to 19 years old get pregnant. It shows by the data, and experience from a

doctor show that young people do not know much about sexual health”. (RTS, 2013)

By addressing topic of teen pregnancies, first and foremost the article targets female reproduction. This narrative takes patriarchal turn by demonstrating nationalist idea of female role as of biological reproducer within a nation. The narratives about the initiative from the start were biased when it came to gender and sexuality, and this article does not propose different. Even the authors of the initiative reinforce similar message, they would start off by explaining how the subject would teach children of their sexual rights and freedom, then again the whole discourse emphasizes significantly on female sexual activities rather than male, as shown in the following examples. The article published on the official website of RTS, starts by telling about seven girls who had got pregnant during their school trip in the Republika Srpska, BiH. Including exact numerical information, as well as giving a trip’s location served a purpose – to make story believable to the public. Creating a story around the narrative, the article quoted the National Coordinator for Reproductive Health of the Republic Srpska who expressed concerns that “children, already at 13 or 14 years have sexual relations, and the reason for that is neglectful attitude of parents, and educational institutions towards the education of children” (RTS, 2014). In his opinion, as the article points out, later in life an early sex initiations cause consequences such as “infertility, various diseases, miscarriages and premature births” (RTS, 2014). There was no evidence of this event actually happening other than a brief interview with the coordinator, therefore validity is definitely questionable. However what has drawn my attention was not questionability of the facts, but the way this article was used as a tool to reinforce moral panic of early sexual relations. It is clearly emphasized that lack of sexual education results with adolescent pregnancies, which again are presented as undesired. Without

even any implication of male sexual experience at a young age, the article is biased in its views on female and male sexuality. While there is silence when it comes to male experiences, the article condemns young women for early sex initiations, repressing young female sexuality. Results of a survey conducted in 2012 illustrate that in 2010, at the age 15-19, 42% of men and 27,6% of women had sexual intercourse (Blagojevic Hjuron, 2012). This shows that less than half of young women had their first sexual experience by the age of 19.

Even if the data presents the low numbers of early female sexual experiences, the media's narrative still emphasizes on young female sexuality and topic of reproduction when addressing the sex education. The other article in Serbian newspapers 'Blic' supporting inclusion of sex education addresses that with such program the youth will learn how to avoid undesired pregnancies and practice a safe sex. The article states that introduction of the subject in the education will not increase sexual activity of young people, however it will more importantly decrease the percentage of 'unwanted' pregnancies and abortions. As the example of such a bold claim, the article refers to the experiences in the European countries, where these results were accompanied by the introduction of sex education in schools (Blic, 2013). The central idea of these articles presents how female sexuality is still repressed in the society, but also the ways it is controlled in the narratives in order to justify the repression and subordination. . The narrative embodies the nationalist ideas of the control of the reproduction. In the presented discussions of sex education, these ideas are restored by underlining early female sexual experiences and freedom, while at the same time completely excluding male experiences. Jessica Valenti, as showed in Chapter 2, studied sex education and the discourses around it in the United States of America. She presented that various discourses in the USA support chastity and discourage early sexual activities of women, by similarly as in Serbia, excluding male experiences or praising it.

The double standards of sexuality and sexual behavior reinforce the oppression of female sexuality and promote female purity, as a model behavior. During my interviews, I have not noticed the reflection of these ideas, however on the social media, the forum about parenting I was invited by the respondent, these ideas were discussed by the group of mothers, users of the forum. In one of the groups on education, one of my interviewees asked an opinion on the sex education program from her peers. Around fifteen mothers, living in Belgrade, of various backgrounds, very eagerly stated their views, completing my web-survey in a meantime. However these escalated into the deeper discussions about topics of discrimination and stereotypes. The forum introduced the diversity of views on female sexuality – while some women argued for freedom of sexual activities, the others used an argument that “as a mother” they could not allow themselves to be “promiscuous”. In that sense, even if nationalist discourses promote female purity, the arguments of these women were based on their experiences and views of womanhood in Serbia. Their views reflect the nationalist idea of how woman should act as a citizen of the country.

Following this idea, I would like to refer back to a view of female role in a nation as an active transmitter and producer of the national culture (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, page 9). In my interviews with parents, as well in the web survey, there was one question, I was interested in particular to hear responses about – how the topic of sex education is approached in their families, and who discusses it. Earlier, I mentioned that one respondent told me she reads books about sexuality, in order to get acquainted with the topic and ways to transmit it to her children, the other woman told how she talks to another mothers about the topic and how sharing of experiences helps her approach conversations with the children better. Additionally, in the forum, women took a trip down memory lane, majority of them opening up about their

relationship with their mothers, claiming that sex life has not been a part of their discussions, and the way they were educated about sex were from peers and experience. Further on, the parents talk about their views on who in family should talk about the conversation about sexuality with children. A stay at home mother of a boy and a girl, told me that these conversations are necessary part in children's upbringing, however when I asked how much in these conversations is also involved her partner, she told me that her husband and she "share the responsibilities with our children, however when it comes to certain topics, such as sexuality and other controversial issues, children come to me first for answers", therefore she thinks that discussion of these issues becomes part of her job (from the discussion with one the parents, Belgrade, 2015).

Another parent shared a similar view on mother's role in children's education about sexuality, saying that "I usually it is my area of education to talk with our daughter about sex differences, however my husband helps with other responsibilities" (A mother of a girl). Nevertheless according to few respondents, in most situations, parents should have equal roles in children's upbringing, as one of them said to me that "I do not see the difference in the roles of parents with regard to the sex of the child" (from the interview with J, a journalist). One mother however argued that "even if I and my partner work together on the upbringing of our child, but as education is concerned, it is more on me" and she continues by saying that in her family "each parent has its own role". Similar idea was part of the narrative of my other respondent, the other mother of eight years old girl, who commented that "both my husband and I contribute to in the upbringing of the child, but me, a little more". Further she elaborates: "I am more acquainted in all the events in the school and her life. My husband is present in our daughter life as well, but rather more passively, he works on more technical matters, such as taking and picking up our daughters from their after school activities. My daughter and I talk more than he does with her,

the husband is involved definitely, but less in discussions of the problems with our child”. These narratives reflect the view of female role in a nation as a transmitter of the culture and knowledge to children, however at the same time they recognize the role of both parents in the upbringing of children. In that sense, according on Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989), in the nation, women’s role is to transmit the national identity to next generations, as well as to reproduce the values and traditions of their community. While in the interviews, the respondents argued that both parents share equal responsibilities in regards to transmitting moral, religious and family values²⁰, they recognize the mother’s role as an expressive in child’s socialization and education (sex education). Therefore, the nationalist ideas of women as participant “in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, page 7) are not only part of political narratives, produced in the media, but also “everyday” discourses.

Referring back to one of my respondents, a stay at home mother of two girls, “today’s children enter early in sexual relations [therefore they need to learn] about different hazard before, in order to avoid consequences, such as adolescence pregnancy”. Again, the question of female sexuality was brought up, leading their narrative under the influence of larger public discourses. Thus, even if majority of women stated that roles of both father and mother in upbringing of children are similar in their households, few mothers have still admitted that when it comes to discussion of sex in family, they see it as part of their job. According to a mother of a

²⁰In the interviews, I noticed, that many parents mentioned the importance of passing on their values to their children, for an example, the mother of two girls, 10 and 12 years old, said that “as an every parent, I would like for my child to have similar set of values as me and my husband”. Another woman commented that “I try to pass on my child true moral values, for my daughter to be just and honest, and to create a healthy family image, which hopefully helps her to establish her own family in the future”.

girl, such discussions are female job, especially with daughters, as “a mother usually has a stronger connection with female children”.

4.2. Europeanization

While sex education narratives brought up nationalist ideas, they also reflected another discourse, of Europeanization. In the following subchapter, I look into how the narratives around sex education welcomed in the discussion of the EU accession of the Serbia and also the Euroscepticism. With a content analysis of textual sources and social media, I present how the discourses of sex education reflect the idea of East/West, tradition/modernity in Serbia.

Since the sex education was introduced in the country, the majority of media had a positive reaction to the initiative, approving the idea of breaking the long existed taboo and finally opening a platform for topic of sexuality in schools. During my research, I was interested to see what the parents think about the initiative, how it is perceived in their view, to understand better their meaning of sexuality and sex education. A mother of three, I spoke with during my research, mentioned how the timing is right for such subject to be taught to children, as “the society is more ready to discuss sexuality today, than it was fifteen years ago”. She referred to her own experience, as a parent of three daughters, between two oldest and the youngest is more than twelve years of age difference, saying how she was less open to talk with the two older children about sexuality when they were in school, as the period of time was more conservative than today. The time of which my respondent was talking about was the period in the country, when Milosevic’s regime collapsed and there was a sudden shift towards new democratic path for Serbia (Greenberg, 2006). In 2009, the quest for European identity officially started, when Serbia applied for EU membership. Three years later, in 2012, the European Council confirmed

Serbia as a candidate country and since then, the Serbian Government many times expressed that the EU accession is among first priorities for the country.

Topics of the EU integrations seemed to have emerged in various Serbian public narratives connected to the initiative,, and in this section I mainly focus on that presentation of Europeanization in discussions about sex education. By that term, I suggest a way of spreading and integrating of what is considered European norms and values in Serbia, in other words integration of the policies which are supported and promoted by the EU. For purposes of my study, I was not interested to look at a notion of European values as such, instead I focus on their interpretation in Serbian media, in the narratives of sex education and sexuality. Moreover I concentrate on the social aspects of Europeanization, looking at how the narratives of sex education address Serbia's accession to the EUropean community and adoption of 'proclaimed' European norms and values²¹. By the 'European community', I refer to Kulpa (2013) when he suggests that this expressions stands for 'European Nationhood'. By this expression he recognizes that "nationhood here, however, does not necessarily have to be understood in narrow terms as a (institutionalised) nation-state, but relies more on the idea of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' (1991)" (Kulpa, 2013, page 433). I agree with his statement, as by looking at the EU as an "imagined community" of many identities, who merge into one – European, and on the other side candidate countries, among them Serbia, in a state of transforming their "imagined communities" towards European ones. That process of tailoring identities to fit one more dominant is not fully unfamiliar to counties like Serbia. During Yugoslavia, all countries merged under Tito were under similar phenomenon, over a period of time, they become one nation, inorganically created of many. Returning to Kulpa's "European

²¹ These norms and values represented in the political discourses of the EU

Nationhood”, Serbia is position under “leveraged pedagogy”, a form of requirements and conditions, which as an accessing country needs to meet in the path towards “Europeanization”.

In previous section, I examined the perception of sex education in the context of nationalist ideas – the role of women in Serbia. By reflecting on the notion of womanhood and what considers to be the role of women's body in the nationalist rhetoric, I showed how through the narratives around sex education, the gender is constructed within the nationalist ideas. Further on, I add the concept of Europeanization to the study, to present how the same narratives reflect the attitudes towards the EU accession process in Serbia.

During the time when sex education project was introduced in Serbia , in early 2013, two major narratives emerged, first was oriented towards praise and promotion of the initiative the initiative, and the second was built on arguments against the program, Othering it within the educational system. As mentioned before, the regional government of Vojvodina introduced the sex education more gradually, first only in 10 schools of the region, calling it a pilot project. Learning from the lessons of neighboring countries, and especially Croatia, where similar initiative has been launched only after two months of preparations, Vojvodina’s project was more carefully planned for over ten months, according to the provincial minister of youth and sport. Nevertheless, similarly, as in in Croatia (Kuhar, 2014), launch of the program brought certain groups in Serbia to speak up about the initiative as threatening to, what they consider to be Serbian traditional values. While supporters of the initiative claimed that this type of education only supports current Serbian values which should correspond European values.

The sex education project indeed received a great attention of the public, positive as well as negative, both reflecting nationalist ideas of healthy reproduction and control of young female

bodies. As an example, the pro initiative articles emphasized their fact that Serbia is in Europe on the top of the list by the number of adolescent pregnancies and abortions (RTS, 2013, Vecernje Novosti, 2013, Vreme, 2014). The online article on the website of the largest public broadcaster in the country, Radio Television of Serbia (RTS) states that in the European countries, such as the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands, sex education program exist for years, and as a result of it, “in the last two decades, there have not been recorded any cases of abortion among teenagers in the Netherlands” (RTS, 2013).

Without the information or a data which supports the claim’s validity, the article issued by the RTS, the broadcaster which uses a slogan of ‘Public Media Service of European Serbia’²², carries a narrative of the more progressive West/Europe, in contrast to backward and less sexually educated Western Balkans/Serbia. The encouragement of the program via European lens positions Serbia approaching EU set of values. Using the initiative in the narratives not in discussion of education but reproduction and desirable European low abortion rate, reflects gendered construction of EU/Serbian sexuality. The EUrope is presented as supposedly more advanced with their knowledge of sexual pedagogue, as according to the article, the implementation of sex education in these countries contributed to the reproduction regulation. I have shown in the previous subchapter, that one of goals of the initiative recognized by the provincial Ministry of Youth and Sport, is to protect the nation from the threat of a “white plague”, the decreasing birth rates. By recognizing the high numbers of abortions and adolescence pregnancies in Serbia, the media brings the attention to the question of the positionality of the country. The article implies that by implementing the project of sex education, Serbia takes one more step towards the Europeanization and as an impact of taught

²² This is an official slogan of RTS, who is a member of the European Broadcasting Union since 2001

sex pedagogue, also more importantly – lower abortion rates. The argument is supported by the idea that such path benefits Serbia, as it results, according to the article, with an increase of birth rate, therefore, a growth of the nation. The European model is, in this case, positioned as dominant and the West/Europe as a pedagogue to the Western Balkans (to Serbia). This narrative could be explained by Kulpa's "leveraged pedagogy" (2013). As mentioned in chapter 1, the term explains the relationship between the West/Europe and post-communist countries, by applying that such method was adapted in the EU integration process, in a form of requirements and conditions, assisting countries 'in transition' on their path towards 'Europeanization'.

In that sense, an article published by the RTS, a network which identifies as the Public Media Service of European Serbia, definitely implies that the country should follow the European method. Introducing the similar idea, another article published in newspapers *Vecernje Novosti*, presents reasons why the sex education is necessary for Serbia. However, instead of using the Netherlands example, this article introduces Denmark as the country "which has not had any case of teenage abortions in the last two decades" (*Vecernje Novosti*, 2012). Regardless, of validity of the stories or truthfulness of presented information, both narratives suggest the progressiveness of European community, and at the same time position Serbia outside the category West/Europe. These articles are part of the larger narrative within sex education discourse which supports the initiative and presents Serbia as in transition phase, becoming more 'European' to enter to the EU, but not fully ready for a membership. Nevertheless, the narratives imply that through the introduction of sex education to the schooling system, Serbia is one step closer towards being 'European'. As a result, the sex education is presented as an essential part of the progress of the nation. In other words, the initiative was used to promote the path towards the EU.

The article in the newspapers *Vecernje Novosti* (2012) begins with the statement that “most European countries introduced this type of education [sex education] in mid-twentieth century”. Following the narrative, the article introduces the data from the European countries. The data presents how sexual education supported in regulating the number of pregnancies, abortions, and diseases. Similarly as presented by the scholars (Chapter 1, e.g. Valenti, Eccles), in some countries, sex education discourses promoted abstinence and female purity, targeting women as main beneficiaries of the program. In similar fashion, the article of *Vecernje Novosti* narratives that based on the example of European countries, who have benefited of the sex education program by “succeeding in controlling the abortions and undesired pregnancies” than Serbia, being positioned as more backward and less ‘educated’, needs to follow the EU path in order to achieve increase in a birth rates, healthy reproduction, as well as progressive education for the youth. Presenting sex education, in these narratives, as a standard for Europeaness, positions the project as a part of the EU “leveraged pedagogy”. As Kulpa stated this method presents a clear power distribution between different groups, which in this case are Serbia and the EU countries. This type of the article clearly expresses the support for the sex education initiative, but at the same time, the project is used as a tool to present dichotomy between the EU and Serbia, framing the latter as “in transition” or in other words not liberal enough for the European membership. Another article, published on the website of Radio Television of Vojvodina, the public broadcaster of the Serbian province of Vojvodina, declares that the past practices abroad (in the EU) have shown that implementation of sex education in schools was beneficial and it “paid off” as a total success. Once more such narrative implies that more progressive countries, mostly in these stories, members of the EU established a trail for Serbia to follow on the way towards Europeaness (Europeanization) (RTV, 2013). Once again, the EU is

positioned as a mentor to Serbia, the country that is ‘in transition’ phase. In this narrative, the discourse of West/EUrope versus the Western Balkans/Serbia is noticeable, and there is clear shift between ‘progressive’ EUrope and the Others. At the same time Serbia is positioned inferior to the EUrope, but nevertheless, more European than the other countries of the East (non-EU candidates). Ann L. Stoler in the article “Making Empire Respectable” (1989) made an interesting observation while looking into sexual politics of the colonial places, showing “the ways in which colonial authority and racial distinctions were fundamentally structured in gendered terms” (Stoler, page 635). Researching the Netherlands Indies and French Indochina, she examined how through sexual control certain groups exercised their power and dominance. In her analysis, Stoler presents how intersections of class, race, gender and sexuality create the sexual domination of ones and the sexual submission of the Others. She showed how creation of the image of the colonized men as primitive savages reinforced the idea of the Homo Europeans supremacy. By positioning certain groups as privileged, the discourse of the sexual control, demanded of those groups to uphold and preserve their white prestige, especially women to be the guardians of the prestige (Stoler, 1989). Similar events were examined by Wendy Bracewell in Milosevic’s Serbia, of 1980s when in the Serbian political discourses of the situation in Kosovo, Albanian men were presented as deviant savages in comparison to ‘more European’ Serbian masculinity (Bracewell, 2000). In these discourses, the Serbian masculinity was only able to preserve if Serbian men defend their women from Albanian savages. Their studies even with different geographical and theoretical background, do come to similar conclusions – nations are built on two principles:

- Us against the Other
- Us united with

In the similar ways, the pro-European discourses of sex education, position Serbia and its citizens as more European, than the other countries of the East, but again at the same time not fully European, in comparison to the EU member countries.

Returning to Stoler, the other important matter she points out was not only the Otherness of the colonized, but of colonials too. She explores the pressure put upon the Europeans living in the colonies to preserve the European purity in the uncivilized settings. They become less European than European metropolitans. With the state politics changing in favor of European women over the local, the European men were expected to avoid sexual contacts with the women of color. The European women in that community were supposed to help them with that. They were supposed to be “angel in the house”, preserving “order, peace, hygiene and economy” (Stoler, 649). In these, (European) discourses, the reproduction was seen as these women’s responsibility and duty. Similarly, this idea of reproduction is traced in Serbian nationalist narratives, as it was presented in the previous subchapter on the example of sex education. However returning to the “Europeanization”, Stoler presented through the example of sexual control in the colonized state, how certain groups were acknowledged as superior in comparison to the others. In the same way, through the pro-European discourses supporting the sex education in Serbia, citizens who recognize the sex education as a necessity and not a taboo, are closer to becoming a part of the ‘European community’, than those Serbs who perceive the sex education as a threat to their values. The next section will present narratives of those groups which oppose the idea of sex education in Serbia, arguing that it teaches ‘wrong values’ and homosexuality.

At the same time when the pro-European narratives supported the reproductive health education, the project also received the attention from the opposition, who positioned themselves against the introduction of sex education in Serbia. It is through these narratives that I noticed

dominant opinion that the initiative is in support of the “Europeanization” of the country. I argue that the discourses of sex education in Serbia reflect the country’s positionality – its current balance between “Europeanization” and pro-nationalist politics. In this division, the actors such as Dveri and the Orthodox Christian Church are still representors of patriarchy and traditionalism in the country. As Drezgic pointed out “that Orthodox Christianity, like other monotheistic religions, promotes a strict division between gender roles, in which the public realm is reserved for men and the private realm for women” (Drezgic in Stakic’s “Homophobia and Hate Speech in Serbian Public Discourse” 2011, page 51). Therefore the patriarchal system of values reinforced by the religious institution in Serbia, is adopted in, Dveri’s narratives of sex education initiative. This far-right social conservative movement is closely linked to the Serbian Orthodox Church and considered as major anti-Western association in the country²³. Thus when Dveri announced to be displeased with the content of the program of sex education, the arguments against the initiative resembled the previous statements issued against the Serbian EU accession, as well as Pride Parade organized in Belgrade. The mentioned above explains Dveri’s view are reflecting the Serbian nationalist politics (Kahlina, 2014), criticizing both the Pride and the sex education for not conforming with heteronormativity.

Dveri released the statement in 2014, in which the movement argues that the program of sex education abounds with “disinformation and scientifically unproven and falsifiable claims” (taken from the official website of Dveri Movement, 2014). The opening of the announcement stated that a member of Dveri, Rados Pejovic reiterates the request of the movement for the ministry to abolish the subject of the sex education, and withdrawn the course’s textbook as it promotes to the students “homosexuality and all that is deviant” (from the official website of

²³ More examples on Dveri’s standpoints I present in Background Chapter

Dveri Movement, 2014). Moreover, the article continues with the following accusations: “the project of the Provincial Secretariat for Sports and Youth titled “Reproductive Health Education”, which was introduced by a decision of the provincial assembly, promotes divorce and early sexual acts, instead of promotion (celebration?) of marriage and family” (from the official website of Dveri Movement, 2014). The article calls the project shameful, and claims that the provincial ministry allocated budget of 20 million dinars for it, instead of giving the money to a better cause, bringing an example of the funds for children with special needs and disabilities. This narrative has been used previously by Dveri, in their accusations of LGBTQ groups in Serbia, condemning the sexual minorities for organizing events such as Pride Parade, because the funding which is directed to these events instead could go to ‘orphans and homeless’. By using vulnerable groups in their narratives, the Dveri positions sexual minorities as privileged enough to receive any help from the state. The narrative clearly degrades sexual freedom, but also discriminates sexuality as a tool of oppression, by emphasizing on a ‘privilege’ of these groups.

The statement declares that the Dveri Movement supports the idea of children being educated about the topics of sexuality and sexual health, however within the heteronormative framework. Based on their view, sexual education could be taught in schools if it promotes “normal values, such as the institutions of marriage and family” (2014). Comparing their vision with the current sex education program, they accuse the latter of promoting the homosexuality, instead of what they agree to be “normal” values. In Dveri’s narrative Serbian values are presented as heterosexual and family-centric. Anything different to their concept is perceived as foreign and anti-Serb. By using nationalist approach to oppose the sex education initiative, the Dveri Movement reflects the nationalist heteronormative anti-Western discourses, in which

homosexuality is perceived as part of ‘foreign’ and European. In their pro-nationalist narratives, Serbia is usually located in between of the West and the East, first representing the EU and the second – Russia. This specific division is not surprising, considering that Dveri publicly showed their support of Russian-Serbian cooperation and objection of Serbian path towards the EU. The division has been reinforced in the narratives of the Dveri Movement during the Pride Parade in 2014. At that time Dveri organized the protest against the parade in Belgrade, opposing the value and importance of the event. In the similar manner that criticized the sex education initiative, the organizers argued that the Parade imposes the wrong values, and puts Serbia “into a situation where family values are no longer the main values” (source: InSerbia²⁴, 2014).

During the protest, Danilo Tvrdiscic, Dveri representative, declared that “the protest was organized to protect the children from the aggressive promotion of the ideology of homosexuality” (InSerbia, 2014). People, which were gathered at the location to oppose the parade, waved the country flags, while the Serbian national anthem “Boze pravde” played in the background. Among the posters of religious connotation, there were also those which pointed out the relationship of Serbia and Russia by using words such as “Serbia, follow Putin” (photo credit: InSerbia, 2014). The Dveri discourse of the event and the sex education program reinforces the same idea of anti-Europeanization. This discourse of sex education translates the pro-nationalist ideas against the EU accession, dividing Serbian values from European ones, first representing heteronormative family values and the other undesirable homonationalist ones.

A similar narrative of disapproving the sex education initiative, came from another nationalist political party, the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). The DSS is center-right, right wing party, known for euroscepticism in the last couple of years, however recently the party

²⁴ InSerbia Network Foundation is independent, volunteer-run, non-profit organization.

proclaimed the ideology of political neutrality. In 2013, the party released the official written statement for the media calling the textbook for the sexual education as an instrument of indoctrination of youth and promotion of homosexuality. The DSS said to see the project as part of pressured “leveraged pedagogy” (Kulpa, 2013), arguing against it, as it is not in accordance with religious and moral beliefs of Serbian citizens. Such statement is presented as one more example of the party’s euroscepticism, the party claims that such education in Serbia starts the “long-awaited ‘change in mindset’” sought by the European Union (DSS, 2013). The narrative that this type of education is pressured by the EU and would indoctrinate youth into an immoral lifestyle is part of the larger nationalist heteronormative anti-Western discourse. The article, published by Radio Television of Vojvodina (RTV), presented pro-nationalist views on sexual education, where it was argued that introduction of sexual education in schools is a wrong way to teach children of healthy reproduction, as youth must be taught at home, by their parents, instead of schools. This view does not only place topic of sexuality to the private sphere, but also it emphasizes the heteronormative parenthood, claiming that ‘parents’ are people “who are in the natural marriage of man and woman” (RTV, 2013). By using word ‘natural’ it is implied that such marriage is based on the highly valued tradition rooted deeply in Serbian nationalism. In my discussions with parents, I have not encountered such views on sex education, majority of parents, as said earlier, expressed the need for such project to become a part of education. Moreover, they emphasized that this topic should not be only part of a private sphere, but again majority of them stayed within heteronormative framework.

The previous pro-nationalist narratives clearly present that the certain political groups are trying to include the discussion on sex education to a larger debate of East/West, in the interviews none parent brought up any similar concerns in regards to sex education. However,

the ways of how arguments were presented for or against sex education in textual sources reflect the debate on Europeanization, in other words Serbian path towards the EU accession. I recognized two main narratives, first, in support for sex education also positions the EU's standards as a model for Serbia, while the second narrative against sex education, shows resistance towards "leveraged pedagogy", main reason behind it is the importance of preservation of traditional Serbian values.

In the interviews, I have not discussed Europeanization as an idea or a concept with my respondents, nevertheless in the conversations with some of the parents, I found that several their narratives correspond to the tradition/modernity discourse, which is often appearing in discussions about Serbia and the EU. In the beginning of this subchapter, I mentioned my conversation with a mother of three, and her observation of the time, when thinking of introduction of sex education in Serbia. Her meaning of the time, or in other words "more conservative" period from fifteen years ago in Serbia, showed me how through speak about sex education, but even topic of sex itself reproduces the larger discourses of tradition and modernity. Reflecting on the different historical period in Serbia, the interviewee told me that her views on sex education are "much more open-minded nowadays than before" (from the interview). Referring to her own experience as a mother of three, of whom two older girls grew up in the 90s in Belgrade, she said that it was hard for her to speak on topic of sexuality with them, as "the topic was much more repressed than today". By looking at the narratives around sex education, I noticed that Serbian society, nowadays is in between Europeanization and pro-nationalist politics, balancing traditional, patriarchal values with tolerance and progressiveness. In that sense, discussing sexuality in contemporary Belgrade becomes less stigmatized than it was only fifteen years ago. However this is only one side of the story, stepping into analysis of

nationalism and Europeanization within sex education discourse, I discovered that sex education is also perceived within certain narratives as a taboo topic, part of a private sphere, unwelcomed part of Serbian educational system. Similarly, in pro-nationalist narratives, the sex education initiative is presented as a project ‘imported’ from the West, imposing ‘wrong’ values to Serbian society, while in parallel pro-EU narratives praised it, perceiving it as a step towards European identity.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I examine how the narratives of the sex education initiative reflected in a nationalist discourse and views on Europeanization in Serbia. Much of this research is shaped on how certain groups perceive the sex education, their views of sexuality, gender, nationalism, tradition and Europeanization. Through my research and with the support of the literature about nationalism, gender, sexuality and sex education, I have shown how the ideas of national identity and Europeanization are reinforced in the public perceptions of sex education. In my qualitative part of the research, I studied the attitudes and views of parents towards sex education, but also how their discussion of the topic reproduces the larger discussion on position of Serbia in East/West dichotomy.

While in the first chapter I summarized main academic and non-academic work which helped me during my research, I aimed to always present its linkage to my own study and the ways I interpret main ideas of each literature presented. The background chapter, I included in order to present to a reader more pieces to the puzzle – the sex education initiative, in order to explain the context in which the narratives surfaced. Even if my analysis was not concentrated on the program of sex education itself, but on the public perceptions around the program, I found it necessary to explain how such initiative is trying to contribute to the education of young people in Serbia. By deciding to interview parents, whose children are of school age, I wanted to examine their views on sex education, but also how their perceptions are shaped by larger discourses in the country. In my analysis, I examined how the narratives around sex education reflect the nationalist ideas in the country, afterwards by using a content analysis of textual sources and social media, I presented how public narratives about sex education and the initiative itself reflect the idea of East/West, Europeanization in Serbia.

I see this research as a starting point to examine how sexual education is understood in Serbia, where such initiative has not yet received much scholarly attention. This topic has a potential for analysis of sexual citizenship, the ways sexual education produces and regulates the notion of sexual citizenship. Also, sex education could be analyzed through another angle, examining the ways it reflects the idea of Serb masculinities, contributing to the studies which I had briefly presented in theoretical framework chapter.

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