Gendering in Political Journalism
To my family
LIUDMILA VORONOVA

Gendering in Political Journalism
A Comparative Study of Russia and Sweden
Abstract


The news media are expected to provide equal space to female and male political actors, promoting the idea of equal access to political power, since they are recognized as a holder of power with a social responsibility to respect gender equality. However, as previous research shows, political news coverage is characterized by so-called “gendered mediation” (Gidengil and Everitt 1999), i.e., gender imbalance, stereotypes, and a lack of discussions about gender inequality. Scholars point to media logic, organization, and individual characteristics of journalists as the main reasons for this pattern, but still very little is known about how and why gendered mediation is practiced and processed in political news.

This dissertation focuses on gendering understood as the perceived imprint of gender on the media portrayal of politics and politicians, as well as the processes by which gendered representations materialize. By applying a perspective of comparative journalism culture studies (Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012), it examines the processes and modes of origin of gendering as they are perceived and experienced by journalists. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with 40 journalists working for the quality press in Russia and Sweden.

The results show that the national culture of political journalism, and the context it is located within, are of crucial importance for understanding gendering and its modes of origin. Gendering may cause problems to the democratic development of society and the position of the quality press in it; however, it also offers a potential for promoting gender equality. The choice of the form of gendering does not fully depend on journalists. It depends on the contextual possibilities for journalists to fulfill the gender-ethical ideal of the quality outlet as long as they need to meet the demands of society and market, and to face the challenges of political communication.

Keywords: gender, gendering, journalists, journalism culture, political journalism, Russia, Sweden.

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1. Introduction

As the representation of women in politics is miserable, and representation of men is dominant, we see only men all the time. We have what we have. This is not in media, but in life […] I don’t see a specific problem here; not that the society is somehow suffering from it. However, from my personal point of view, it would be preferable to see more women, both in politics and in business.

A, vice-editor, male (Russia)

It is not our job to sort of fight for women’s rights. Our job is to produce the paper. On the other hand, there is no contradiction between women’s rights and our paper. It is not our job to go front line, I think, we are not a political force in that sense. We leave it to others. We have to reflect the society, and we can sort of boost some things that we think are good for our paper, and good for the society.

N, editor of international department, male¹ (Sweden)

The idealized vision of the media is that it should be a space where female and male participants of the political processes are covered equally, and where the idea of equal access to political power is promoted (Falk 2008; Ross 2002). Gender equality in the media coverage refers to both the numeric representation and the diverse and unbiased media output, which promotes equal status, value, rights, and opportunities for women and men (Gender Sensitive Reporting n.d.; Getting the Balance Right 2009; Global Media Monitoring Project 2010). The institution of media is recognized as a holder of power that has a social responsibility to respect gender equality (Recommendation CM/Rec 2013).

The problem this research deals with is the “gendered mediation” of politicians and politics (Gidengil and Everitt 1999). In political news, whether context-relevant or not, gender often appears as a crucial characteristic of political actors or a perspective from which the political sphere is discussed. It becomes problematic if it implies quantitative imbalance and superiority of gender stereotypes² in the news coverage of women and men politicians and does not promote a discussion of the problem of gender inequality in the political sphere (Braden 1996; Bystrom et al. 2004; Falk 2008; Jarlbro

¹ These are quotations from the interviews with Russian and Swedish journalists, on which this study is based (see Chapter 3 for more details).
² Gender stereotypes are stereotypical, culturally based interpretations of femininity and masculinity and women’s and men’s roles in the society (Hermes 2013, p. 7).
The gendered mediation3 of politics and politicians influences voters’ recognition of candidates as well as their vision of the political sphere as being open or closed to certain actors (Cabecinhas et al. 2014; Falk 2008; Ross 2002). In the words of American scholar Erika Falk (2008), “Depending on the content, the media can encourage people to participate, engage, and become interested in political process, or instead determine that the political sphere is not for them” (p. 2). Moreover, gendered mediation is strongly interrelated with the freedom of expression: while – when provided with freedom – news media can promote tolerance and counter-act discrimination, they can also become “a powerful actor in the censorship of women” (Callamard 2006, p. 2) if they silence, defame, and deny women’s validity.

In the era of mediatization,4 when all social relationships are embedded in a mediatized context (Hjarvard 2013; Krotz 2009; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012a), the role of media in the functioning of the political sphere becomes more important (Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014b), making the patterns of the gendered mediation in political journalism even more influential. According to Swedish scholar Monika Djerf-Pierre, the gender aspect of relations between the news media and other societal institutions should receive special attention from researchers:

As media are the prime vehicles for the construction and circulation of cultural values in the current era of mediatization, the relationship between gender equality in journalism and the fundamental political, social, and economical institutions in society, for instance, becomes a subject worthy of rigorous study (Djerf-Pierre 2011, p. 43).

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3 I make a distinction between the terms “mediation” and “mediatization,” as suggested within the mediatization of politics tradition (Hjarvard 2008, 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2009). See Chapter 2 for a discussion on the concept of mediatization of politics and its connection to the studies of gendered mediation of politics.

4 For an overview of mediatization studies and different views on terminology see Bolin (2014) and Kaun and Fast (2014). See Chapter 2 for more details.
Previous research suggests that it is the media institution that acts as a “party-at-fault” in the process of political communication, producing gendered media representations and ignoring the problem of gender imbalance in the political sphere. Scholars blame 1) media logic – traditional news values and assessments of newsworthiness, a “male-oriented” agenda of reported politics, and political economy of media institutions (Falk 2008; GMMP 2010; Ross 2002), 2) media organization – quantitative domination of men in the political and international departments, and lack of articulated ethical standards (Macharia and Moriniere 2012; Ross 2002), and 3) individual characteristics of journalists – their cultural assumptions about gender (Azhgikhina 2006; Braden 1996; Falk 2008), for production of gendered mediation in political journalism. Scholars assume, that journalists can only counter criticism by suggesting that they provide the public with what they want (Ross 2014a).

These reasons for gendered mediation are theoretically argumented. Much of the research on politics, gender and the media have concentrated on analyses of gendered representations, i.e. how gender is displayed in news, and in a particular cultural context (e.g. Braden 1996; Falk 2008; Fernandez Garcia 2014; Gerrits et al. 2014; Kahn 1996; Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008; Norris 1997; Pavlikova 2008; Suboticki 2014; Vartanova et al. 2012; Wagner et al. 2014). Some scholars base their arguments on interviews with politicians (Kroon Lundell 2010; Ross 2002, 2010a). Yet, journalists’ perspectives on the gendered mediation of politicians and politics are lacking. More specifically, the ones who report on politics, and could provide crucial knowledge about the reasons for gendered mediation in the news, have been only scarcely addressed by researchers. American scholar Carolyn Byerly (2014) points to this fact as one of the main gaps to be filled by gender media research. While the research of the content provides evidence to both the progress the media has made since the 1970s and the problems that remain, scholars are still missing why and how the gendered mediation is practiced and processed.

5 By gendered media representations of politics and politicians scholars understand both gender-spotlighting, stereotyping, and lack of news coverage of actors of one gender (Wagner 2014). They are based on culturally-shaped norms relating to established images of masculinity and femininity characterized by patriarchy and divisions of space, labor and sources of knowledge (Connell 2005; Gerami 2005).

6 Chapter 2 suggests a detailed vision of how media logic is interpreted in gender media studies and mediatization of politics research.
In order to complement the existing research on gender, politics and the media, I will address the processes whereby gendered representations come about. I will apply the concept of “gendering,” highlighting the processual character of gendered mediation of politics and politicians. By gendering I refer to the perceived imprint of gender on the media representations of politics and politicians, as well as the more abstract processes whereby gendered representations materialize in the first place.

This study is located in the field of gender media studies, and, as it focuses on political news journalism, it builds on the perspectives of journalism culture studies (Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Zelizer 2005). Mediatization of politics (Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014a, 2014b) constitutes an important context within which the cultures of political journalism are analyzed.

The overarching aim of this dissertation is to examine the processes and modes of origin of gendering in political journalism as they are perceived and experienced by journalists working in two countries: Russia and Sweden. Both countries are situated within the Baltic Sea region (Bolin et al. 2005) and are geographically proximate. However, the political and cultural contexts in the two countries are different, and so are media models situated within them: the Eurasian government-commercial media model in Russia (Vartanova 2013), and the Democratic Corporatist (Hallin and Mancini 2004), which is currently turning to the Liberal media model (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Wiik 2014), in Sweden. I compare the Russian and Swedish cultures of political journalism (see Chapter 2), which allows for tracing the interrelations between gendering in political journalism, the national culture of political journalism, and the broader political and cultural context in order to identify the context-specific and common modes of origin of gendering. This, in turn, allows for not only identifying and contextualizing the challenges to producing diverse and unbiased political news journalism, but also drawing conclusions about common processes that prevent the quality press from promoting gender equality.

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7 Although mediatization is a global phenomenon, it can take different forms in different historical and social circumstances (Fornäs 2014; Kunelius and Reunanen 2012b; Strömbäck and Esser 2014b). This is the case with the processes of mediatization of politics in Russia and Sweden, and these will be discussed in the chapters that follow.
The aim is broken down into the following main research questions:

- How is gendering conceptualized, experienced and contextualized by political journalists in the two countries?
- What are the modes of origin of gendering as defined by the journalists themselves? And which modes of origin of gendering in political journalism can be considered to be common for different contexts, and which ones are context-specific?

These questions are answered throughout the dissertation and are broken down further in each empirical chapter. As such, Chapter 4 looks into how journalists look at gendering in political journalism, and how they link gendering with the national specificity of the political and cultural context. Chapter 5 illustrates how the formulation of the ethical ideal within the culture of political journalism influences the production of gendering. Chapter 6 asks 1) whether journalists consider themselves to be passive information transmitters, or active constructors of the social reality, and how this is related to the production of gendering, 2) whether gendering is a tool for challenging, controlling, or even manipulating politicians, and whether it is a similar tool in the hands of power holders, and 3) whether gendering is perceived as an instrument for gaining economic benefits or as a tool for providing readers citizens with a platform for a public dialogue. Finally, Chapter 7 questions if and how the journalists’ ability to fulfill the ideal of objectivity influences the production of gendering.

To this end, I conducted semi-structured interviews with journalists involved in the production of news in the so-called “quality” press in the two countries. Despite the fact that social media are recognized as an increasingly influential actor of social change, manifesting the tendency of a transition from centralized media control to human agency (Hjarvard 2014), the press still carries out an important role in the media systems (Vartanova 2013), and there are a significant number of journalists producing content for the paper platform in Russia and Sweden.8

The quality press represents a specific segment of the printed media. Media, positioning themselves as “quality brand” (Anderson, Ogola and Williams 2014), promise readers a certain quality of journalistic product: reliability of facts, pluralism of opinions, and non-biasness. This makes the

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8 In Russia, 69.2% of all journalists produce content for the paper platform (Anikina and Johansson 2013); in Sweden, the proportion is 75% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013).
quality press a “preferable terrain for the public dialogue” (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007, p. 83, my translation). Unlike the popular press, quality outlets target citizens rather than consumers (Hanitzsch 2011). Despite the fact that the press draws a much smaller audience than television, and that people spend more time consuming non-printed than printed media (e.g., Nordicom-Sverige 2014, Mediedagen; Nordicom-Sverige 2014, Bruttotid), the quality press still reaches a high number of politically active potential voters and can be considered to be among the most influential actors of political communication, i.e., intermediaries in the process of what voters learn about politicians (Ross 2002, 2010a; Ross and Comrie 2012; Ross et al. 2013). While the findings of this study cannot explain the processes and modes of origin of gendering in all genres and all media, they do provide certain insights into how the cultures of political journalism function, as well as into how the journalists’ perceptions of the context they are surrounded with, and the cultures of political journalism, contribute to gendering.

The present study adds to the existing research in several ways. First, it makes use of results from research on gendered mediation of politics and politicians and then combines this with the perceptions of political journalists actively involved in the production of political news. Gendering is, thus, examined from the perspective of the journalists themselves, and conclusions are drawn based on their perceptions and experiences. In effect, the journalists’ perspective adds to the previous research on gendered mediation of politics, as it reveals whether the journalists working for the quality press acknowledge the problem of gendered mediation and whether gendering is produced consciously. It also reveals what factors both within and outside the culture of political journalism are considered by the journalists themselves to be influential for the production of gendering. The dissertation is written with a trust in the power of the culture of political journalism, which is shaped by journalists, and with a hope that an indication of the – on the one hand – harm gendering may cause to the quality of political journalism and the position of the quality press in society, and – on the other hand – the potential for promotion of gender equality gendering provides, will encourage journalists to pay more attention to the issue.

Second, the study focuses on Russia and Sweden with an aim to contribute to the knowledge about cultures of political journalism and patterns of political communication in the Baltic Sea region. It, thus, follows the tendency of de-Westernizing media and journalism studies (Curran and Park 2000; Wasserman and de Beer 2009). The comparative perspective applied
in the study allows for identification of the common and context-specific modes of origin of gendering, suggesting a broader perspective on gendering in political journalism than would be possible in a one-case study. It also provides a deeper insight into how the global processes of mediatization of politics and commercialization of the media, as well as the international value of objectivity in journalism, are contextualized and made situational within the national cultures of political journalism.

Third, gendering in general, and in political journalism in particular, is not an uncontroversial issue to discuss. Combining the basis of a scholarly PhD in Sweden with a journalistic background in Russia, I employ self-re-flexivity to look at gendering in political journalism from this rather unique “double distance” perspective (Bourdieu 2001/2004; also Alasuutari 1995) in two very different political and cultural contexts.

**Dissertation structure**

Chapter 2 presents the theoretical background and the analytical model of this dissertation. Chapter 3 discusses the study’s methodological design and how the material is used.

In the analytical chapters (4-7), I move from what can be considered to be the broadest level of the multi-level journalism culture (broader cultural and political context) to the narrowest (individual features of journalists) (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Shoemaker and Reese 1996). The analytical chapters are constructed similarly. First there is an introduction to the chapter, where a background is given, and then the analysis proceeds to the Russian and the Swedish cases, after which a comparative discussion and conclusions follow.

Chapter 4 focuses on the journalists’ contextualized conceptualizations of gendering in the framework of their vision of the national culture of political journalism and the broader national and international context. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 move on to analyzing the modes of origin of gendering within the framework of the constituents of the national culture of political journalism – ethical ideologies, institutional roles, and epistemological beliefs (Hanitzsch 2007). Chapter 5 situates gendering within the framework of the ethical ideologies of journalists, and considers both the international and national legislative and self-regulatory backgrounds and the organization-specific guidelines that are perceived to be meaningful in relation to gendering by the journalists. Chapter 6 considers gendering in relation to the journalists’ perceptions of their institutional roles. It has a more detailed structure than the other empirical chapters, as it focuses on
three dimensions of the institutional roles: interventionism, power distance, and market orientation (Hanitzsch 2007). Chapter 7 considers the journalists’ conceptualizations of the role of subjective perceptions versus objectivity in relation to gendering.

The concluding Chapter 8 situates gendering within broader political and societal processes and indicates, on the one hand, the existing and potential future problems that gendering in political journalism may cause to the democratic development of society and the position of the quality press in it, and, on the other hand, the potential it offers for the promotion of gender equality.
2. Theoretical framework

This chapter acquaints the reader with the previous research on gender, politics, and media interrelations, and presents the theoretical background and analytical model of this dissertation, as well as provides contextual information about Russia and Sweden.

2.1. Previous research

The discussion of the so-called “gendered mediation” of politicians and politics (Gidengil and Everitt 1999) should be viewed within a broader field of gender media studies and a narrower field of gender news media studies. Since the 1960s, when gender media studies originated, attention of media scholars worldwide has been paid to the questions of how women and men are represented in the media, how the conceptions of femininity and masculinity are mediated, how gender issues are framed, and what kind of consequences it all has for the society. The scholars have continuously highlighted that women are marginalized and “symbolically annihilated” (made invisible) in the media discourses (Tuchman et al. 1978). The media representations of women and men often reproduce traditional stereotypes, and the media’s constructions of “femininity” and “masculinity” influence the media users’ concept of selves by providing hegemonic definitions of what it means to be women and men, and what their role in the society is (e.g., Butler and Paisley 1980; Byerly and Ross 2006; Carter, Branston and Allan 1998; Carter and Steiner 2004; Davis, Dickey and Stratford 1987; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Gallagher 1981, 2001; Gamble and Gamble 2002; Gauntlett 2002; Gill 2007; Ross 2010b; GMMP 2010; de Lauretis 1989; Macdonald 1995; Mbilinyi and Omari 1996; Puustinen, Ruoho and Mäkilä 2006; Roosvall 2005; Siivonen 1999; Sreberny-Mohammadi and van Zoonen 2000; Valdivia 1995; van Zoonen 1994; Zilliacus-Tikkanen 1997).

What the previous research points to is that the gendered representations are often based on culturally-shaped norms relating to established images of masculinity and femininity characterized by patriarchy and divisions of space, labor and sources of knowledge (Connell 2005; Gerami 2005). These representations, thus, tend to reproduce stereotypical notions about women and men in society. Women and men tend to be described as oppositions that complement each other with different gender-specific (and culturally

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9 I see gender media studies as an inclusive definition to feminist media studies, postfeminist media studies, and women's/men's studies (see Kleberg 2006).
accepted) characteristics (Cameron and Kulick 2003). Moreover, as British scholar Rebecca Kay points to, it is the state-led ideologies, reflected and formed by the media, that to a large extent define the roles for the female and male citizens in the society:

Dominant discourses and understandings of gender, propagated through media and cultural representations of women and men, public rhetoric and popular debate, prioritize equality and difference to varying degrees, both drawing on and feeding into state-led ideologies and policies. These in turn play an important role in determining the extent to which gender impacts upon the opportunities, rights, entitlements and duties of male and female citizens (Kay 2007, p. 1).

The scholars suggest that it is impossible to speak of any “progress” when it comes to the current gendered representations in the media, which continue to appear despite the scholarly critique. For example, British scholar Karen Ross (2010b), comparing the findings of the pioneers of the gender media studies to the current media representations, states that the situation has definitely become different from what could be observed in the 1960-70s, but it has hardly become better. The 2010 Global Media Monitoring Report (GMMP), which is a project conducted every five years since 1995 almost all around the world that monitors the representations of women and men in the news, shows that today 46% of all the monitored world news stories reinforce gender stereotypes, and only 6% of the stories challenge them (GMMP 2010). When it comes to the political news (stories about politics and government), 54% of the stories reinforce stereotypes, and only 8% challenge them (GMMP 2010).

Gender media scholars have given special attention to the different aspects of political communication. The media’s role is viewed by the gender media scholars as reflecting and reshaping our perceptions of selves and others (Gamble and Gamble 2002), and in formulating the message about women’s and men’s place in the society and reinforcing gender norms (Byerly and Ross 2006). Accordingly, media representations of politicians in different contexts have a very particular influence both on voter recognition of female and male candidates and on political participation of women and men (Berggren, Jordahl and Poutvaara 2006; Cabecinhas et al. 2014; Falk 2008; Hansen and Otero 2007; Ross 2002). If women politicians generally receive less media attention (and according to GMMP (2010), in 83% of news stories worldwide the representative of the political sphere is a man), the voters have little information about them, and therefore voter
recognition of women candidates is weak\textsuperscript{10} (Ross 2002, p. 156; Cabecinhas et al. 2014). Media, thus, exercise their power by either providing or denying access to information about political candidates:

Visual cues such as gender take on an increasingly important function in influencing voter choice, no matter how arbitrary those cues actually are and no matter how stereotyped (and therefore, possibly ill-informed) voter expectations might be (Ross 2002, p. 128).

The idea of gender equality in the political sphere and its reconstruction in the media coverage is associated with the democratic development of society: just as the political sphere should be equally open to everyone, the media should not only provide equal space to female and male participants of the political processes but also promote the idea of equal access to the political power (Falk 2008; Images of Women in the Media 1999; Ross 2002).

The previous research on the female and male politicians’ representations in the news has shown that female politicians worldwide are rarely treated by the media in the same way as their male counterparts. Women politicians are ignored by the media; they are often portrayed with an application of a “woman politician” frame (with a focus on their gender, not their political career), persistently trivialized by media speculation over their private lives, domestic arrangements, and sartorial style, and often seen as unnatural, incompetent, and unviable actors of the political process. Moreover, according to the scholars from different countries, even in cases where women politicians are portrayed as “perfect women,” embodying the best of feminine and masculine traits, such a construction masks the difficulties that these successful women have faced progressing through their careers, thus reproducing gender inequalities in society (Braden 1996; Bystrom et al. 2004; Campus 2013; Falk 2008; Fernandez Garcia 2014; Gerrits et al. 2014; Jarlbro 2009; Kahn 1996; Norris 1997; Ross 2002; Rossi 1995; Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996; Sreberny-Mohammadi and van Zoonen 2000; Suboticki 2014; Wagner et al. 2014).

It seems to be a taboo for women politicians to talk about discrimination during the election campaigns, as the metaphors appearing in the media

\textsuperscript{10} Despite the fact that politicians may try to influence the way they are perceived (Grinberg 2005; Strömbäck and Kiousis 2011), for example by applying particular strategies of gendered self-representations in the social media (Bystrom et al. 2004; Kroon Lundell 2010; Markstedt 2007; Nedyak 2002; Pavlikova and Yakova 2012), the media still to a large extent defines the tone in which politicians are covered (Gerrits et al. 2014; Wagner et al. 2014).
coverage tend to “hide and negate the complex ways in which the social order makes political aspiration and attainment difficult for women” (Falk 2013, p. 204). Men politicians also are gendered in the news, though this process is not as explicit as with women politicians. For example, the media portray the private life of men as unimportant by simply not mentioning it, yet doing so reinforces the traditional stereotype of a male public persona. Similar patterns are evident not only in the textual, but also in the visual representations of politicians (Kinnebrock and Knieper 2014; Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008).

Most of the scholars accuse the media as an institute of gendered mediation of politics and politicians. They refer to 1) media logic, 2) media organization, and 3) individual characteristics of journalists as main reasons for gendered mediation.

Referring to media logic, Falk (2008) states that traditional news values or assessments of newsworthiness (including prominence, topicality, human interest, conflict, timeliness and unusualness) in the periods of political campaigns make women appear less like “real” or “serious” candidates to reporters and editors who must make gate-keeping decisions. Ross (2002) suggests that there is a tension between traditional journalistic practices and routines, which have a specific criteria for newsworthiness, and the complexity of social policies/politics, which are contrary to what Ross calls the “news now!” imperative. This tension may be a reason for a lack of stories covering the problem of gender inequality in the political sphere. Furthermore, the ritualized practices of “objective” news reporting, according to Allan (1998), are gendered, as journalistic objectivity itself can be understood as an (en)gendered construction.

As the media become overwhelmingly driven by commercial logic, gender stereotypes can also be explained by economic reasons: gender-sensitivity11 is something that journalists working for increasingly consumer-oriented media can hardly afford, as such an approach requires commitment and time (Cerquiera et al. 2014). Ross (2002) points to the media’s tabloidization, strive for sensation, and the “cult of personality” as additional reasons for the gender imbalance in media representation of political processes. The scholar states that the reported politics is determined by a male-oriented agenda, “which privileges the practice of politics as an essential male pursuit” (Ross 2002, p. 67). As Falk (2008) explains it,

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11 Gender-sensitive – recognizing gender inequalities, focusing on gender as a reason to discuss them.
When a reporter or assignment editor approaches a race in which there is a woman candidate, the contest is viewed through the lens of gender. The reporters are likely to view any candidate qua woman. That is to say, the motivating force by which the reporter writes the story is one of gender. Once the notion of gender is activated in memory, reporters are more likely to write about that which they associate with gender, and in the case of women, that may mean their emotions, families, and appearance (Falk 2008, pp. 74-75).

This tendency to focus on emotions, families, and appearance in turn refers to a broader process of personalization of politics12 (McAllister 2007), which is often negatively connotated as being related to “feminization” of politics. There is a tendency to discount emotional reactions as irrational, prejudiced, unreliable, unsound, or “feminine,” which is criticized in the feminist theory that argues for new legitimacy to emotional, bodily, and subjective reactions in politics (Samuels 1993, 2001). Van Zoonen (2003) finds that the today’s politics is more and more often compared to a soap opera in the media: while the most common metaphors and symbols in politics are associated with masculinity (politics is metaphorically portrayed as warfare, sports, games and violence), the soap opera is a genre usually considered appealing to women (being about the private sphere, emotional involvement, conversation). When political problems, debate and conflicts are framed as a soap opera, politics implicitly receives an accusation of feminization, and “while everything else that’s solid melts in the air, traditional gender relations fly high and dry” (van Zoonen 2003, p. 113).

The second reason for the gendered mediation of politics and politicians named by the scholars is the domination of men at the top of the media organization (Ross 2002). As it is men who control and own the media, it is their ideas, views and values that dominate in this production system and in the system of images in broadcasting, press and advertisement (Jackson 1993). Media organization’s ethical standards and norms also affect how women and men are represented and gender issues are addressed (GMMP 2010; Macharia and Morinière 2012).

Individual characteristics of journalists is the third reason for gendered mediation of politics and politicians. According to Braden (1996), it is the journalists’ awareness/unawareness of their own cultural assumptions that influences the way they write about politics and politicians:

12 Personalization of politics can be understood, on the one hand, as a manifestation of mediatization of politics (Driessens et al. 2010) and, on the other hand, as a storytelling technique applied by the media (Strömbäck 2011).
Journalists, like everyone else, understand the world through a largely unconscious frame or pattern that helps structure new experiences and ideas [...] Journalists may not be aware of the way their perspectives can unconsciously work to shape their conceptions of the news (Braden 1996, p. 10).

At the same time, the reporters’ choice of words, categories, and labels affects the readers’ thoughts, and their discourse becomes “a factor in building the receivers’ mental representations of the world” (Falk 2008, p. 22). Thus, as Falk (2008) notes, “by featuring gender or by differentiating between men and women, reporters will affect the thoughts of the reader” (p. 21).

Other scholars point to the gender aspect of the journalists’ individuality as a factor influencing their professional performance (for an overview see Djerf-Pierre 2011; also de Bruin 2000; de Bruin and Ross 2004; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Djerf-Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Edström 2013; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Melin 2008; Ross and Byerly 2004). Journalism as such is understood as a gendered institutional practice, splitting the field both horizontally (female journalists covering “soft” topics and male journalists covering “hard” topics) and vertically (men dominating in the managerial positions) (Djerf-Pierre 2007; Gallagher 2005; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; van Zoonen 1998). What is also discussed within the gender media studies is whether the gender of the journalists has a direct influence on the production of journalism, i.e., whether there is a “masculine” (male sources, objective stance, professionally defined criteria for ethics and quality) and a “feminine” logic of the media (focus on the audiences’ interests and needs, soft news, female sources) (Djerf-Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Gheretti 2012; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Meeks 2013).

Based on an international study, Hanitzsch and Hanusch (2012) argue that when it comes to the choice of news sources, the gender of journalists generally does not influence their choice. However, the actual process of interaction with the sources can be described as gendered, where gender influences the relationship of the communicator with others (Gamble and Gamble 2002), or, as Löfgren Nilsson (2010) formulates it, “the gender we think guides the way we act” (p. 3). As for the way stories are written, gender media researchers have found that “women journalists often resort to even more macho reporting styles than their male colleagues as if to prove their professional mettle and, of course, in order to get their material passed

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13 Earlier findings, however, suggest that there is a congruency between the number of female reporters and females appearing within the news story (Armstrong 2004).
the sub-editor” (Ross 2002, p. 108). Thus, the presence of women in journalism is not a guarantee that the news will be free of sexist reporting,\(^\text{14}\) as it mainly depends on the journalist’s (whether male or female) sensitivity to gender-based stereotypes, awareness of the need to seek gender balance in stories, and ability to generate and promote stories of concern to women (Braden 1996; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Edström 2011). As British scholar Karen Ross rightly states, “sex is not determinant of a value set” (2014b).

In addition to the media as an institute, scholars suggest other factors influencing the way women and men politicians are covered in the media. Some of the researchers point to the general lowering of the academic standards in journalism courses as one of the main reasons for the journalists’ gender-blindness.\(^\text{15}\) They believe this leads to gendered mediation of politics and politicians (Ross 2002; Smirnova 2010). Others speak about the more general problems in society related to the association of leadership with stereotypical masculine traits as possible reasons for the gendered mediation dominant in the current media discourses (e.g. Mbilinyi and Omari 1996; see also D’Amico and Beckman 1995; Easthope 1990; Hirdman 2007; Lovenduski and Norris 1996). According to Falk (2008), “men and women candidates for president are not treated comparably in the press because men and women are not treated comparably in society” (p. 74).

Thus, gender media studies of the content (media portrayal of female and male politicians), media effects (statistical studies of the female and male voters’ reactions to female and male political candidates), and interrelations between politicians and media (ethnographic studies of politicians and journalists’ interaction), point to the various modes of origin of gendered mediation in political journalism and highlight the role of the journalists. The media and the producers of the media discourses are viewed by the gender media scholars as the actors responsible for the way women and men politicians are portrayed and for how the problem of gender inequality in political sphere is addressed. However, journalists remain silent in previous research. Their vision of the reasons behind the gendered media portrayal of politicians and the

\(^{14}\) The GMMP report from 2010, however, shows that, although it is minimal, there is a difference between the way women and men journalists write news stories. Seven percent of the stories reported by women challenge stereotypes, in contrast to 4% by male reporters. Thirty five percent of stories by female reporters reinforce stereotypes compared to 42% reported by men (GMMP 2010, p. 33).

\(^{15}\) Gender-blindness – unawareness of gender imbalance and inequality, a gender-blind person, unlike a gender-aware one, lacks a gender-sensitive perspective. Gender-awareness is a critical approach to gender imbalance and inequality.
lack of media interest towards the problem of the gender inequality in the political sphere is unknown. Yet their views would allow us to understand more about the processes and modes of origin of gendering, and would help situate gendering in the journalists’ system of conceptualizations of the broader, national and international cultural context and the cultures of political journalism that the journalists themselves shape.

**Previous research on gendered mediation in Russia and Sweden**

In Russia interest in feminism and gender studies was raised at the end of the 1980s and was further developed in the 1990s after the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, there was not an established platform for the gender media research in the academia until 2007, when the Center for Gender Studies of the Media was founded as part of the Faculty of Journalism, Moscow State University (with the support of the Russian Union of Journalists).

The existing research has shown that the Russian media seldom covers women as active participants in political life (and when they are covered women are discussed as voters rather than as politicians), and the problem of gender inequality in the political sphere is rarely addressed in journalistic articles (Vartanova, Smirnova and Frolova 2012). Skornyakova (2004) shows that women leaders and women’s issues are mainly covered in the media at a particular time, i.e. on the 8th of March. Hate speech, proverbs of a sexist nature, and gendered asymmetry of lexical and grammatical forms accompany women politicians’ media portrayal (Smirnova 2010; Vagenlyajtner 2011). Media create a symbolic “glass ceiling” even for those women politicians who have already reached the top of the political Olympus (Pavlikova 2008). Even quality media (re)produce common myths about women in politics, a pattern, which is different from the representations of women politicians in the Swedish press (Voronova 2011). While a focus is on the women politicians’ appearances, they still may be represented as strong and stubborn, which does not always lead to a positive perception of them in the Russian context (Vanhala-Aniszewski 2008).

Azhgikhina (2006) states that the reason for the gendered mediation of politics and politicians in the Russian media is the postsocialist “patriarchal

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16 The only current study of the political journalists’ visions of gendered mediation is an ongoing Portuguese project “Politics in the Feminine” led by Carla Baptista, based on interviews with parliamentary reporters (Baptista 2014).

rennaissance” (Posadskaya 1993), unpreparedness of journalists to adequately perceive new tendencies, and lack of dialogue between media and audiences. Smirnova (2010) refers to the journalists’ ignorance about gender issues, the unconscious use of gender stereotypes, and the lack of gender education and training for future journalists as potential reasons for gendered mediation. Voronina (1998) relates the imbalanced representation of women and men in the Russian media to the “violation of freedom of speech for women” and to the lack of regulatory norms concerning gender balance in the media content.

In Sweden scholars have been focusing on the gender aspects of media representations since the 1960s, and already in the 1980s gender media studies became an established discipline (Kleberg 2006). Gender media studies of the content concern both popular culture and news journalism (e.g. Carlsson 1993; Edström 2006; Hirdman 2004, 2008; Hirdman, Kleberg, and Widestedt 2005; Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Roosvall 2005). Other studies focus on the domain of the newsroom and media routines (e.g. Djerf-Pierre 2007, 2011; Djerf-Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Edström 2011, 2013; Löfgren Nilsson 2010).

Statistics show that in Sweden, only 32% of the subjects in media stories are women (68% are men), while a full 52% of the reporters are women. In the news stories about politics and the government, 30% of the news subjects are women and 70% are men, and a majority (63%) of the reporters are also men (GMMP 2010). When it comes to the occupational group “politician” women comprise only 19% of the news subjects (GMMP 2010).

These statistics are confirmed by Swedish scholars (e.g. Ekman 1998; Jarlbro 2006; Kroon Lundell 2010; Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008; Nordberg and Edström 2007; Norén 2001), who also provide possible reasons for such representations. Nordberg and Edström (2004) point to the fact that although politics is the only elite field in Sweden where women constitute more than 40% of its representatives, it is not reflected in the media. Nordberg and Edström relate this pattern to the media logic, which works in such a way that when women constitute a minority in this or that elite field and seem to be “others”, they get media attention. Conversely, the more women there are in the elite field, the less interest they are to the media. Moreover, according to the authors, in the Swedish media male politicians are presented as a norm, and female politicians are often represented as powerless and unsuccessful strangers.

Jarlbro (2006) states that despite the success of women in the political arena, the Swedish media often apply gender stereotypes when covering
women politicians. She provides an example of Gudrun Schyman (an ex-leader of the Vänsterpartiet/Left Party, and now the head of the party Feministiskt initiativ/Feminist Initiative),\(^{18}\) who was often portrayed by the media as an owner of “nice legs” (p. 58). Jarlbro concludes that “focusing on the appearance of female public figures […] belongs to the media routine” (Jarlbro 2009, p. 59, my translation).

Allern and Pollack (2009, 2012) and Bromander (2012) consider the reasons for the harsh critique women politicians are subject to in Swedish media. Bromander (2012) suggests that “female” scandals sell better; thus, media are more eager to “hunt” women politicians than their male colleagues. Allern and Pollack (2009), in turn, suggest that

the limit of tolerance concerning breaches against norms is lower for women than for men; amongst others because women are expected to show more empathy, to be more expressive and less instrumental than men. Therefore the reactions against women who do not live up to these expectations are harsher (Allern and Pollack 2009, p. 15).

Analyzing political scandals where women politicians were condemned for their alleged immoral actions, Kroon Lundell and Ekström (2008) find that media tend to visualize women politicians by either emphasizing their femininity or de-emphasizing it by downplaying conventional feminine attractiveness. The authors point to three complex contextual factors that, in their opinion, may influence the ways in which gendering of women in politics is achieved: 1) the male-dominated media culture (especially the domination of men in editorial positions), 2) the women’s alleged (in)abilities to conform to conventional standards of attractiveness, and 3) the politicians’ previous relations with the media.

Regarding the strategies politicians use in dealing with the media, and in particular with press photographers, Kroon Lundell (2010) finds that Swedish politicians feel powerless in relation to their mediatized image but try to manage their appearance to keep to an “ordinary” image. They even manage gender so as not to invite sexual interpretations.

\(^{18}\) Gudrun Schyman has been the leader of Feministiskt initiativ/The Feminist Initiative since 2013 (also from 2005 to 2011). She was the leader of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party from 1993 to 2003.
2.2. Main concepts

Mediatization of politics

The key question in studies of gendered mediation of politics is “who leads and who follows” in the “power-play between politicians and journalists” (Ross 2010a, p. 274), and it is the latter who are often accused by the scholars of creating such patterns of representation that can be labeled as gendered. Some scholars view the media as some kind of “aggressors” constructing gender stereotypes and myths about “victimized” female politicians who are doing their best but not succeeding in applying proactive strategies to counteract the media. For example, Ross (2002) describes the female politicians’ views on their interrelations with the media in different contexts (Great Britain, South Africa and Australia) and finds that in all studied places female politicians have to play by the media’s rules and not vice versa. Moreover, the higher the position of authority a female politician holds, the worse the position of the media in relation to her is, i.e., she becomes even more scrutinized by the media and her actions become more exaggerated (Ross 2002). However, Ross’ more recent research (2010a) conducted in New Zealand, where she interviewed both female and male members of the Parliament, shows that both female and male politicians generally agree that their relations with the media are collegial, although in a situation of a political scandal the media might turn “from watchdogs into attack dogs” (p. 280).

Journalist–politician interrelations, thus, can be analyzed as a struggle for power, despite that the media and politics are so closely connected that researchers talk about the “mutual interweaving” and “interpenetrating” of the media and political spheres (Edin and Widestedt 2010; also Cook 2005). This interweaving is gendered: “[m]eaning, media and politics become blurred, but arguably in highly gendered ways” (Holmes 2007, p. 12).

According to Ross, “media do have a negative effect on the democratic process through their insistence on privileging their own perspectives above those of the political actors they purport to cover” (Ross 2002, p. 163). She calls media “both modern agenda-setter for the 21st century and orthodox gatekeeper of traditional social morals and values,” and states that the end result of both impulses is the presentation of a world dominated by men and male concerns where women’s voices and women’s perspectives are marginal and peripheral to the main business of the day: history is made every day; herstory struggles to make the back page (Ross 2002, p. 163).
Taking into account how powerful the media appear in forming political opinions (Asp 1986), the discussion of gendering of politics and politicians can be placed within the broader context, namely, the context of mediatization of politics, as long as it concerns the influence the media have on the politicians and the political processes. Mediatization of politics is here understood from an institutional perspective, as “the process by which the political institution is gradually becoming dependent on the media and their logic” (Hjarvard 2013, p. 43). According to Hjarvard, mediatization of politics is “characterized by a double-sided development”:

- On the one hand, the media “become integrated into the daily practices of political organizations and serve both internal and external communication tasks for political actors,”
- On the other hand, the media “have evolved into a partly independent institution in society that controls a vital political resource in a democracy: society’s collective attention. As a consequence, the media become partly responsible for various political functions, not least the setting of political agendas and the generation of public consent for political decisions and actions” (Hjarvard 2013, p. 43).

The process of mediatization of politics is more complex than the process of gendered mediation of politicians, as it refers to a broader spectrum of changes in the structures of communication and in political communication in particular, along with other process-related concepts, “such as Americanization, modernization, professionalization, presidentialization, personalization, [and] privatization” (Isotalus and Almonkari 2014, p. 289; see

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19 A similar definition is given by Strömbäck and Esser (2014b), who talk about the increase of the importance of the media and their “spill-over effects on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors” (p. 6, original in italics).


21 A distinction should be made between a more neutral process of mediation of messages through media versus mediatization, referring to the issue of the media’s power and influence (Strömbäck and Esser 2009, 2014b).
also Fornäs 1995, 2014). When it comes to the change in political communication, mediatization of politics implies tendencies such as personalization, celebritization, and tabloidization of politics. The borders between politics and entertainment are disappearing, and some researchers even talk about a new hybrid sphere referred to as “politantment” (Nieland 2008; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007; for more on the infotainment format of political coverage, see Moy, Mazzoleni and Rojas 2012). Politicians are becoming celebrities – their classy style, emotions, and private life are followed in a flow resembling a soap opera (van Zoonen 2003) and are more interesting for the public to follow and to identify with (and more beneficial for politicians to display) than political programs and policies. In order to adapt to the media logic, politicians’ messages have to be simplified, concretized, and personified, and the political style of individual politicians comes to the forefront (Strömbäck 2002, 2008). Political style (ways of speaking, acting, looking, displaying, and handling things), thus, acquires an equally legitimate place as political rationality (Corner and Pels 2003). The essence of the media power – the state of affairs where the media’s rules shape or even determine the functioning of political institutions – is labeled “media democracy” (Meyer 2002).

According to scholars, in the process of mediatization of politics “the political institution is gradually becoming dependent on the media and their logic” (Hjarvard 2013, p. 43). Media logic, the concept first introduced by Altheide and Snow (1979), has since been broadly applied (e.g., Altheide 2013; Asp 1990, 2014; Esser 2013; Mazzoleni 1987; Meyen, Thieroff and Strenger 2014). It has, at the same time, been criticized for being “elusive and vague, because it suggests a linearity and singularity that is not there, because it lends itself to technological determinism, or because the concept may hide important patterns of social interaction” (Strömbäck and Esser 2014b, p. 14; see also Couldry 2008; Donges and Jarren 2014; Landerer 2013; Schulz 2014). According to Strömbäck and Esser (2009), media logic is a way of seeing, covering, and interpreting social, cultural, and political phenomena. Asp (2014) sees (news) media logic as an institution in itself. Hjarvard (2013) refers to media logic as a “particular modus operandi” and

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22 However, as Voltmer (2013) rightly notes, “it is not the media as a means of communication that makes them a democratic force, but particular norms of their institutional structure and the quality of their performance that establish them as a cornerstone of democracy” (p. 23). See Mazzoleni and Schulz (1999) and Strömbäck and Esser (2014b) for discussions on the mediatization of politics’ potential challenges for democracy.
“specificities of the media” “that come to influence other institutions and culture and society in general” (p. 17), thus replying to the general critique of the media logic approach. According to Hjarvard (2013),

’Media logic’ does not suggest that there is a universal, linear, or single rationality behind all the media. It is to be understood as a conceptual shorthand for the various institutional, aesthetic, and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which the media distribute material and symbolic resources, and operate with the help of formal and informal rules (p. 17).

Rather than address the modus operandi or media logic as an institution, I will discuss (political journalism) cultures that shape the way the media and politics interact. I see no contradiction in combining the institutional conceptualization of mediatization of politics with a culturological perspective (for an overview of three main strands of mediatization conceptualizations, institutional, technological, and culturological, see Bolin 2014). Indeed, even within the institutional perspective on mediatization there is a tendency to define institutions from a sociological and historical perspective, as “informal routines, rules, norms and guidelines for behavior spanning across organizations” (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011, p. 93, with a reference to Ryfe 2006). Thus, the concept of journalism culture will be applied here to link the broad context of mediatization of politics with particular situational processes happening within the cultures of political journalism (see below).

One more concept coined by mediatization of politics scholars will be applied in this dissertation. Journalist–politician interrelations can be understood as a struggle between media and political logics. The political logic implies “formal and informal rules, routines and principles for thinking and acting” within the political sphere (Strömbäck and Esser 2014b, p. 14). As this study only takes into account the journalists’ perception of the political communication, when discussing political logic in the text I will refer to the journalists’ view on what this logic constitutes in a particular context, and how it is manifested in their interrelations with politicians. As the political logic will not be analyzed as such, I will not go indepth in defining dimensions of political logic (see Esser 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014b).

**Gendering**

As mentioned above, the patterns of representation of women and men politicians and of addressing the problem of gender inequality in the political sphere, have been described as the gendered mediation of politics (Gidengil...
Gendered mediation usually refers to the media representations, i.e. the outcomes of the journalistic practices. Although there are currently attempts to redefine the concept and emphasize that gendered mediation is a process (Wagner 2014), in this dissertation in order to accentuate the processual character of production of gendered representations of politicians and politics, I apply a different concept – gendering.

In gender media research, gendering is usually understood as an emphasis on a person’s gender without a specific relevance to the context (e.g. Devere and Davies 2006; Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008). This definition of gendering is somewhat contradictory. The term “gender” has appeared in order to point to the abstractedness and illusionary nature of the naturalized and often unquestioned concept of “sex” (Holmes 2007). In gender media research, gender is understood as “a set of overlapping and sometimes contradictory cultural descriptions and prescriptions referring to sexual difference” (van Zoonen 1994, p. 34) and a communicative process (Gamble and Gamble 2002). Thus, if gender is a critical concept, introduced specifically to avoid using the essentialist term “sex,” then it is somewhat limiting to apply the term gendering in order to describe only “negative” processes, such as spotlighting of sex or gender stereotyping.

My understanding of gendering is close to what Swedish scholars call ”könsmärkning” (Edström 2006; Löfgren Nilsson 2004), sex-marking, which refers to ideas, structures, and processes where the gender dimension has a meaning. As Maria Edström (2006) explains it, sex-marking has two sides – a quantitative one (where quantitative imbalance mirrors the societal perceptions of sex) and a qualitative one (where certain features are ascribed to persons of one or the other sex). Gendering, however, can be understood as an even broader process. In my opinion, it can also refer to the application of a gender perspective in journalist stories, where an event or a phenomenon is discussed from primarily a gender perspective.

Thus, I claim that gendering can be understood as a more inclusive term than gendered mediation and sex-marking, as it also includes a positive interpretation of the concept. Gendering is about making gender matter, focusing on it, while not necessarily leading to a construction of stereotypes. I suggest that gendering can also be understood as a recognition of gender biases and stereotypes. As such, phrases like “She is the first woman president” and “There is a clear gender hierarchy in the political sphere” can be interpreted as gendering of politics. The question is only whether gender is discussed as an issue in itself (as in the first phrase), or whether gender becomes a reason to discuss a bigger phenomenon (as in the second phrase).
Thus, by gendering I understand the perceived imprint of gender on the media portrayal of politics and politicians, as well as the processes whereby gendered representations materialize in the first place.

In a way gendering in journalistic discourse can be viewed in similar terms as discourses of policies. According to critical feminist scholars (Bacchi and Eveline 2010; Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008; Verloo and Lombardo 2007), gender policies are ambiguous in their character. On the one hand, policies are gendering in that they highlight the differences and reinforce the gendered vision of the world, and on the other, they problematize the gendered vision of the world (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, pp. 7, 18).

Therefore, I also suggest distinguishing between two main types of gendering in political journalism: “essentialist” and “reflexive.” By essentialist gendering, I take gendering as based on an understanding of gender as equal to sex. This process manifests in political journalism through irrelevant spotlighting of gender and gender stereotyping. Reflexive gendering, on the contrary, is based on an understanding of gender as a critical concept. It results in counter-stereotyping and gender-aware stories23 (see Table 1). Reflexive gendering can be understood along similar lines as gender mainstreaming,24 i.e., by pointing to the gender hierarchies and inequalities, it aims to problematize the gendered world and transform it by promoting gender-inclusiveness and gender-sensitivity (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, p. 2).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essentialist gendering</th>
<th>Reflexive gendering</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gender-spotlighting</td>
<td>Gender-aware stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>(gender as a personal feature)</td>
<td>(gender as an issue)</td>
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<td>Gender-stereotyping</td>
<td>Counter-stereotyping</td>
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Table 1. Manifestations of gendering in the content of political journalism. This distinction is based on the scheme denoting different kinds of gendered patterns (blatant and subtle stereotypes and gender-blind and gender-aware stories) introduced by the GMMP project (2010, pp. 46-55).

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23 Gender counter-stereotype – an image challenging stereotypes and prompting debate on topical gender issues. By gender-aware stories, I am referring to articles prompting debate on topical gender issues and critically approaching inequalities between women and men.

24 Gender mainstreaming – a process of integrating a gender perspective in activities, with the aim to achieve gender equality (Bacchi and Eveline 2010). For suggestions on gender mainstreaming in a European political sphere, see Leijenaar (1997), and in the Russian context, Liborakina (1996).
The distinction between essentialist and reflexive gendering is useful insofar as it doesn’t determine whether gendering practiced by journalists is conscious or unconscious. As we will be able to see from the coming empirical chapters, even essentialist gendering can be practiced by journalists consciously, and, thus, the production of stereotypes is not always explained by gender-blindness of media producers.

**Culture of political journalism**

Studies of gendered mediation of politicians and politics have turned to both the media representations of women and men politicians, and to the gendered media-politics interaction. However, with their focus on content and politicians’ perspectives, and not the journalists’ views on the gendered content and the process of its production, these studies provide only theoretical interpretations of the gendered character of journalism. Thus, there is a need to connect these theoretical reasons behind gendering of politicians and the lack of problematization of the political sphere’s gender imbalance in the political journalism with the journalistic practices as they are experienced by the journalists’ themselves.

For this reason, I chose to base this study on the perspectives suggested within the sub-field of journalism culture studies (Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Nygren 2012; Zelizer 2005). Journalism culture is described by scholars as “one of the resources journalists draw upon to coordinate their activities as reporters, photographers, and editors” (Zelizer 2005, p. 204), a “multidimensional lattice of meanings for all those involved” (p. 200). For analytical purposes it can be viewed as “a particular set of ideas and practices by which journalists legitimize their role in society and render their work meaningful” (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 369).

In my view, the concept of journalism culture is helpful for analyzing gendering and its modes of origin for several reasons. First, it builds a necessary contextualizing link between the global processes and the local con-

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25 Journalists’ conceptualizations of the texts they create, practices they are involved in, and the contexts within which these practices are situated are found in various theories, professionalization being one of the main theoretical perspectives (Hallin and Mancini 2004; Schudson 2003; Schudson and Andersson 2009; Weaver et al. 2007; Örnebring 2009a). However, the analytical model developed by scholars conducting comparative studies of journalism cultures (e.g. Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Nygren 2012) was found to be more applicable in this study.
texts: if mediatization of politics provides a very abstract general level, comparative journalism culture studies are helpful for establishing the link between the national context and the origins of a particular type of gendering within it. Second, it places gendering in the framework of as different components of journalism culture as ethical ideology, institutional roles of journalists, and epistemological beliefs (Hanitzsch 2007). Thus, it allows for a broader perspective than that suggested in the previous research focusing separately on media logic, media organization, or individual characteristics of journalists as driving forces of gendering.

Third, the concept of journalism culture is helpful insofar as it clarifies the relationship between the actors (i.e. journalists) and the structures (i.e. political journalism). The problems associated with this relationship are often emphasized in mediatization of politics studies (e.g., Meyen, Thieroff and Strenger 2014 suggest applying actor-structure theory in order to tackle the problem of defining the role of actors within the structure). From the perspective of the journalism culture, it is not only the journalism culture (structure) that shapes the ideas and practices of the journalists but also the journalists (actors) who shape the journalism culture they inhabit (Zelizer 2005). It is suggested that it is possible to study journalism culture by focusing on the perceptions, views and visions of the journalists inhabiting it (Hanitzsch 2007, 2011).

While journalism culture is a concept commonly applied in gender media studies, it hasn’t yet been applied to analyzing gendering in political journalism as a process, but rather focused on gender relations within the media organization (de Bruin and Ross 2004; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Edström 2011; Melin 1991, 2008; Smirnova 2012; Torkkola and Ruoho 2009; van Zoonen 1998). Swedish scholar Margareta Melin used the concept “journalist culture” already in 1991 (Melin 1991), defining it as “production and reproduction of meaning and ideology for a particular professional group – journalists” (cited in Melin 2008, p. 55). In her recent study Melin (2008) compares British and Swedish gendered journalism cultures, which constitute arenas of a “constant fight for the symbolic power of creating the meaning of journalism” (p. 70). This fight, according to Melin, can be interpreted as a struggle between the

26 For a discussion on the contextualization of journalists’ universal values and norms, as well as global media challenges (e.g. commercialization) in national journalism cultures see Hanitzsch and Donsbach (2012) as an overview. See also Berkowitz, Limor and Singer (2004), Hanitzsch (2011), Hanitzsch et al. (2011), Heikkilä and Kunnelius (2008), Lo, Chan and Pan (2005), Mellado et al. (2012), Obijiofor and Hanusch (2011), Preston (2009), van Dalen (2012), Weaver (1998), Zhu et al. (1997).
sexes (p. 123), i.e., dominant groups consist of men who have the power to construct *doxa* (news values, role perceptions, ethical codes etc.), but women can use specific tactics to try to change their conditions.

Research from different countries shows that journalism is an en-gendered practice (de Bruin and Ross 2004). Löfgren Nilsson (2010) suggests that gender expectations are embedded in daily practice, routines, and rituals, and that practice and cultural meanings interact with the gendered division of labor in the newsroom. She highlights the male homosociality and the female heterosociality\(^{27}\) at work, and concludes that the gendered culture is “part of both the gender logic at large in society and the gender logic in the field of journalism” (Löfgren Nilsson 2010, p. 14). Smirnova (2012) concludes that gendered professional practices in Russian media bear a resemblance to what has been revealed in the previous research in other countries (de Bruin and Ross 2004; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Edström 2011; Melin 1991, 2008; Torkkola and Ruoho 2009; van Zoonen 1998), namely that professional values are often perceived as “according better” with masculinity.

As this research does not concern journalism in general, but rather one particular part of it – political journalism – I will discuss cultures of political journalism in quality press constituting a part of media cultures\(^{28}\) (Couldry and Hepp 2012, p. 253) and journalism cultures (Hanitzsch 2007; Zelizer 2005). I view culture of political journalism as a combination of the concepts of political communication culture (which should also include politicians’ perspectives)\(^{29}\) (Pfetsch and Esser 2012, p. 34) and journalism culture concepts. The concept of political journalism culture in quality press, thus, on the one hand marks the delimitations of the study (it focuses on a particular journalistic genre and type of media), and on the other hand, links the study with the process of mediatization of politics (as a background

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\(^{27}\) Homosociality and heterosociality (Lipman-Blumen 1976) are referred to as the constructions of gender within the nonsexual interpersonal relations. Homosociality refers to the nonsexual attractions held by men or women to the people of the same sex, and heterosociality, accordingly, to the nonsexual attractions to the people of the other sex (Bird 1996, p. 121).

\(^{28}\) Media culture is a broader term than the concept of journalism culture. It refers to “any culture whose primary resources of meaning are mediated or provided by technologies of media communication” (Couldry and Hepp 2012, p. 253; also Snow 1983).

\(^{29}\) According to Pfetsch and Esser (2012), “studies on political communication culture focus on orientations of both politicians and journalists and investigate the interaction norms underlying their mutual exchange” (p. 34, original italics).
against which gendering is taking place) highlighting the power-structure of the politics–journalism interaction.

Political news journalism can be understood as a “specialized practice of reporting on political campaigns, elections, and government functions” (Mills-Brown 2008). I claim that political journalism also forms a specific culture, with its own ethical ideology, specific understanding of professional roles, and views on epistemology. As political journalism covers both local, regional, national, and international events, I consider both political and international journalists writing about politics to be representatives of the culture of political journalism, with a reservation for the differences concerning their practices of interaction with politicians and the conditions surrounding them.30 This culture has gender specifics, i.e., it not only covers predominantly men but is also dominated by male reporters and editors (Djerf Pierre 2007, 2011; Gallagher 2005; GMMP 2010; Klaus 2009; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; van Zoonen 1998).

Political journalism from a gender perspective can be understood not only as journalism about politics, but also more specifically as “gender-politics,” which manifests in all stages of news story production, and operates through “a whole series of discourses, norms, unspoken assumptions and empathetic identifications” (Kitzinger 1998, p. 201). News, and especially political news, reconstructs the dominant cultural assumptions, which are determined by race, gender, class, wealth, power and nationality (Gill 2007, p. 114). In this sense, as Ross and Comrie (2012) comment, “sex, politics and news work together to produce a gendered news agenda which mostly disadvantages women” (p. 981).

The cultures of political journalism, interestingly enough, are not only the source of the mediatization of politics, but also its object. Mediatization

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30 The difference between the practices of political and international journalists is mainly discussed in the research from an economic perspective. While political news is expanding in circulation and steadily gaining popularity, which makes it less affected by budget cuts than other beats (Kavanagh 2011; McNair 2000), international departments all over the world are hit by the budget cuts, which leads to a decrease of the amount of foreign correspondents and foreign news (van Dalen 2012; Wu and Hamilton 2004). In Russia, for example, there is a visible decrease in the number of journalists covering foreign news and especially in the number of correspondents working abroad (Anikina and Johansson 2013). This tendency is also confirmed by the interviewees in this study. The differences in the working conditions of journalists covering domestic and international politics are discussed where relevant in the analytical chapters.
of political journalism implies that while journalism has become more independent of the political institutions, “it has also become more attuned to the various demands of the media industries […] [A]s such we may think of journalism as a particular profession with partial independence within the broader institution of the media” (Hjarvard 2013, p. 54). According to Kammer (2013), “journalism increasingly subsumes itself to the logic of the media” (p. 141), which implies that the imperatives of the media institution become dominating and journalism starts to serve the media, which leads to its increasing commercialization and a simultaneous multi- and de-skilling of journalists. A similar position is expressed by Vartanova (2013, p. 257), who suggests that one of the key problems of the Russian journalism is the conflict between the social duty, societal mission, and creative character of journalism on the one hand, and the demands of the growing media industry, i.e., economic efficiency, commercialization of the content, and commodification of the audiences, on the other.

2.3. Analytical model

The analytical framework used is borrowed from the comparative journalism culture studies (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012). The comparative perspective is helpful as it “forces us to revise our interpretations against cross-cultural differences and inconsistencies” (Esser and Hanitzsch 2012a, p. 4), prevents us from over-generalizing, and helps us to remain critical to the Western conceptual thinking and normative assumptions (Curran and Park 2000; Esser and Hanitzsch 2012a, 2012b; Livingstone 2003). Comparative studies in the media studies are much advocated (Blumler, McLeod and Rosengren 1992, Livingstone 2003) as they “denaturalize social relations and help us understand that they are historically constructed, culturally infected, and mutable” (Sreberny 2004, p. 83). According to Fornäs (2008), contextualization has become one of the main currents in the contemporary cultural research with its strive “to analyze the contents and meanings of media texts and genres in a wide set of contexts” (p. 896).

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Commercialization, according to McQuail (2005), involves the increased influence of the market on media and their content. Commercial considerations tend to outcompete traditional news values (Kammer 2013), and some news values, such as newsworthiness, transform from being an occupational instrument to a means of securing customers (Örnebring 2009a). The actions intended to boost profit often interfere with the journalists’ role of maximizing public understanding of events and issues (McManus 2009, p. 219).
Comparative investigation of the journalism cultures has a long tradition. The comparative paradigm in journalism research started from an inclined paradigm, “The U.S. and the Rest” (1950-60s), and was then followed by the stages of “The North and the South” (1970s), “The West and the West” (mid 1980s to late 1990s), and “The West and the Global” (after the end of the Cold War) (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012).

Comparative journalism culture studies have focused on different domains: journalists’ professional orientations and their everyday practices, the content journalists produce, and the nature and routines of editorial processes (e.g. Hanitzsch and Mellado 2011; Hanitzsch et al. 2010; Nygren 2012). One of the largest scopes of data on national journalism cultures is presented by the international project *The Worlds of Journalism Study*, which includes 18 groups of researchers from different countries. The project, led by German scholar, Thomas Hanitzsch focuses on journalists' values, and aims to see which aspects of journalism culture are perceived most differently among journalists from different countries (The Worlds of Journalism Study 2014).

Though comparative journalism culture studies are topical and efficient, they often face the inevitable challenges of any comparative research (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Hanitzsch and Esser 2012). First, it has proved difficult to avoid conceptual analytical models (mostly Western). Second, variation within one culture may be greater than that across the cultural borders (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Hanitzsch and Esser 2012). As such, the national level of comparison (compared to regional or local) “offers a convenient shorthand for comparative analysis” (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012, p. 262). However, differences and similarities between the cultures may be seen as caused by features of respective media systems, but they may also result from diffusion across national boundaries (Couldry and Hepp 2012; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Schudson 2001). Couldry and Hepp (2012) suggest that due to the process of media globalization, “we have to be wary of reducing all cultural patterns in media communication to those that can be characterized as national” (p. 249).

Moreover, the culture of political journalism is not homogeneous, as it is a multi-level structure. According to Zelizer, “the construct of culture offers a way to repair the long-standing neglect of journalism’s contradictions while attending to the flux of its territory [...T]he culture of journalism pro-

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vides a way to both think about journalism more broadly and in conjunction with its internal variance” (2005, p. 198). Indeed, what is focused on in comparative journalism culture studies is not only the differences between the cultures, but also the inner heterogeneity, which allows for a deeper analysis of each journalism culture terrain – be it national culture, regional culture, culture of a newsroom, or culture of a smaller group of journalists within a newsroom.

Hanitzsch and Donsbach (2012) suggest to address the variations among journalism cultures on individual, organizational, national, and transnational levels (p. 271). This dissertation takes into account all these levels. However, the main framework for the analysis is built around the three components of the journalism culture, suggested by Hanitzsch (2007): ethical ideologies, institutional roles, and epistemological beliefs.

Gendering in the framework of the journalism culture components

Analyzing gendering through the prism of journalism culture allows us to understand whether and how gendering is situated in the journalists’ system of conceptualizations of the broader, national and international, context and the cultures of political journalism the journalists themselves shape. The journalists’ conceptualizations may be viewed as representing the cultures (the broader cultural context and the culture of political journalism) they are situated within. In this sense, culture is viewed in hermeneutical terms, as a production of meaning, where meaning is something that builds on interactive and mediated interplay between different subjects (Fornäs 2012), and where journalists are viewed as “not only conveyors of information but also as producers of culture” (Zelizer 2005, p. 208).

Journalism culture is deconstructed differently in the journalism culture studies.33 The choice of the analytical model was dictated by the themes extracted from the interviews (see Chapter 3). As a result, the analytical model suggested by Hanitzsch (2007) was deemed the most suitable for analysis of gendering and its modes of origin. Hanitzsch (2007) suggests viewing journalism culture as being constituted by 1) ethical ideologies, 2) institutional roles, and 3) epistemological beliefs of journalists.

33 See Hanitzsch (2007), Hanitzsch et al. (2011), Hanitzsch and Donsbach (2012), and Nygren (2012) for different suggestions on deconstructing journalism cultures, e.g., viewing cultures as consisting of ideas, practices, and products, analyzing the levels of influence on and within the journalism culture, and studying cognitive, evaluative, and performative dimensions of the journalism culture.
Ethical ideologies refers to the culture-specific journalists’ responses to ethical problems (such a focus, according to Hanitzsch (2007), appears to be a more “humanocentric strategy” than focusing on the distinctive content of ethical values in journalism). The institutional roles dimension describes the journalists’ ideas about the role of journalism “both in terms of its normative responsibilities and its functional contribution to society” (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 371). The institutional roles are viewed in three dimensions: interventionism (the “extent to which journalists pursue a particular mission and promote certain values,” ibid, p. 372), power distance (“the journalist’s position toward loci of power in society,” ibid, p. 373), and market orientation (“the primary social focus that guides news production, ibid, p. 374). “The epistemology constituent of journalism culture,” according to Hanitzsch (2007), “is concerned with the philosophical underpinnings of journalism that are instrumental in doing news work” (p. 375). This dimension concerns the journalists’ beliefs about their own objectivity34 and the influence of their individual features on the product of the culture of political journalism.

The context within which the culture of journalism functions is key to the comparative studies of journalism cultures. While journalism cultures in different countries have similarities, “national journalism cultures reflect the historical differences between journalists from different countries” (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012, p. 262, original italics). Societal influences and especially political systems largely define the variance between the cultures of journalism around the world (Berkowitz et al. 2004; Heikkilä and Kunelius 2008; Weaver 1998; Örnebring 2009b). In this study, the journalists’ perceptions of the influences of particular geographical and temporary contexts on the processes of gendering in political journalism are of major interest. Such a contextualization allows for overcoming the common prob-

34 There are different ways of approaching the concept of objectivity (see Hopmann, Van Aelst and Legnante 2011). Usually the two key components implied are the obligation to fairness and unbiasedness and the separation of facts from values (Asp 2014). However, as we will be able to see from the coming chapters, the traveling notion of objectivity (Schudson 2001) is conceptualized differently in different cultures of political journalism. Moreover, objectivity has an ambiguous character. On the one hand, it is regarded by journalists as an ethical ideal, and on the other, it refers to the epistemological beliefs of journalists (Hanitzsch 2013). This is why objectivity in this study appears as a subject of concern to journalists in both Chapter 5 (as a part of ethical ideology) and Chapter 7 (as a part of epistemological beliefs). See Allan (1998) for a discussion on the (en)gendered nature of objectivity.
lems of comparative studies, i.e., theoretical and methodological universalism and non-recognition of cultural specificity, as well as the risk of viewing “other” contexts through Western lenses (Curran and Park 2000; Livingstone 2003).

Illustration 1 visualizes how the analytical model is applied in the empirical chapters.

Illustration 1. Analytical model.
3. Methodology

This chapter discusses the materials of this study, research methodology, and the researcher’s self-reflexivity. The primary material for the research consists of interviews with political journalists. The chapter begins by discussing how cases and informants were chosen, and describes the method of data collection and use. It then turns to a discussion on my position and involvement in the production of information. The final part of the chapter briefly discusses the secondary materials, which were collected in order to acquire more information about journalism cultures, gender and politics in the two countries.

3.1. Primary material: interviews with journalists

Explaining the choices

The choice of the journalism culture as the analytical framework pre-defined that the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering acquired through the interviews will constitute the primary material of the study, as “the culture of journalism is given shape by the people who inhabit its terrain” (Zelizer 2005, p. 205). The journalists’ perceptions of their roles and practices constitute an important object of study, allowing to better understand the processes both inside and outside the media. According to Hanitzsch et al. (2010), studying journalists’ perceptions “renders observable social structures that are otherwise invisible to researchers” (p. 18).

As the major focus of this dissertation is on how journalists themselves conceptualize gendering, I chose to apply the ethnographic approach, meaning that it is the journalists’ ideas, views, experiences, and conceptualizations that are central to the analysis (for a similar approach, see Löfgren Nilsson 2010; also Lindlof and Taylor 2002, p. 173). I chose to conduct

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35 The term “journalists” in this dissertation refers to all the interviewees irrespective of the position they hold within the media. When citing the interviewees, I will refer to the exact position the interviewee held at the moment of the interview (e.g. “political reporter” or “editor of political department”).

36 For example, The Worlds of Journalism Study focuses on ethical orientations of journalists, determinants of journalists’ professional autonomy, and journalists’ trust in public institutions; Knoppers and Elling (2004) analyze discursive strategies employed by Dutch sports journalists in explaining the exclusion of women’s sports coverage in the selection process; Donsbach and Patterson (2004) analyze political news journalists’ visions of their partisanship, professionalism, and political roles.
semi-structured interviews, as they are “particularly suited for studying people’s understanding of the meanings in their lived world, describing their experiences and self-understanding, and clarifying and elaborating their own perspective on their lived world” (Kvale 1996, p. 105), and allow for learning about “events, processes, or objects that exist outside the immediate interview context” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002, p. 172).

With the choice of Russia and Sweden as the two research locations, I gained more information about the various interpretations of gendering in the two different contexts. Russia and Sweden can be considered countries representing different political (a federal semi-presidential republic vs. a parliamentary representative democratic constitutional monarchy), cultural (a “passion for equality” vs. “patriarchal renaissance”), and media contexts (the government-commercial Eurasian model vs. Democratic Corporatist turning to the Liberal Model) (see Chapter 4). However, recent decades have blurred the differences between the nation states, moreover that the media in the former “West” and “East” face the global challenges (Couldry and Hepp 2012). The once very clear boundary has supposedly become more flexible, allowing for uniting previously “incomparable” countries into the framework of one conventional Baltic Sea region (Bolin et al. 2005). This has paved the way for applying a comparative perspective to the transformations taking place in the two countries.37

I chose to interview journalists working for the quality press. While it is difficult to differentiate between quality and non-quality media, the media outlet itself usually makes a claim to be a “quality brand” (Anderson, Ogola and Williams 2014), promising the audience a journalistic product of a certain quality. To a large extent, this informs my choice of which newspapers and magazines to use as research locations. Division between the niches of mass media and quality media, according to researchers, is also informed by

37 Interest in this type of research is growing. Russian and Swedish journalism cultures have been addressed in cross-national studies (Anikina, Dobek-Ostrowska and Nygren 2013; Nygren 2012), where Swedish, Russian (and Polish) journalists’ interpretation of the world, of the professional ideology and roles, of the relation to external power and audiences, and of the journalistic practices are explored. Such studies, in their turn, aim at de-Westernization of the comparative studies and transcultural studies (Couldry and Hepp 2012; Curran and Park 2000; Robinson and Buzzanell 2012; Wasserman and de Beer 2009). Transculturation (Cerwonka 2008), a high level of reflexivity upon the context (Fornäs 2008), and self-reflexivity on the part of both Western and Eastern gender media scholars (Liljeström 2005, 2010) are all suggested as ways to overcome the East-West divide.
certain standards, i.e., reliability of facts, competence of experts, pluralism of opinions, argumentation of viewpoints, and non-engagement and non-biasness, which makes the quality media a preferable terrain for the public dialogue (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007). Quality media have their own “topics, rules and conventions, as well as interrelated status, values and approaches” (Costera Meijer 2012, p. 755, with a reference to Leggatt 1996). They require that journalists present non-standard, original opinions, ideas, and approaches to problems (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007). In addition, the interviewed journalists were asked to define what quality is (for a similar approach, see Bogart 2004; for a quality experience approach, where quality is instead defined by users, see Costera Meijer 2012), and, more specifically, whether and how the quality standards complement the overall influence of the culture of political journalism on gendering. The sample in both of the countries was designed to include different quality outlets – common interest, with a focus on business and politics, and daily and weekly. These high circulation media are influential and represent the broader spectrum of the quality press in the two countries.

**Outlets in Russia**

*Kommersant*. This daily business newspaper was launched in 1992 (from 1989 to 1992 it was published as a weekly). It has 16 pages, and is published in A2 (broadsheet) format. It has a circulation of 120,000 (Media Atlas 2014). The chief editor of the newspaper is Mikhail Mikhailin. In the beginning of the 1990s when the newspaper appeared, it aimed at a completely new audience in the post-Soviet society – businessmen. They required business information, something no other media at the time provided. From the very beginning, the newspaper was oriented towards the Western newspaper formats: strict structure and style, strict division between facts and opinions, objectivity as the main value, and a horizontal structure of newsroom management (http://www.kommersant.ru/about). Since 2006, the owner of the newspaper has been businessman Alisher Usmanov38 (a majority shareholder of “Metalloinvest,” a Russian industrial conglomerate; a co-owner of Russia’s second-largest mobile telephone operator MegaFon; a chairman of Gazprominvest Holdings, the investment holding subsidiary of Russia’s state-owned gas company; the largest investor of “Mail.ru Group” funds; and a holder of shares in a number of international technology companies, including Facebook and Twitter). Today “Kommersant” is a publishing house, which unites daily *Kommersant*, weeklies

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38 Before 2006 it was owned by infamous Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky.
Kommersant. Vlast’. This weekly magazine about domestic and international politics was launched in 1997. It has 80 pages and is published in A4 format. It has a circulation of 60,000 (Media Atlas 2014). The acting chief editor of the magazine is Azer Mursaliev (from 1999 to 2011 it was Maxim Kovalsky). The magazine not only discusses the key events of the week in political life, it also offers its readers expert analysis of events in political and economic spheres, as well as publicity and popularity ratings of politicians and political parties, and economic forecasts. Sixty six percent of its readers are men, and 34% are women. 14% of the readers belong to the age group 16-24, 25% are 25-34 years old, 17% are 35-44, 25% are 45-54, and 19% belong to the group 55+. Thirty percent of the readers define their income as high, 29% as medium, and 12% as low. Sixty three percent of the readers have higher education. 37% hold positions in top-management, 20% are specialists, 16% are workers, 9% are managers, and 5% are students. 20% of the circulation is subscription based, and 80% in retail (http://www.kommersant.ru/about/vlast).

Novye izvestiya. A daily common-interest newspaper that was launched in 1997, when a group of journalists left the newspaper Izvestiya (“Novye” means “new”). It has 8 pages and is published in A2 (broadsheet) format. It has a circulation of 108,200 (Media Atlas 2014). The editor-in-chief is Vladimir Yakov. Independent of any political ties and objectivity are the two main principles of the newspaper. The newspaper has a strong social orientation – it actively organizes social campaigns (http://www.newizv.ru/society/2012-11-01/172409-15-let-novye.html). Its publishing house “Novye izvestiya” has around 60 employees. The owner of the publishing house is “Alliance” company led by the Bazhaev family (which has shares in various industries, including oil refining, food, finance, textile, and building construction).
Moskovskie novosti. The last issue of this common-interest newspaper was published in late January 2014. In February 2014 its owner, news agency RIA Novosti (in turn wholly owned by the federal government and currently merging with other media to become an International Information Agency Russia Today), announced that the newspaper will not be published anymore. The newspaper had 16 pages and was published in K3 format. It was published 3 times a week and had a circulation of 30,000 (Media Atlas 2014). The weekly supplement had a circulation 100,000 (Media Atlas 2014). Its editor-in-chief was Vladimir Gurevitch. The newspaper had a rich history. It first appeared in 1930 as an English-language newspaper Moscow Daily News for foreign specialists visiting the USSR. From 1980 it was published in Russian. In 1990 it became the first politically and economically independent Russian media. After changes of ownership and pauses in publications in the 2000s, ownership went back to the RIA Novosti (it used to belong to its predecessor news agency APN), which re-launched the newspaper in 2011. The newspaper defined its readers as “Westernized” middle-class people oriented towards European values, and men and women in age 25-45 with higher education and high social status (http://www.mn.ru/docs/about.html).

The New Times. Weekly common-interest and political magazine. It has 72 pages and is published in A4 format. Circulation: 50,000 (Media Atlas 2014). The editor-in-chief since 2009 is Evgeniya Albats. Originally published in the Soviet Union since 1943 under the title Novoe vremya, today’s format began in 1998, and the English title was adopted in 2007. It is distributed by subscription and at retail. Until 2013 it was published by the Lesnevskie family. In September 2013 Irena Lesnevskaya donated the magazine to its editor-in-chief Yevgenia Albats, who stated that from that moment the magazine belongs to the society. It is currently published through donations and money coming from subscriptions (the magazine runs a popular campaign under the motto “Freedom of expression. Expensive. Subscription-2014”) and is also supported by the non-commercial organization Press Freedom Support Foundation. The magazine defines freedom of expression as its main value (http://www.newtimes.ru/foundation/). It is famous for critical investigative publications as well as for its publications of political expert opinions.

Forbes. In 2004 Russia became the fifth country where international business magazine Forbes established an outlet. In Russia it is published by Axel Springer Russia, a daughter company of the German holding Axel Springer AG. This monthly magazine contains 288 pages and is published in A4 format. The editor-in-chief is Elmar Murtazaev (from 2011 to January 2014 it was Elizaveta Osetinskaya). Circulation: 105,000 (Media Atlas 2014). It is distributed both by subscription and retail. The
magazine is aimed first and foremost at businessmen, and focuses on politics, business and investment ideas. It has a special supplement aimed at women in business – *Forbes.Woman*.

**Outlets in Sweden**

*Dagens Nyheter*. Daily morning newspaper. Launched in Stockholm in 1864 and from the beginning distributed all over the country (Gustafsson and Rydén 2010, pp. 102-104). Since 2004 the newspaper has been published in an A3 (tabloid) format. Daily circulation: 282,800 (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/korta-fakta/). The editor-in-chief and legally responsible publisher is Peter Wolodarski (from 2009 to 2013 it was Gunilla Herlitz). The newspaper is owned by Sweden-based media holding Bonnier AB (which has a majority of the newspaper shares since 1909), and it has 400 employees (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/korta-fakta/). The newspaper is labeled “independent liberal” (“oberoende liberal”), as it states that it is independent of political parties, organizations, and economic power spheres. It claims objectivity as one of its main values (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/) and promotes the values of the open society, humanism and tolerance (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/dns-publicistiska-uppdrag/). It aims to not only report on events and provide forum for current debates, but to also be a driving force of debates (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/dns-publicistiska-uppdrag/). The readers of the newspaper are defined as people with higher education and high income (http://info.dn.se/annonsera/malgrupperoch-rackvidd/malgruppsbeskrivningar/), who are curious, eager to learn new things, and who possess modern urban values (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/dns-publicistiska-uppdrag/). Ninety-seven percent of the distribution is subscription based, and 3% is sold at retail (http://info.dn.se/info/om-oss/korta-fakta/).

*Svenska Dagbladet*. Daily morning newspaper. Launched in 1884 as a new “patriotic” paper and competitor to *Dagens Nyheter* (Gustafsson and Rydén 2010, p. 114). Circulation: 159,700 (http://www.ts.se/mediefakta-upplagor/snabbfakta/?mc=001848). The editor-in-chief and legally responsible publisher is Fredric Karén (from 2001 to 2013 it was Lena K. Samuelsson). The newspaper defines its position as “independently moderate,” implying that it is independent from the political parties, but “adheres to the liberal conservatism of the Moderate Party” (http://www.svd.se/special/svd_info/svd-in-brief_1647817.svd). The newspaper claims that it promotes democratic rights and freedoms and acts as an open forum for free debate, defending the integrity of the individual (http://www.svd.se/special/svd_info/svds-publicistiska-uppdrag_2508667.svd). The newspaper is owned by Norway-based media holding Schibsted (since 1998) and has 270 employees (http://www.svd.se/special/svd_info/svd-in-brief_1647817.svd). Fifty one percent of its readers are men and 49% women. 60,3%
of the readers live in Stockholm. The readers define their income as high, have higher education, and are active consumers. An average reader is 50 years old and sees her/himself as a holder of cosmopolitan values (https://kundservice.svd.se/annonsera/Forsaljningsstatistik/).

Fokus. Weekly news magazine. Launched in 2005. Circulation: 30,200 (http://www.ts.se/mediefakta-upplagor/snabbfakta?mc=006137). The editor-in-chief and legally responsible publisher is Martin Ahlquist. The magazine is politically independent and has no connections to any parties or organizations. Its main aim is to summarize and interpret the main events of the week and, although its main focus is on political events, the magazine covers a broad spectrum of topics (http://www.fokus.se/om-fokus/). It is owned by FPG Media AB (http://www.allabolag.se/5566739065/verksamhet), where the major shareholders are Nordstjernan (investment company), the Johan Björkman Foundation (Johan Björkman used to be an editor-in-chief of Veckans Affärer magazine – see below), and Tagehus (a company investing in different types of businesses, such as real estate, other businesses, and aircraft) controlled by the Ax:son Johnson family. Its readers are urban men and women (68% live in big cities) in the ages of 25-64 (75% of the readers) with an interest in news and society as a whole, who define their income as high and have higher education (76%). The majority of them are decision makers and formal or informal opinion makers. Fifty five percent of the readers and male and 45% female (http://www.fokus.se/annonsera/english/).

Veckans Affärer. Business weekly magazine. Launched in 1965. Its format was inspired by American BusinessWeek (Gustafsson and Rydén 2010, p. 264). Circulation: 16,500 (http://www.ts.se/mediefakta-upplagor/snabbfakta?mc=005665). The chief editor and legally responsible publisher is Ulf Skarin (from 2009 to 2011 it was Anna Körnung, and from 2011 to 2012 Pontus Schultz). The magazine specializes in analysis of the economic world, and publishes expert opinions and interviews with businessmen, top-managers, and politicians (http://www.va.se/Mer_VA/Pre-numerera/). It is owned by Bonnier AB and is published by its division Bonnier Business Press. Since 1997, it has regularly published a list of the most powerful women experts in the Swedish economic world (this was inspired by the magazine Fortune, http://www.resume.se/nyheter/tidskrifter/2010/04/14/va-chef-natmobbad-av-egna/) and has a special section for businesswomen called “VA Kvinna” (http://www.va.se/ledarskap/va-kvinna/). The magazine defines its readers as highly qualified decision-makers, who have a professional interest in trade, companies, and stock (http://www.va.se/Mer_VA/annonsera/).
The choice of informants was conducted based on the following distinguished conditions of the informants (what Lindlof and Taylor (2002) label “theoretical construct sampling”): involved in the production of original news stories on internal and/or international politics; preferably were employed by the media on a permanent basis as reporters or department editors;\(^\text{39}\) recently published an article(s) where gender was a theme, focus, or angle of the article (where a female or male politician was discussed in terms of femininity/masculinity, in connection to feminism etc., or where the issue of gender in politics was a main focus otherwise). Preliminary textual analysis informed the choice of potential interviewees. This first-round sampling was later accomplished by snowball sampling (Lindlof and Taylor 2002), whereas I received contact information of other potential informants from the interviewees.

Among the Russian interviewees there were 7 women and 14 men. Among the Swedish interviewees there were 10 women and 9 men. Although initially aimed to maintain gender balance among the interviewees, I later chose to not intervene in the flow of theoretical construct, followed by snow-ball sampling (I discuss the possible implications of these choices below). The gender imbalance among the Russian interviewees can be explained by the representation of women and men in the political and international departments of the outlets chosen for this study at the time the field work was conducted, as well as by visible homosociality at the work places, manifested in the way the interviewees gave recommendations on what other colleagues to contact (although they noted from the beginning that I would benefit from talking to women, they gave me contacts of their male colleagues). In the Swedish case, the majority of interviewees being women does not correspond to the existing data on the amount of women and men covering political issues (only 37% of the news on political issues is reported by women – GMMP 2010). The results of the sampling can be explained first and foremost by the way the professional networks functioned here: unlike in the Russian case, both female and male interviewees tended to give me contacts of their female colleagues.

\(^\text{39}\) Reporters and editors were chosen as the key informants, as these are the most common professional roles occupied by journalists (e.g., among all Russian journalists 53.4% work as reporters, and 31% fulfill the roles of editors – Anikina and Johansson 2013).
Collecting material

I conducted qualitative semi-structured interviews, where a researcher “encourages others to freely articulate their interest and experiences” (Lindlof and Taylor 2002, p. 170), and where the preliminarily marked sequence of themes to be covered and suggested sets of questions allow the researcher to lead the conversation in the relevant direction, while providing openness to changes in the sequence of questions and their forms (Kvale 1996). A set of questions was prepared in Russian and in English⁴⁰ (see Appendix 1 for the English version). The questions were used in a flexible way – some of them could be dropped or replaced with others, and their order was changed from interview to interview in order to maintain conversational flow.

The main part of the fieldwork was conducted in November 2011 – May 2012.⁴¹ Seventeen interviews were conducted with the Russian journalists (there were 21 interviewees; two interviews were conducted with two participants and one with three participants), and 18 interviews with the Swedish journalists (19 interviewees; one of the interviews involved two participants).

All of the interviewees signed a consent form (except two journalists interviewed in 2009 and two journalists interviewed for the pilot interviews via Skype). The possibility for the participants to view their own citations from the interview transcriptions, I am convinced, made the atmosphere of the interviews in both contexts more relaxed. In Russia, however, the consent form sometimes provoked jests concerning the Swedish “over-protectiveness” and accuracy.

The interviews were usually conducted in an editorial office (empty break rooms, halls, or editorial restaurants during closed hours), but on some occasions we met with the interviewees in a café near the office. In all cases, the interviewees themselves chose the time and location for the interview.

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⁴⁰ English was chosen as a major language of communication with the Swedish informants, as I didn’t apply any linguistically sensitive methods of analysis of the interviews’ transcriptions. Semi-structured interviews require a high level of concentration on all of the details expressed as well as an immediate reaction to any thematic shifts, nebulosity, or aspects requiring further unraveling. This choice proved to work efficiently, as informants spoke English fluently. They were, however, allowed to express anything they wished in Swedish during the course of the interview – whenever they found it impossible or problematic to express it in English.

⁴¹ As work on this project started before I gained my position as a doctoral student at Södertörn University in February 2010, the first interviews with Swedish journalists (in just one newsroom) were conducted already in autumn 2009. Also two pilot interviews via Skype were conducted in November 2011 (they are not used in this study).
The interviews included two experiments with “stimulus materials” (Cabe-cinhas et al. 2014), which were aimed at both illustrating the discussion with more particular examples of gendered mediation of politics and encouraging the interviewees to talk about their journalistic practices.

In the first experiment the informants were asked to discuss some of their own articles related to the theme of the study that I had cut out of a newspaper/printed out and brought to the interview setting.\(^{42}\) I asked them to discuss the process of production of these articles from the choice of the theme to the actual writing and editing. This approach can be labeled “article-elicitation” by analogy with an ethnographic method of photo-elicitation (Harper 2002). Apart from providing important information, this tactic also helped me to establish a better connection with the informants. By reading the informants’ articles in advance, I learned about their direction of work and style, which is always helpful when one is supposed to enter a conversation with an unfamiliar person. In addition, the informants usually said that they were flattered by the fact that I am acquainted with their work. It helped my informants to focus on the theme of the discussion and better understand the goals of my research. This approach also helped me to follow events and personalities brought up during our discussion.

The second experiment was aimed to implement a comparative perspective into the content of the interview itself. I chose four press articles (two Swedish and two Russian) that in my view were illustrative of the manifestations of gendering.\(^{43}\) One of the articles (in each language) focused on gender as a politician’s personal characteristic, and the other one on gender as a political issue (see Appendix 2). Excerpts from these articles were translated into the language of the informants: excerpts from the Swedish articles

\(^{42}\) To prepare for the interviews, I searched for recent articles of the informants where gender as either a personal characteristic or as a political issue was discussed. I searched for the articles on the outlets’ websites and used special search engines (such as Retriever) with the help of key words: “gender and politics,” “gender in politics,” “sex in politics,” “female politician/s,” “male politician/s,” “woman/en in politics,” “man/en in politics” (accordingly in Russian: “gendер и политика,” “гендер в политике,” “женщина/ы-политик/и,” “мужчина/ы-политик/и,” “женщина/ы в политике,” “мужчина/ы в политике,” in Swedish: “genus och politik,” “genus i politik,” “kön i politik,” “kvinnlig/a politiker,” “manlig/a politiker,” “kvinn/or i politik,” “man/än i politik”).

\(^{43}\) Similar to above, I searched the outlets’ websites and used search engines with the help of key words but I did not identify the particular outlets and authors. Thus, the articles were not necessarily published in the sample’s outlets (see Appendix 2).
were translated to Russian, and pieces from the Russian articles to Swedish. The help of a professional Swedish–Russian–Swedish translator was provided to ensure the impossibility of identifying the source.

These translated pieces were shown to the interviewees who were asked to comment on the piece’s idea and connotations, as well as about the possibility of publishing such a text in their media. They were also asked to guess where the articles came from. Once this was identified, the interviewees were asked to speculate about the similarities and differences between the Swedish and the Russian cultures of political journalism. After first suggesting that such a comparison is problematic because of their poor knowledge of the foreign (Swedish/Russian) context, most of the informants made the comparisons, sometimes requiring more information and details from my part about the Swedish/Russian media system, i.e., about internal norms and rules concerning representations of women in the Swedish media or about the influence of political institutions in the Russian media.

Analyzing and using the material

The interviews were transcribed and read as texts, as suggested by gender media scholars (van Zoonen 1994). The empirical data was the starting point for the analysis. The interview accounts can be read as both “for what they tell us about the phenomena to which they refer,” and “in terms of perspectives that they imply, the discursive strategies they employ, and even psychosocial dynamics they suggest” (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007, p. 97). So I focused both on what the journalists say about gendering, and on how they tell it.

The data was sorted into categories and labeled theoretically (Jensen 2002). In the analysis, the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering were placed in a structural framework of the journalism culture. As the theory of journalism culture suggests different ways of deconstructing the journalism culture and analyzing its components (see Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Nygren 2012), the choice had to be made based on the categories and themes extracted from the data. I chose to analyze the journalists’ interpretations of gendering in the framework of the journalists’ visions of their institutional roles, ethical ideologies, and epistemology (Hanitzsch 2007), as this best suited the categories extracted from the data. Thus, I moved from the theory to the material and back, and while the concept of journalism culture informed the analysis from the beginning, it was the material itself that dictated the most articulated themes in this study.
In the text, I use quotations that in my view are most illustrative for these themes. Unless specified, the quotations represent articulated patterns in the interviewees’ utterances; the most common views are presented, and it is specifically mentioned when the quotations illustrate exceptional views. I aim to display the variety of the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering. By doing this I ensure that the reader is provided with access to the meanings as they were expressed by the journalists, and not only with the meanings I ascribe to their utterances. The empirical chapters, thus, contain many quotations.

I translated the quotations from the interviews with the Russian interviewees from Russian to English, trying to keep as close to the original as possible (including the meaningful slang words and expressions). Since in this study I am not applying any linguistically-sensitive methods, the fact that the interviews are translated does not influence the analysis and the perception of the meanings by the reader. However, the spirit of an oral conversation can be lost. As the interviews with the Swedish interviewees were conducted in English (with few utterances in Swedish, which I translated to English), they are mainly cited without changes (except for quotations from one interview, the transcription of which was edited by the interviewee), and only grammar editing was added.

I chose to anonymize the interviewees, although most of them expressed their consent to be referred to with their full name. I do this for security reasons, as many of the quotations contain references to certain political actors and events, and – taking into account the professional risks of, especially, Russian journalists (see Appendix 3), I do not want to place the interviewees in potential jeopardy. For the same reason, I do not identify the journalists’ place of work (with several reservations). The interviewees themselves many times pointed to the fact that there is a common culture of quality press within the country and, when talking about political journalism, they often referred to several other quality outlets that have similar approaches to theirs. Thus, it proved to generally not be important to provide the references to the particular media the journalist was working for at the time of the interview. However, in several cases the journalists referred to their outlet as somewhat specific and different from other quality media in the country. In these cases, the title of the outlet is provided, but instead the journalist’s position is hidden.

In all other cases, I identify the journalists’ position (at the time of the interview), as it proved to be an important category for analysis, especially for Chapters 6 and 7. As such, it allows me to trace how certain views are
overall quite common for those who occupy a certain position in the newsroom (e.g., in Section 6.3 it becomes obvious that department editors have a visibly more cynic and pragmatic repertoire in comparison with more native reporters). There were observed minor differences in the conceptualizations of gendering between reporters covering domestic and international politics related to the specifics of the practices of the latter. As such, the latter tended to have more of a “helicopter” view on the topic, and provided more examples from different contexts. I point to these differences where it makes sense for the analysis.

I chose to refer to the journalists’ sex when providing quotations, although it is crucially important to note that there were only minor differences observed (and pointed to in the text) when it comes to conceptualizations of gendering between female and male journalists. Instead, this study allows for agreement with the British scholar Karen Ross, who suggests that “sex is not determinant of value set” (2014b). I am aware of a common mistake made by researchers who identify the sex of the research participants and then announce findings about gender (see Dow and Wood 2006, p. xiii). I attempt to analyze the journalists’ assumptions about the gender they do, or perform (Butler 1990/1999; West and Zimmerman 1987), as well as the gendered practices they are involved in (Löfgren Nilsson 2010). These assumptions become of crucial importance in Chapter 7, which discusses the journalists’ own understanding of the role of their own subjective perceptions and individual features in the production of gendering. In this chapter, the journalists focus on the gendered nature of their interaction with politicians and point to the differences in subjective perceptions women and men have or are supposed to have as long as they cover political actors and processes. Moreover, the references to the journalists’ sex will allow the reader to get a vision of the existing gender hierarchy in the cultures of political journalism (as such, most of the interviewed department editors and international journalists in both countries are men), which doesn’t have a direct influence on the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering, but does define the gendered character of the journalists’ practices (Djerf Pierre 2007; Gallagher 2005; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; van Zoonen 1998) – especially when it comes to their interaction with politicians.

3.2. Self-reflexivity in the research: co-producing knowledge

Fieldwork is a very intimate process – it is the researcher who knows most about the problems and victories at each of the different stages, from the design of the study to the last page of the written research report. Thus, it
becomes essential to share observations and ideas about them with the reader. The vector of self-reflexivity suggested by Bourdieu (2001/2004) has already become a constituent part of any research within the constructionist paradigm. Self-reflexivity allows one to be more critical to the information achieved in the process of a study: it helps one better understand how the researcher's own position, the research questions and design, and the different dimensions of the ethnographic communication formed the knowledge that the researcher attempted to find. In my case, I am aware of the fact that it is not only my informants who produced the knowledge, but that it is our common co-production of knowledge that took place in the course of this study. My own interpretation of gendering in political journalism influenced the way I communicated with the informants and interpreted the information they provided.

Conducting interviews in the two contexts

Already at the level of establishing contact with my informants in the two countries, I experienced the differences between the two contexts and could see how the views of journalists on gender issues generally vary and what their attitudes to gender studies and scholars were. I could, thus, sometimes adjust my strategies of approaching the informants. The knowledge achieved in the course of the fieldwork allowed me to better contextualize the actually recorded and transcribed words, and, thus, interpret them from a more grounded and aware perspective.

Field-work in Moscow

The Russian part of the fieldwork was conducted in Moscow in December 2011. Parliamentary elections took place in Russia on December 4th, 2011, just before my arrival in Moscow. During this time, in many Russian cities people went to streets to voice their opinions about economics, internal and external politics, the lack of political diversity, and discussion in the media that have (according to these claims) become – simultaneously so politicized – in terms of controllability – and so apolitical – in terms of entertaining and non-analytical nature of the content (Parfenov 2011).

As my informants described later, it was one of the most amazing and at the same time most tiring episodes in their professional life. The events attracted the attention of millions of media consumers. Though I was interviewing not only political correspondents but also journalists and editors writing about international events, the latter were also involved in the cov-
verage of the internal politics. My potential interviewees were working weekends to cover demonstrations, gatherings, endless speeches, political promises, and the like. Moreover, the political situation influenced not only the time schedules of those who became my interviewees, but the entire agenda of the media, the situation on the media market, and the internal structure of some of the outlets in the sample.44

The discussion around the questions of political and media power entailed the debate around gender issues. A popular oppositional radio channel, *Ekho Moskvy/Echo of Moscow*, published on its website a rating of the 100 most powerful women in Russia (Ekho Moskvy 2012). Among the judges who were to decide who these women were (heads of the publishing houses, TV channels, and press, among whom were also my informants), there were only two women, and the right to comment upon each of the positions in the rating was granted to men only. Thus, while the general political situation seemed to be beneficial for women gaining informal power, the structures framing their media representations remained rather stereotypical. The months that followed have changed the vector and the intensity of the public debate around gender issues, with the scandal around the punk group *Pussy Riot*, and the enactment of the law forbidding “propaganda of homosexualism among youth and children,” feeding into “politicization of gender in the last decade of Putin’s Russia” (Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014).

This situation, therefore, to a certain extent explains the ambivalent reactions of the Russian journalists to the suggestion of participation in this research project. While the theme, as we will be able to see from the subsequent chapters, seemed to many of them to be currently non-topical for the media coverage, most of the interviewees readily discussed the future of the theme of gender in political journalism. The specificity of the situation

44 *Kommersant.Vlast* published an article about how the Russian citizens living in the UK participated in the State Duma elections. The article was illustrated with images, one of which was a photo of a spoiled ballot spattered with coarse language directed towards Vladimir Putin (the then Prime Minister). The picture got accusations of being “unethical,” and the outlet made an apology. A decision was made by the owners of the publishing house “Kommersant” that the issue’s editor-in-chief Maxim Kovalsky and vice-editor Veronika Kutsyllo had to leave the magazine “on their own wish.” Kutsyllo was one of my potential interviewees, but, taking into account the situation, I found it impossible to contact her. My interviews with journalists working for the publishing house had to be postponed – they were too busy with the external and internal battles to talk about the eternal gender one.
within which the field work was taking place, however, did not largely influence the data. Indeed, the pilot interviews conducted with the journalists in November that year (before the elections) demonstrated a very similar tone and similar perceptions of the political sphere and the topic.

Field-work in Stockholm
The Swedish part of the field work had a much calmer pace and was not as affected by events. Still, however tranquil the Swedish political life may seem, political scandals is not at all something foreign (Allern and Pollack 2012; Bromander 2012). This was reinforced by my interviewees constantly referring to various mediated political scandals.

As such, Socialdemokraterna/The Social Democratic Party, the oldest and the largest in the country, got through a scandal related to its then leader, Håkan Juholt, resulting in him leaving his post. The role of the media in this scandal was strong. An article in the tabloid newspaper Aftonbladet about Juholt requesting too much housing allowance was followed by mediedrev – a series of similar investigative and monitoring publications in other media, contributing to the development of the political scandal. The scandal influenced the content of my interviews – it was a starting point for many of the interviews and the key reference issue for many of my interviewees (moreover, some of them were direct participants in this media hunt). There was also an immediate gender perspective to it, which my interviewees constructed – the political scandal that Juholt was involved in was constantly compared to the one another ex-leader of the Social Democratic party, Mona Sahlin, was involved in during the 1990s. It was discussed, both in the media and in the course of the interviews, whether the media treated these two leaders differently based on their gender.

The gender dimension was also key in another mediated scandal. Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party, which has declared itself a feminist party since 1996, was accused by some media of ignoring the feminist goals after its influential positions of party leader, secretary, and parliamentary group leader were filled by men.

The so-called ‘hen’-debate provided another interesting background to the field work. The discussion concerned the possibility of using the gender-neutral pronoun “hen” instead of the gendered “han” – he, and “hon” – she in primary schools and children’s literature, and even further expanding

45 Aftonbladet is one of the largest tabloids in Sweden and the Nordic countries.
the term to the general media discourses and communication patterns. This heated debate made discussions of gender issues even more acute and relevant, thus making it much simpler for me as a researcher to approach my interviewees and explain my goals and tasks to them. This was in contrast to what was happening in Moscow, where, taking into account the current political situation, my intention to talk about gender issues seemed strange to many of my informants, and where I had to explain how the “soft” topic of gender may be relevant to discuss in the current political conditions they were pressured by.

**Professional distance**

My own position in this research is both complicated and beneficial when it comes to my background and knowledge of the theme I am studying. A faculty of Journalism (Moscow State University) alumni with some experience in the field of journalism (I worked as a freelancer for a few Russian national outlets and as a staff project manager for the Russian Union of Journalists), I view the processes I am analyzing as not completely unfamiliar phenomena. However, today I enter the media newsrooms as an outsider, and, thus, I have a distanced perspective on the phenomena and subjects I am studying. Bourdieu found this distance beneficial, as an outsider can notice details invisible for an insider (Bourdieu 2001/2004). Similarly, Alasuutari (1995) suggests making the familiar strange (through becoming an outsider) and the strange – familiar (through becoming an insider) (see Livingstone 2003). The distance, however, also creates obstacles for the researcher – from establishing contact with the subjects of study to difficulties

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46 The debate was ignited by the publication of a children’s book *Kivi och monsterbund* [Kivi and monster dog], where the main heroine was referred to as ‘hen’. This book was followed by another one – *Känn med hen* [Feel with “hen”]. In addition, some of the Stockholm’s primary schools chose to avoid gendered pronouns when talking to children. At the time when the media debate became very vivid, some media started to experiment with introducing gender-neutral language in its content. As such, *Nöjesguiden*, a free monthly magazine about culture and entertainment, made a special issue, where pronouns “he” and “she” were not used (Thomsen 2012). A special plugin, *Henerator*, was worked out to allow surfing the internet in a “gender-neutral way” by automatically changing “hon” and “han” to “hen” (Dalén 2012).
in interpretations of the information gained in the research process\textsuperscript{47}. Yet, as Livingstone (2003) resolves, “The trick is to keep the insider and outsider perspectives in dialogue” (p. 491).

**Geographical double distance**

The complexity of my research position is connected not only to my relation with the interviewees, but also to my relation to the two different contexts. Coming from Russia, and receiving education in journalism and media studies there, I now live and work in Sweden. Thus, the double distance is achieved: while I learn the basics about the Swedish media system, culture and politics, I have the possibility to look at the – familiar to me – Russian context from a new perspective.

This professional and contextual distance became both a problem and a benefit during various stages of the research. As such, while in Russia it was much easier for me to get in contact with informants (as I kept friendly ties with my former coursemates and colleagues in the media), it became a problem in Sweden where I did not personally know any journalists. In Russia I could contact the potential interviewees for the first time by cell phone or even via Facebook; in Sweden, making contact was rather done through an official and stylistically dry e-mail.

Even when meeting with the interviewees in Russia and Sweden I had to apply different strategies. In the Russian context, despite currently being an outsider (a researcher, not a media employee any longer, working for the Swedish university and not living in Russia), I expected to be treated by the informants as “one of us” in order to be involved in an open discussion around gendering. This didn’t work quite like this though, as in Russia many of the interviewees perceived me as a “foreigner,” by applying phrases like “as you have it there in Sweden.” In the Swedish context, on the contrary, I strategically chose to present myself as a complete “foreigner” (what Hoffmann 2007 labels “student” role of a researcher) to both the Swedish

\textsuperscript{47} This problem of professional distance can be illustrated by the following short story. At an informal dinner with my former colleague from the Russian Union of Journalists, who also publishes journalistic articles, I shared some stories from my field work. At one point my colleague blurted out: “You media scholars have no understanding of and no respect for media producers! You just judge and judge, and they do the work.” First frustrated, I then realized that such words just prove once again the importance of constant self-reflexivity. As a researcher, I am the one who if not judges, makes conclusions, and I should be well aware of the different positions I and my informants have.
context and the Swedish media sphere. It justified my research aims and provided me with detailed information on political, cultural, social, and media phenomena and processes.

**Exercising power**

The type of ethnographic research I conducted can be labeled “going sideways” (Plesner 2011). As my interviewees are journalists working for the leading Swedish and Russian printed media, I escaped going either “downwards” or “upwards.” Specifically, I shared common codes with my informants, and our roles in the communication were more equal than in ethnographic research of, for instance, marginal groups or political elites.

However, the dimension of exercising power should still be considered critically. While the topic and direction of conversation were guided by me (and I was expecting my informants to accept this topic as relevant, and directed the flow of conversation by my questions), the interviewees were free to choose the physical and “metaphysical” conditions of the interviews. They were allowed to choose the time and location for the interview. Informants were also free to refuse participation in the research at any time, which was made clear on the consent form they signed before the interview.

My informants could even choose to show their explicit disinterest in my research and me. Indeed, in an interview with three participants (which turned out to be an unfortunate circumstance caused by the routines in the media organization), one of the informants articulated discontent with wasting his time for such an empty and unneeded discussion. “I don’t understand what we’re gonna talk about,” he said, and turned his back to me and other participants to continue surfing the internet on his laptop. This informant turned out to be an opinion-leader, and although the other interviewees did not fully agree with his standpoint, the atmosphere did not contribute to the development of a discussion. This is an example of how “underpowered” a researcher can be in directing a discussion. The position this interviewee chose is what I call a position of “defense” towards something unexpected (gender issues in politics) and, thus, potentially threatening. It is quite probable that employees of this media organization are used to being in such a defensive position due to the status of their oppositional media, or maybe this was the informant’s way of expressing distrust towards me as a Russian researcher based in Sweden.
Interview roles

At a more implicit level, informants in a way could choose how they wanted to view me in the interview, and I had to be flexible in adjusting to their preferred style of communication. Accordingly, some informants willingly shared their knowledge with a “naive student,” others needed a “confidant” or a “therapist” to whom they could tell stories not previously shared with their colleagues, and some even chose to view me as a “confessor” who is there to approve the media product they create (all of these roles are introduced and described in detail by Hoffmann 2007).

However, my power was also exercised in many of the interviews. While the researcher should usually avoid any intervening role, in some cases (often only after the interviews had been transcribed) I could see myself taking on the position of an “expert-enlightener” in the interview (Hoffmann 2007). Explaining concepts to informants, talking with them about the relevance of gender studies, discussing with them the articles in the experimental part of the interviews, commenting on their and others’ articles, even recommending literature and contacts to some of them who showed interest in the theme – all of this, I am sure, had an effect on the responses of the informants.

Gender dimension

Another dimension that I continually reflected on during all of the stages of the field work was my and my interviewees’ gender (for more about gendering of ethnographic interviews during different stages of field work and the importance of researchers’ self-reflexivity, see Golombisky 2006). When approaching my interviewees, I considered their sex, as well as their age, background, and education – not only because I viewed these factors as important for variation in my choice of research participants, but also because it formed my expectations of what the communication with this or that interviewee would be like (and these expectations often turned out to be wrong).

There is a great deal of literature about the benefits and obstacles created in inter- and cross-gender communication with interviewees (e.g., Koivunen 2010 depicts the extreme case of a failed cross-gender communication with interviewees). I do not intend to generalize and say that my communication was always more successful with female than with male interviewees, or that I could feel any explicit “paternalistic” approach expressed by the males. However, some of the male interviewees in both countries wondered if it had not been better to conduct interviews with women “as they might know more about these issues.” In the interviews with female journalists,
the “you-know-how-it-is” frame was often used, and in this sense the inter-gender interviews were easier to conduct.48

In one of the interviews with two participants (an interviewee with whom the interview was pre-arranged took along his colleague without notifying me), my interviewees entered an interesting debate from a “male vs. female” perspective, reflecting upon how their professional actions and perceptions are related to their gender. The female interviewee was explicitly contradicting the male informant, searching for my support, and “helping” me by attacking him with questions I would not be able to ask from my position as a researcher.

For establishing contact with the interviewees, I often had to apply different types of humor – the “stereotypical” one implying a somewhat sarcastic and paternalistic attitude not as much to women as to feminism and gender studies, and the “feminist” one implying a sarcastic attitude towards gender-blindness, and often even towards men (see Kalinina and Voronova 2011). I cannot say that the “stereotypical” sense of humor was expressed solely by men and the “feminist” one only by women. On the contrary, many women rolled their eyes at what they called “obsession” of the Swedish academia with gender issues, and many male informants shared feminist views and made jokes about gender stereotypes produced in the media. My main goal therefore was to be able to accept both types of humor, even if outside of the interview situation I would not tolerate the “stereotypical” sense of humor. If I hadn’t done it, the contact would have been jeopardized. Even more importantly, this “stereotypical” (or what I interpreted as “stereotypical”) sense of humor taught me about my interviewees’ ideas about gender on a more general, contextual level, and allowed me to look upon myself and my research from completely different grounds.

3.3. Additional materials
Apart from conducting interviews with the journalists, I conducted interviews with experts in the field of gender, journalism, and politics. These experts represented both the academic and the professional journalistic organizations: the Russian and the Swedish Unions of Journalists, editors of professional journalistic magazines, and ethical commissions (The Ethical Board/Yrkesetiska nämnden and The Swedish Broadcasting Commis-

48 Similarly, Löfgren Nilsson (2010) notes that “gender issues were easily discussed with the female journalists while men had less to say on the topic” (p. 4).
These interviews allowed for better contextualization of the cultures of political journalism and for a deeper insight into the cultures of political journalism in the two countries.

The following legislative and self-regulatory documents were considered:

- European documents, such as *Advancing Women’s Roles as Decision-makers in the Media* (2013);

These materials (interviews with the experts and legislative and self-regulatory documents) were used mainly for the background information in each of the empirical chapters. They also helped to put the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering in context, and were thus necessary for drawing conclusions concerning the processes and modes of origin of gendering.
4. Gendering: contextualized conceptualizations

Our country is somewhat masculine, and this male chauvinism is present in a patronizing attitude to women. In this Russia is more Asia than Europe, one can feel it, even though it is less evident in the big cities than in the villages. The attitude is top down, not equal. This manifests also in the way publishers, editors, and journalists do not think about it, do not comprehend.

Vladimir Kasutin, Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and editor of the professional magazine Zhurnalistika i mediarynok (interview, December 28th, 2011)

Swedes find it fair and decent not to discriminate. That’s awareness […] This society is not totally equal, but at least journalists share the values.

Swedish Council for Professional Ethics (YEN) representative (discussion, November 4th, 2009)

This first empirical chapter answers the question: What do journalists in Russia and Sweden understand by gendering in political journalism, and whether and how do they link gendering with the national specificity of the political and cultural context? The chapter shows that the different political and cultural contexts that Russian and Swedish journalists are situated within pre-define the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering. The differences in the Russian and Swedish journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering are important, insofar as they define the level of the journalists’ acknowledgement of their role in the production of gendering.

Gendering also happens to be one of the structuring elements of the national culture of political journalism: the journalists’ conceptualization of gendering informs the way they find the culture of political journalism they “belong” to and the cultures of “others.” Gendering as a part of the culture of political journalism demarcates the symbolic location of the national culture of political journalism in space and time, thus helping to situate the broader processes (such as mediatization of politics and commercialization) within the geographical and temporary context.

4.1. Contextual information

In this chapter, the discussion of gendering connects the culture of political journalism and the context within which it is located. Before addressing the journalists’ conceptualizations and contextualizations of gendering, I would
like to give a short introduction to the Swedish and Russian contexts where
the quality press and its journalists are functioning.

**Political structure**
The Russian Federation is a federal semi-presidential republic. According to
the Constitution (the fundamental law), the head of the state is the President
(currently Vladimir Putin). Executive power is exercised by the government,
headed by the Prime Minister (currently Dmitry Medvedev), who is appointed
by the President. Legislative power is vested in the Federal Assembly of the
Russian Federation, consisting of two houses: upper – the Federation Council,
and lower – the State Duma. Currently (after the parliamentary elections
2011), four parties are represented in the State Duma: Edinaya Rossia/The
United Russia party (52.88%, led by Dmitry Medvedev), Kommunistich-
eskaya partiya Rossiijskoj Federatsii (KPRF)/The Communist Party (20.46%,
Gennady Zyuganov), Spravedlivaya Rossia/The Just Russia party (14.21%,
Sergey Mironov), and Liberal'no-Demokratischeskaya Partiya Rossii
(LDPR)/The Liberal Democratic Party (12.45%, Vladimir Zhirinovskij).

Sweden is a parliamentary representative democratic constitutional mon-
archy. Formally, the head of the state is the king, Carl XVI Gustav. Execu-
tive power is exercised by the government, headed by the Prime Minister
(currently Fredrik Reinfeldt). Legislative power is vested in both the gov-
ernment and the parliament, Riksdag. Currently (after the parliamentary
elections 2010), there are two major blocs in the parliament: the socialist-
green Red-Greens and the liberal-conservative governing Alliance for Swe-
den. The Red-Greens include the following parties: Socialdemokraterna
(S)/The Social Democratic Party (30.66%, led by Stefan Löfven), Miljöpar-
tiet de Gröna/The Green Party (7.34%, co-led by Åsa Romson and Gusrav
Fridolin), and Vänsterpartiet (V)/The Left Party (5.60%, Jonas Sjöstedt).
The Alliance includes Moderaterna (M)/The Moderate Party (30.06%, led
by Fredrik Reinfeldt), Folkpartiet liberalerna (FP)/The Liberal People’s
Party (7.06%, Jan Björklund), Centerpartiet (C)/The Center Party (6.56%,
Annie Lööf), and Kristdemokraterna (KD)/The Christian Democratic Party
(5.60%, Göran Hägglund). One more party represented in the parliament
is the far-right party Sverigedemokraterna (SD)/The Sweden Democrats
(5.70%, Jimmie Åkesson).
Gender equality
Russia ranks 94th place (out of 135 countries) when it comes to the political empowerment of women (Hausmann et al. 2013). Political power remains one of the most impermeable “ceilings” for women (Zdravomyslova 2003). Firstly, this phenomenon is explained by the fact that power and financial and administrative resources are concentrated mainly in the hands of men (Gorshkov and Tikhonova 2002). Secondly, political appointments and recruitments are made from spheres that are exclusively or predominantly occupied by men (Kochkina 2004). Thirdly, according to politicians from both sexes, the partnership between women and men in politics is almost impossible due to the “naturally” built gender borders that exist along the same line as holding political power (Zdravomyslova 2003). While today the state formally claims a commitment to equality in the Constitution and has signed the international agreements and declarations, the everyday practices of women and men are still defined by what is labelled by the researchers as the “patriarchal renaissance” (Kay 2007; Posadskaya 1993; Temkina 1996; Voronina 1994). The latter, according to the scholars, takes its roots in the Soviet approaches to gender equality (Goscilo and Lanoux 2006; Kay 2007; Temkina 1996; Voronina 1994), which were largely instrumental and focused primarily on altering women’s roles, practices and identities in order to suit economic, demographic and political priorities […] As a result, many women’s experiences of ‘emancipation’ were anything but liberating (Kay 2007, p. 3).

Being considered a “feminist state” (Bergqvist, Adman and Jungar 2008), Sweden officially promotes gender equality policies and is considered to be at the top of the list when it comes to gender equality achievements (Djerf-Pierre 2011). In addition, most of its political parties use the label “feminist” in their descriptions. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, Sweden is at 4th place (out of 135) when it comes to the political empowerment of women (Hausmann et al. 2013). However, while a “passion for equality” characterizes the Swedish society (Holli, Magnusson and Rönnblom 2005; Inglehart and Norris 2003), and the history of fighting for gender equality is considerably long (Bergqvist 1999; Freidenvall 2006; Karam 1998), the scholars see a problem with putting gender equality into practice (Holli, Magnusson and Rönnblom 2005; Osika 2008).

Appendix 3 provides numerical information about gender (in)equality in different spheres in the two countries.
Media models

Both Russian and Swedish media systems are often viewed by scholars as systems in transition. The complex transformation process of the media system in Russia was not linear (Rosenholm, Nordenstreng and Trubina 2010; Vartanova 2009; Voltmer 2013) and was characterized by a gradual narrowing down of the media influences and freedoms (Koltsova 2001; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007; Voltmer 2013; Zassoursky 2004). In the 1990s, the press was a highly required political instrument, “translating economic power into political and cultural power” (McNair 2000, p. 88), and turning the Russian media system into the “world’s first true media-ocracy49” (McNair 2000, p. 88). The media-ocracy didn’t last long as already during the presidential elections in 1996, the political control in the media sphere started to increase (McNair 2000; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007).

The today’s media system in Russia is defined by Vartanova (2013) as the government-commercial Eurasian model, synthesizing “European” and “Asian” characteristics of media worlds, Soviet traditions and current global trends (pp. 217-218, 222). Logic of commercialization here is combined with an authoritarian approach by the government (Pasti and Nordenstreng 2013). The regime of “managed democracy,” or “manipulative democracy,” implies tight control over the major media through financial and political control of its owners and administrative and economic control of journalists (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007, especially in the television sector – see Vartanova 2013). State influence is perceived as strong also by the journalists themselves: 46.8% of the Russian journalists believe that the level of press freedom in the country has decreased in the last 5-10 years (Anikina and Johansson 2013). As Elena Vartanova (2013) formulates it,

Traditional paternalist character of the media–authorities interactions, where the media still has a role of an “obedient child,” is a feature of the Russian media system (p. 109, my translation).

While the Russian media system traces back to the traditions of the Soviet period, the Swedish media system is viewed as post-corporatist (Dahlgren

49 Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova (2007), however, point to the fact that even in the years of media-ocracy, media were not considered to be independent political subjects, but stayed “means” of communication in Hegel’s terms: the owners of media empires had the power within their empires, while on the political arena they remained just executors of the more influential political actors’ power (p. 56).
Today the Swedish media system reportedly tends to turn from Democratic Corporatist Model\(^5\) (Hallin and Mancini 2004) to the Liberal Model (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Wiik 2014) characterized by increasing commercialization and, thus, a dependency of journalism on the market rather than the state (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Dahlgren 2000; Ekecrantz 2005). A near-zero political influence on media content is reported (at least according to the perception of the journalists themselves – Nygren and Appelberg 2013).

The Swedish model of political communication is characterized by a high influence of the media logic (Strömbäck 2009, p. 248). News media compete with the political parties in their influence (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011). The press has taken upon itself an active watchdog role (Dahlgren 2000; Wiik 2014), and media have gained a notch in power over political elite by suggesting its own formats and logic (Dahlgren 2000; Strömbäck 2009). However, although the press can harshly attack an individual politician in a situation of political scandal\(^5\) (Allern and Pollack 2012), it is reported to have a “cooperative relationship” with the power structures (Dahlgren 2000). For example, mediatization of politics is discussed by politicians and journalists together.\(^5\)

Appendix 4 provides numerical information about the media and journalism in the two countries.

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\(^5\) Hallin and Mancini (2004) consider Sweden to be a representative of the Democratic Corporatist Model, which refers to strong ties between the media and the political groups, and “the coexistence of liberal traditions of press freedom and a tradition of strong state intervention in the media as a social institution” (Hallin and Mancini 2004, pp. 195-196).

\(^5\) Although politicians become more and more interesting for the public not just as leaders of parties, but as persons, personalization of politics is not so characteristic for the Swedish context. This can be explained by the fact that Sweden has a tradition of a collective-oriented political culture, where parties, and not so much individual leaders remain the key political actors (Karvonen 2011, p. 3; Strömbäck 2002, p. 18).

\(^5\) During Almedalen week (an annual event, which is considered to be an important forum in Swedish politics, where representatives from the major political parties – but also journalists and experts – participate in seminars and other activities) in 2012 there was a session titled “Medialisering – Vem utnyttjar vem?” (“Mediatization: Who uses whom?”).
4.2. Russia: essentialist gendering comes from politics

The Russian journalists emphasized that the culture of political journalism with all its components and elements should be situated within the broader Russian cultural and political context. According to them, the political journalism is a replica of the Russian politics and society, characterized by clear gender borders, lack of gender-awareness, and lack of critique towards the existing matter of facts and tendencies. In this sense, political journalism in the quality press, in the journalists’ opinion, appears to be an “island” in this ocean of gender inequality, as the inhabitants of this culture appear to be gender-aware and critical towards what they cover. Discussing gendering with me, the journalists distanced themselves from responsibility, considering this process to be mainly informed by the context, and being out of their control and influence.

“Women are invisible”: from the context to the content

Numerical gender imbalance in the Russian political sphere was the first thing that the journalists chose to discuss in the interview in relation to gendering in the journalistic content. The country’s historical development, according to the interviewees, determines the current representation of women and men in the political sphere:

It has historically been constructed so that in our country’s leadership and on many key positions it is only men (V, political reporter, male)

The journalists link the absence of women in the Russian politics with the “gender-as-difference” approach (D’Amico and Beckman 1995; Zdravomysova 2003) dominating in the Russian cultural context. According to the cultural tradition, women are viewed as different from the male “norm” in politics, and more generally in the public sphere. This approach, according to the journalists, is very stable in the Russian society, and it dominates both in politics and in the public opinion. Masculinity is, thus, linked with power and publicity (cf. Easthope 1990; Mbilinyi and Omari 1996), and femininity with subordination and private sphere, which leads to problems accepting women politicians in the Russian society:

In Russia this [female politicians] is, well, not exotic, but something uncommon. The society, well, probably is not yet ready to perceive female politicians seriously and view them as specialists […] In Russia when female politicians are talked about, an image occurs, or more correctly, two images:
either of somewhat marginal persons like Novodvorskaya,\textsuperscript{53} or of people who came to politics either just for interest, or to reach their somewhat mercenary goals, but not seriously dealing with politics, not doing it professionally, like the Duma deputies, Alina Kabayeva and Svetlana Zhurova\textsuperscript{54} [...] It is considered at least that men are more independent in making decisions, while a woman is just a standby, a person who supports all the plans, all the decisions of a male politician (P, international reporter, male).

According to the interviewee, within this context “media confess to the same position, and do not yet take female politicians seriously” (P, international reporter, male). The Russian journalists, thus, confirm scholars who say that the way women and men are treated in a particular society influences the way journalists are covering politics (Falk 2008; Mbilinyi and Omari 1996). Essentialist gendering occurs to be a “natural” prolongation of the political development and societal background. Due to historical development, women in politics “strike journalists’ eyes” (A, vice-editor, male), and are covered because of their uniqueness:

We have, I am sorry, more charismatic male politicians generally than women. Because it has been a historical development in the world. A journalist should notice something new, uncommon, I don’t know. A woman in politics is, of course, an unusual phenomenon in our, post-Soviet space. So we mark it (G, editor of international department, male).

Interestingly, while referring to the standard of newsworthiness (which is considered by gender media scholars to be a part of media logic; see Falk 2008; Ross 2002), the journalists point to the fact that their (i.e., actors) views on the relevance of gender as an individual characteristic should not be equalized with the media logic. As such, the above quoted interviewee articulated that for him as an individual “it doesn’t matter if it is a female

\textsuperscript{53} Valeriya Novodvorskaya who passed away on July 12\textsuperscript{th}, 2014, was a liberal Russian politician, Soviet dissident, the founder and chairwoman of Demokraticheskij soyuZ/The Democratic Union party, and a member of the editorial board of The New Times.

\textsuperscript{54} Alina Kabayeva and Svetlana Zhurova are famous Russian sportswomen and champions of the Olympic Games. Kabayeva has been a member of the State Duma since 2007. Zhurova has been a member of the State Duma since 2007, and was a member of the Federation Council from 2012 to 2013.
politician or a male” (G, editor of international department, male). However, as the “gender-as-difference” approach is dominant in politics, it also, according to the journalists, finds its reflection in the media logic that they have to follow (cf. Kammer 2013).

In accordance with what Nordberg and Edström (2007) describe, while women constitute the minority in the field (at least, in the eyes of the journalists), the media are interested in writing about them. Gender as a personal characteristic of women politicians becomes a factor around which journalists create a news story. For example, Lyubov Sliska, the Deputy Chairwoman of Duma (from 2007 to 2011), became a popular object of media coverage before the presidential elections in 2008, when her name appeared among the potential successors of Vladimir Putin (who was holding the position of the President also in 2000-2008). As the journalists confess, Sliska was last place on the list of potential candidates, yet they chose to make news stories about her instead of the other (male) potential successors:

Among the twenty candidates, she was the most interesting one. We made an assumption: “What would happen if…” [...] It’s interesting: Why in Europe can there be a woman [political leader], in America, in Latin America, in Africa there already is, [as well as] in India, and we don’t have any after Ekaterina [the Second]? Why?! In Asian countries they elect women, and we, with our intermediate mentality – either Asian or European – for some reason do not come to this (E, political reporter, female).

Thus, gender inequality in Russian politics tends to be the determining factor for the rest of the societal spheres, and for the journalists’ perception of the problem in general. However, a certain difference in how female and male journalists perceive the historical tradition of male superiority in the political sphere can be observed. All of the above-quoted male journalists talked about the “gender-as-difference” approach as given, stable, and unquestionable. The female reporter quoted above instead questioned the ordinariness of this tradition by making comparisons with other contexts, and instead of pointing to the political sphere as the only source of gendering, (self-)critically speaks about the more general “mentality” that the journalists also hold. Another female interviewee similarly pointed to the impossibility to comprehend the masculine dominance in the political sphere, which seems to be at odds with the more gender balanced statistics in other spheres, suggesting that gender

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55 However, as we will see in Chapter 7, gender of both politicians and journalists plays a crucial role in determining the journalists’ strategy of communicating with political actors in the process of actual interactions.
inequality in the Russian politics is “completely incomprehensible, as first, women quantitatively dominate men [demographically], and second, in terms of education, there are many more educated women compared to other countries” (N, political reporter, female).

**Women as “agents of change”: spotlighting and personalizing**

The political sphere in Russia, according to the journalists, manifests as not only gendered, but generally as a closed club, where women have no access not only due to being considered “different” to the male “norm,” but due to their potential of being agents of change (Norris 1997) in politics:

How can women get to politics? The political sphere is blocked. There is a filter, all this “United Russia,” so it is not a healthy democratic environment where everyone can compete on equal terms, but something like this, a strange quasi-scheme [...] It is very difficult to get there from street, if you want to uphold interests, if you try to make a political career. Who will take Chirikova\(^56\) to Duma? No one! Even though she is a good candidate (E, political reporter, female).

The reference to Evgeniya Chirikova, an oppositional political actor, shows that the Russian political journalists, despite the overall disenchantment with the politicians of both genders, still believe that women representing independent political views could become agents of change (Norris 1997). However, in the current circumstances this change seems to be impossible for them due to the political system’s lack of openness to the new actors and alternative ideas. The journalists point to the dominance of bureaucrats in the institutional politics, whose dependence on the dominant political ideology is not related to their gender. However, while women and men bureaucrats are equally disappointing, the journalists hope that women politicians – promoters of alternative political programs – can become a refreshing political force:

I with great sadness see that in Russia there are no women politicians... Well, first of all, let’s agree upon what a politician is. Because Lyubov Sliska, or the present speaker of the Federation Council [Valentina Matvienko\(^57\)], are not

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\(^56\) Evgeniya Chirikova is a Russian political activist, member of the oppositional Coordination Council. Became well-known for participation in the protests of the eco-movements defending the Khimki forest in the Moscow region.

\(^57\) Valentina Matvienko has been Chairwoman of the Federation Council since 2011. From 2003 to 2011 she was the governor of Saint Petersburg.
politicians [...] However, it is the same to call politician the previous speaker of the Federation Council [Aleksander Torshin58], or the previous speaker of the Duma [Boris Gryzlov59]. They are not politicians; they are conductors of a certain will – that’s it (N, head of international information group, male).

The common opinion among the Russian journalists is, thus, that politicians are those who promote certain ideas, and they are often considered “outsiders” from within the established political culture. Those who are holding the official positions, on the contrary, often are not considered to be politicians, but are referred to as bureaucrats. The journalists, thus, draw a line not only between men and women in politics, but also between women bureaucrats and women political leaders outside the institutional politics:

This situation is entirely Russian: politicians who represent the current establishment, sort of official politicians, they are not so interesting to write about, just because they are sort of “grey,” plain, they do not influence anything […] Skrynnik,60 for example, is rather a bureaucrat, not a politician. Dmitrieva61 in this sense is much more a politician (Z, political and economic reporter, male).

Thus, the journalists consider women politicians outside the institutional politics as potential agents of change, whose gender can make a difference in politics in a positive sense. Oksana Dmitrieva, the deputy head of the social-democratic party Spravedlivaya Rossiya/Just Russia, for example, was mentioned in several other interviews as a leader the interviewees themselves would choose to vote for. However, due to a subordinating power of the political logic, aimed at “conservation of everything,” or, as political scholars note, strengthening of traditionalism and patriarchy (Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014), the journalists find it impossible to give these politicians space in the content. The journalists are not ready to become critical change agents (Hanitzsch 2011) themselves (see more in Chapter 6.1):

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58 Alexander Torshin was acting Chairman of the Federation Council in 2011. He is one of the leading figures in the United Russia party.
59 Boris Gryzlov was Chairman of the State Duma until December 2011. He is one of the leaders of the United Russia party.
60 Elena Skrynnik was Minister of Agriculture from 2009 to 2012.
61 Oksana Dmitrieva is the deputy head of the social-democratic party Spravedlivaya Rossiya/Just Russia. She has been a member of the State Duma since 2007. A possibility that she would run in the presidential election 2012 was discussed in the media, but in these elections the party was represented by its leader Sergey Mironov.
The mentality is not changing, because the authorities are not geared towards modernization. This goes for everything: economics, politics, people’s education. We keep writing about the same themes – that’s the effect! We sit like fools, while we could do real journalism! (N, political reporter, female)

Therefore, the journalists suggest that media production does not just draw on existing in the public consciousness (or “mentality”) gender (and other) stereotypes, but also feeds into the dominant ideology (cf. Kay 2007). In this context, the journalists find it important to support the “outsider” women politician breakthroughs. As some of the interviewees mentioned, the fact that they spotlight the gender of women politicians does not necessarily lead to a perception of women as negatively different. According to the journalists, it is important to draw the audiences’ attention to the feminist issues and promote “more progressive” values, making women more visible and viable political actors, especially if “somewhere there had been a revolutionary event, meaning that someone has reached the power top for the first time, and this someone is a woman” (L, international reporter, female).

This contradicts the conclusions of the gender media scholars, who suggest that the spotlighting of women politicians’ gender usually creates a negative image of them, and that journalists do it because of their unawareness of their own cultural assumptions concerning the roles of women and men in the society (Braden 1996; Falk 2008). The Russian political journalists are conscious about spotlighting the gender of women politicians and suggest that, specifically in the Russian context – still suffering from a distinct gender equality backlash, termed “patriarchal renaissance” (Azhgikhina 2006; Posadskaya 1993; Temkina and Zdravomyslova 2014) – gender spotlighting actually works to the benefit of women politicians:

In Russia, the society is quite conservative and patriarchal; it is still far from the Western tradition. Feminism has not yet come to Russia, and hardly will in the nearest future. Here it is often possible to see even contemptuous assessments, because representation of women in the organs of power and so on is inferior to the figures in the West. Thus, the society doesn’t yet react in the right way. We in the magazine try not to skip, but, on the contrary, draw attention – if in a certain country a woman becomes the leader of the country, we write about it indispensably (B, editor of international department, male).

The specificity of the context, where the Russian culture of political journalism is located, was a common refrain in the interviewees’ reflections on the reasons for gendering in the content of Russian political journalism. The geographical (between Europe and Asia) and symbolical “in-betweenness”
of Russia makes the journalists constantly re-evaluate the standards and requirements of journalism. Thus, it is not only the national context that influences the journalists’ perceptions of values, norms, and roles (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; as well Berkowitz et al. 2004; Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Heikkilä and Kunnelius 2008; Lo et al. 2005; Mellado et al. 2010; Preston 2009; van Dalen 2012; Weaver 1998; Zhu et al. 1997), it is also the journalists themselves who define what the national context is like and adjust their practices to it:

Normally the matter at hand is analysis of political platform, team, personal managerial skills, career etc, and not what the politician’s gender is [...] When it comes to Roza Otunbaeva,62 I think, I mentioned that she is the first woman president, as this is really important for the region, the country, the political culture, in which there is a total masculine domination, and emergence of a female chief executive is indeed an important case, which is worth at least mentioning (U, co-editor of international department, male).

Similarly, the journalists believe that personalization benefits women politicians and promotes gender equality in the political sphere (unlike scholars who discuss personalization as a negative tendency – e.g., Falk 2008, pp. 74-75; van Zoonen 2003). The Russian journalists emphasize that closer attention should be paid to the women politicians’ personalities (and, accordingly, to gender as their personal characteristic) in order to influence acceptance of female political leaders in the Russian society:

As women are fewer [than men] in politics, it is not unusual that they tend to do everything in their own way, and, thus, it is important for us to show their personal qualities. A woman who comes to politics, who rises to eminence in politics, she is a priori a big person. There are twenty men per one such woman, even in contemporary politics. Accordingly, we put stress on personal features (B, editor of international department, male).

Thus, gendering – according to the Russian journalists – in the specific political and cultural context characterized by the absence of women in the political sphere and by the prejudiced attitude to their capability of being political actors, implies an emphasis on gender as a personal characteristic. This emphasis in the given context appears to be somewhat “natural” to the journalists: being perceived as agents of change on the political arena, women appear as exotic and different, and their presence in politics in itself is sometimes viewed as a fact worthy of a news story. Despite the common disenchantment with the political

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62 Roza Otunbaeva was President of Kyrgyzstan in 2010-2011.
elite, the journalists (both female and male) support the female political leaders’ breakthroughs. The tools they apply to promote them, however, turn out to imply essentialist gendering in the form of spotlighting of gender and emphasizing the women politicians’ personal features.

“Would be too European”: rejecting discussions of gender equality

Such a vision of a necessity of promoting women political leaders, however, was not shared by all of the Russian journalists. For some, the context justifies a complete ignorance of gender as either a personal characteristic or an issue to discuss. In Russia, where all politicians seem to be “small genderless screws in the wheels of state, in the corrupt machinery” (U, co-editor of international department, male), considerations about gender of politicians seem to be excessive and unnecessary:

I can’t imagine thinking about the gender of the politician I am covering all the time! Hell knows, what is the f…g difference? It would be very European (Y, political reporter, male).

Following European tendencies was usually referred to by the interviewees as something positive for the development of political journalism, as Europeanness is associated with modern values, progress, and moving forward (cf. Vartanova 2013 about “European” and “Asian” in the Eurasian media model). However, as it appears, the requirement for gender-sensitivity falls out of this pattern: the journalists are ready to follow the European tendencies in media development, but certain trends considered to be European seem to them to be not fitting into their practices:

If people absolutely seriously talk about that, look, here is a woman, and here is a man, and that is the difference, then no wonder all this “feminization” takes place. Because if you segregate in politics based on the sexual characters, and not on who does what and how, it provokes all this wild game happening now in Europe, when you open a door to a woman, and she thinks that you infringe on her rights and autonomy (Y, political reporter, male).

The journalists generally keenly compared the content they produce with that of their colleagues in other countries. They eagerly participated in the comparative experiment during the interviews (as described in Chapter 3), where they were asked to read an article excerpt from the Swedish newspaper/magazine translated to Russian (see Appendix 2), and discuss whether this piece could be published in their media. Getting ac-
quainted with the pieces, the journalists suggested that the Swedish journalism is too opinionated and emotional. It should be noted, however, that political journalism in Western quality outlets generally appears to them as somewhat “yellow,” tabloid:

Our quality journalism is impersonal, we talk about deals. When I see articles in the *Wall Street Journal*, I find them to be like popular press. Here it would be like *Moskovskij Komsomolets*63 (Z, political and economic reporter, male).

Although not directly accused of being “feminine” (Djerf-Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Ghersetti 2012; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Meeks 2013), the Swedish political journalism is perceived by the Russian journalists as lacking an agenda. The journalists suggest that in Sweden there are no political events to cover, “everything is too good there” (Y, political reporter, male), thus Swedish journalists pay attention to “minor issues,” such as gender inequality, and can afford to discuss them with passion. The Russian journalists themselves, in their own opinion, cannot focus on the gender issues due to the lack of time spent covering the “real politics” and writing “hard news,” and suggest that they will only be able to start to “philosophize” about gender issues “when everything will stop to fall apart and ruin” in the Russian politics and society (Y, political reporter, male).

The Swedish context, in the Russian journalists’ opinion, is characterized by a high level of gender-awareness and political correctness, which are viewed as the key reasons for the popularity of gender-aware stories where gender is discussed as a serious societal and political issue. The Russian journalists believe that the same tendency is difficult to imagine in the Russian realms due to the different traditions, interests, and cultural codes:

In Sweden you have, so to speak, a country of the triumphant political correctness, thus, triumphant feminism. You are probably interested in all of this, as this all is discussed. We have enough other themes, and such questions to be honest do not touch us much. And very few would discuss it seriously. Will you be seriously discussing garden gnomes? […] There is a country called Bhutan. They have something like garden gnomes. And there, I’ve heard, they seriously write about them (G, editor of international department, male).

This ironic comment hints towards a broadly articulated vision that the Swedes are somewhat obsessed with gender issues (the Russian journalists

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63 *Moskovskij Komsomolets* is one of the most popular Russian tabloids with national coverage. The tabloid’s circulation approaches one million copies.
demonstrated awareness about Scandinavia ranking high in gender equality). In the Russian journalists’ opinion, the “excessive” attention to gender issues has a restraining effect on their Swedish colleagues, putting limitations on the most valuable democratic freedom – freedom of expression. According to the interviewee cited below, the Russian political journalism allows for more freedoms for its producers, thus, benefitting the inhabitants of the Russian culture of political journalism:

With political correctness – and surplus feminism is a part of political correctness – it is important to stop in time, and not to get crazy! Here [in Russia] political correctness has not reached absurd, in this sense here the freedom of speech is even in some sense... Well, Swedes can teach us something in terms of democracy, and we can teach them how to not come to dementia. So, don’t go nuts, dear Swedes! We want to love and respect you, not to laugh at you! (M, international observer, male)

Thus, gendering in the form of the gender-aware articles is not considered to be characteristic for the Russian culture of political journalism by its inhabitants. However, the journalists readily model situations in the future that would inspire them to pay attention to gender issues. The journalists suggested that the time to discuss gender will come if “the situation is calmer, not as tense as it is at the moment,” when “a woman becomes the Russian president or an oppositional leader,” or when in general “Russian politics becomes more gender balanced.” Some of the interviewed journalists, however, had yet more unexpected versions. According to them, gender would appear as a topic for quality political journalism if an “exceptional violation of women's rights, to which they would react happened,” “if the tandem [of the prime minister and the president] was mixed-sex,” or even if “Vladimir Putin changed gender.” It is important to note, however, that while none of the female journalists explicitly expressed that there is a necessity to discuss gender equality in political journalism in the current situation, the explicit rejection of the discussion of gender issues came from the male journalists.

Russia: discussion

The Russian journalists view gendering in Russian political journalism as a direct connection with the political and cultural context of the country and – broader – the post-Soviet region (cf. Kay 2007). According to the journalists, the lack of women in politics (especially active politicians, with a clear and independent political agenda), the lack of gender-awareness in the society, and the rich political agenda that leads to the lack of time for the
journalists’ critical comprehension of the gender issues to a big extent define the way gendering is constructed in the political journalism. As such, lack of women politicians leads to the lack of women politicians as heroines of the journalistic articles (see also Chapter 6.1) and the “gender-as-difference” approach in politics leads to the journalists’ perception of women as unusual political actors.

The Russian journalists distance themselves from taking responsibility for essentialist gendering in the content. Instead, they refer to the political logic, which seems to be overwhelming and dominating. The only step the journalists find possible to do in order to overcome the gender unawareness of the society is to publish stories with a special attention on women politicians, where the spotlighting of gender and a discussion of their personal characteristics rather promote them than humiliate. According to the journalists, in the Russian context, where feminism does not have a stable and evident stance in the society, such stories are one of the few tools for promoting gender equality and particular female political leaders.

Today gender-aware stories appear as something uncommon for the Russian culture of political journalism, as gender-sensitivity seems to be “too European” to be transferred to the Russian context. The journalists, however, suggest that the future can change their perspective. This vision is shared by media experts. Nadezda Azhgikhina, Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists, regional Gender Coordinator of the International Federation of Journalists, and Vice-President of the European Federation of Journalists suggests that “tolerance, or commitment to the ideas of gender equality, is a result of the general situation. We still have a transition, Brownian motion, underdevelopment” (interview with Azhgikhina from April 12th, 2010). Yet, according to Azhgikhina, there is hope that the journalists, especially those who work for the quality press, can change the context where gender equality is not perceived as a value by “being responsible and writing truth about men and women” (ibid).

4.3. Sweden: reflexive gendering as a part of social debate

The Swedish journalists too suggest that their practices are largely dependent on the context they are situated within. They suggest, however, that it is not as much the political logic as the public discussions that inform their approach to covering politics and politicians. Gender appears to them as a social issue worth discussing and as a critical concept applied in order to overcome the essentialist perspective that suggests that the differences between people are normalized:
Gender problems today are a big issue. But gender isn’t or shouldn’t be according to me a big issue (C, political reporter, male).

Gendering, according to the Swedish journalists, should highlight not the differences between women and men, but the cultural constructions of these differences – the inequality gaps that still exist in the society, “the ‘we-got-it-not’ in Sweden today” (R, gender columnist, political and economic observer, female). Gender appears, thus, as “a non-issue by itself” (P, editor of international department, female), meaning that gender as a personal characteristic alone cannot be a basis for considering a certain political personality worth a story. The only exception to this pattern – according to the journalists – when gender matters as a personal characteristic, is if a journalist conducts an interview with a politician with the only reason being that it is a woman or a man. Otherwise gender should only be brought up in the articles as a societal issue:

If I just call a person and ask if I can do an interview, because she is a powerful woman and that’s the reason for the interview, when I portray her, I obviously need to take into consideration that she is a woman – because that’s why we did an interview. But if I call her because she is in charge of a big company and she lost a big order and shareholders are pissed off – then I contact her because she is a CEO of this company and she needs to answer these questions, not because she is a woman (R, gender columnist, political and economic observer, female).

The Swedish journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering are close to the ones suggested by the scholars, who criticize journalists for not addressing the problem of gender inequality in politics and for writing stories with a focus on gender only as long as women politicians are concerned (see Falk 2008; Ross 2002; Vartanova, Smirnova and Frolova 2012). The normalized essentialist perspective on gender differences, according to the journalists, should be criticized and even ridiculed:

The only way gender can appear in the first sense – as a normalized difference, is if we under the text, between the lines have this toll of “it’s kind of crazy” (T, political editor, male).

Instead of writing about them [gender differences] as facts, you can write about why they mean much to certain other media, or to others (C, political reporter, male).

Gender in the Swedish political journalism becomes an analytical category that determines the journalists’ readiness to write gender-aware stories.
The value of newsworthiness works differently in this context, i.e., the journalists point to *something* that “sticks out,” not *someone* who “strikes eyes.” One of the journalists suggested the following example. It had historically been so that Socialdemokraterna/The Social Democratic Party was more strategic about appointing women to higher positions than their liberal conservative competitor Moderaterna/The Moderate Party. Recently, the journalists found out that Moderaterna “were hiring or appointing lots of females to high positions” (C, political reporter, male). As the journalists “always have discussions about trying to find new angles and new ways to write about parties and politics” (C, political reporter, male), this fact was considered to be worthy of a story. Thus, despite the scholars’ assumption that the gender of women politicians informs the journalists’ perception of their newsworthiness (where women politicians often receive coverage due to being seen as a novelty – Falk 2008; Ross 2002, 2014a), the Swedish journalists demonstrate a willingness to create more analytical stories, rather than just focusing on the exoticism of the situations where women politicians reach the top of the power hierarchy. The novelty and uniqueness of the presence of women in political sphere, according to the interviewees, is “not a story in itself” (N, editor of international department, male).

**“Women politicians stand alone”: the political dramaturgy**

Despite the journalists’ willingness to write gender-aware stories, they recognize specific gendering mechanisms within the political culture that require that politicians follow culturally set patterns of self-presentation and of their party’s image, which are to a large extent based on existing, in this culture, traditional gender codes. According to some political journalists, it is still easier for men to build their careers in the political sphere, which is a pattern that is very difficult to change:

I actually think that it is more difficult for a woman to be seen as a prime minister or a candidate – in Sweden as well! I mean, it is male, heterosexual, middle-aged people who are... Males, white males who are elected – presidents, prime ministers, and so on! (L, political observer, female)

The political culture, according to the political journalists, is also characterized by common associations of men and masculinity with positive business features, as well as by the stronger support men give to other men within the political culture (this phenomenon is discussed in the research as “homosociality”; see Bird 1996):
I think that Swedish voters, and the political system, and all the political scientists, as well as media viewed Mona Sahlin as a bad politician because she couldn't handle her economy, because she was a woman, partly. Because people are associating male politician with a more orderly economy (T, political editor, male).

These opinions correspond with the scholars’ vision of the problem of gendered mediation, which is connected with the overall tendency in modern culture to associate leadership with stereotypical masculine traits (Mbilinyi and Omari 1996). This “gender-as-difference” (D’Amico and Beckman 1995) approach still present within the parties, is, according to the journalists, often reproduced by the media, which are related to the political culture they are covering (see also Chapter 6.1). The following quotation correlates well with the findings in the previous research concerning the consequences of mediated political scandals for women politicians (Allern and Pollack 2012; Bromander 2012):

I’ve seen different examples of female politicians who seem to be, to stand more alone, when they get into trouble – it is easier for enemies within to turn against this politician. And, I think, media tends to slip into this – how do you say? – dramaturgy. Whereas […] male politicians have, if you generalize, a bigger back-up with probably friends or alliances around them. And, therefore, also when they fall it is easier to make a comeback (A, political reporter, female).

Thus, the political journalists do not deny that the political logic, which still, even in Sweden, seems to support men and subordinate women, influences the way political journalists report politics. However, according to the journalists, this “dramaturgy” set by the political logic does not play the pivotal role in their coverage of politics. Instead, the journalists try to search for strategies to counteract it. Among these strategies are both a rejection of the traditional stereotypes and attempts to produce counter-stereotypical representations of politicians, playing with commonly accepted gender codes:

There are some things that are more common or have been at least in Sweden, in media: to call women politicians by their first name, to write about their appearance, their looks, and to neglect certain issues that are seen as more female. So, there are things you try to think about when you are writing. Both in the sense not to repeat the same mistakes as others have done, but also to when you write about male politicians, maybe do it in the same way as it has historically or traditionally been done when you write about women: to write about

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64 Mona Sahlin was the leader of Socialdemokraterna/The Social Democratic Party and the leader of the Opposition from 2007 to 2011.
their appearance or looks, to write which colors they have on their tie, or calling them by their first name (C, political reporter, male).

Hence, the Swedish political journalists working for the quality press recognize the problems criticized by the gender media scholars (e.g., Braden 1996; Falk 2008; Jarlbro 2006; Norris 1997; Sreberny-Mohammadi and van Zoonen 2000; Ross 2002) and are trying to find ways to overcome them. A crucial element for avoiding essentialist gendering in the content is discussions in the newsrooms (see Chapter 5). According to the journalists, if gender spotlighting and stereotyping appear in the content, it points to the fact that “we haven’t discussed that enough” (P, editor of international department, female).

The discussions lead to gender-awareness having an important place in the Swedish culture of political journalism (see also Chapters 5 and 7). The journalists emphasize that addressing gender equality as a crucial topic in political journalism is a particular feature of the Swedish journalism, and that gender-sensitivity is a prism, which is brought in not only to cover of domestic issues, but also international affairs:

[I]n Swedish journalism when we write about foreign issues, we sort of bring these glasses. When we cover elections, for example, in other nations: if there are all men, it might be noted. I don’t know if it’s that common in other countries, but here it’s always present (V, editor of news department, male).

Thus, the Swedish journalists notice the mechanisms of gendering that are present within the political system in the country, and recognize that media tend to “slip into the same dramaturgy” of benefiting men and not women. In order to avoid supporting the political logic and so as not to reproduce gender stereotypes (which are perceived as “mistakes”), the journalists weapon themselves with counter-stereotypes and gender-aware stories, and try to attune gender-sensitivity through discussions within the newsroom.

**Reflexive gendering and “maturity” of the society**

The interviewees proudly described the Swedish culture of political journalism as a natural environment, where gender as an idea is something that everyone is aware of, gender as a practice is something to be addressed in (at least) quality media, and gender as a product of political journalism is pretty standardized and carefully examined in the process of creating news. Despite the effort it takes, the Swedish quality media produce a culture, where gender-awareness becomes an unquestionable standpoint for anyone involved in production of journalism:
When I say that I don't consciously think about it, I mean, as a journalist in the Swedish environment you have that issue, that topic (L, political observer, female).

The Swedish political journalists view gender-awareness as an inevitable constituent of their culture, and refer to it as something that is not very common among journalists in other countries. Gender-awareness is associated with maturity and progress, and symbolically situates the Swedish political journalism in an advanced position to journalism in other countries. The most common explanation for gender being an important issue in the Swedish political journalism, according to the interviewees, is the fact that the culture of political journalism is situated in a context where gender equality is a value:

It’s an angle that always comes up in Sweden [in the media...] Because we are society, that are – comparatively viewed – quite equal. And because journalists do think, that it’s an important and interesting angle (T, political editor, male).

The journalists as well point to the fact that, in Sweden, gender equality has been discussed for decades, which naturally makes gender as a societal matter an obvious issue to discuss in journalistic articles:

I mean, the self-image of Sweden is that it’s a country where gender equality is very important, and it has been like this for a long time. So, being kind of a central part of many people’s identity, that’s one of the reasons why it is also a focus in journalism. There is nothing strange about that, it's the same thing with equality in general terms. It's also an important topic in politics (V, editor of news department, male).

These societal discussions around women’s liberation and gender equality, which, according to the journalists, have been taking place since mid-19th century, define what is acceptable and unacceptable in the journalistic content. Although the achievement of gender equality ideal in the society can be questioned (Holli, Magnusson and Rönnblom 2005), the journalists try to fulfill the societal expectations and contribute to the gender-equal self-image of society. According to the journalists, it is “il’comilfo, not correct” to relay chauvinist ideas and produce essentialist gendering.

While gender-sensitivity appears to the journalists as natural and unquestionable, they still see it as a vivid feature of only the Swedish culture of political journalism. According to the interviewees, it is hard to imagine “the same thing in the US press, or British press,” and the Norwegian press appears as the only possible comparison due to the fact that in Norway too
“gender equality has been an issue for a long time” (L, political observer, female). As one of the interviewees expressed it,

I think, the [gender] issue and the concern for the issue is typical for the Swedish media in general. And, I think, you can see it when you compare with the Danish media, for instance, which I really know, ‘cause I lived in Malmö for so long. They have a very different approach to women. I’m not sure about politicians, but they still have people... women in underwear in newspapers! (S, political reporter, female)

As the “Swedish voters, readers are used to it – that there are women everywhere: in parliament, in government,” the journalists too “don’t make too big of a thing about the fact that there are women [in politics]” (H, international reporter, male). The presence of women in the political sphere is viewed by the journalists as a sign of maturity in the society, and – despite the fact that Sweden has never had a female prime minister – countries where women become leaders are perceived as being closer to Sweden due to the fact that the society there manifests receptiveness to the new tendencies. For example, one interviewee suggested that the fact that in Brazil a woman became a president

shows in a way the maturity of the society – that even a woman... or that a woman also can be elected president! Well, you’re from Russia, and if you compare, it might be that the Russian society is not mature enough to have a woman as a president (H, international reporter, male).

Thus, according to the journalists, the environment where gender equality has been an issue for a long time is one of the main factors influencing journalists – they are raised and socialized to become gender-aware. Moreover, the journalists know that not following the rules of the culture (both the culture of political journalism and broader national culture) may cost them criticism from both colleagues and readers, especially in social media: “You would receive reactions from many directions” (G, political reporter, female) (see also Chapter 6.3).

“Outdated way of describing things”: locating the culture in time

The perception of the Swedish culture of gender equality discussions as “mature” frames the journalists’ perceptions of other cultures. The excerpts from the Russian media (see Appendix 2) were perceived by the interviewed journalists as pieces coming from or reminders of the Swedish political jour-
nalism of the earlier decades and evaluated as an “outdated way of describing things” (A, political reporter, female). The suggestions concerning the time in history when the Russian text could be published in the Swedish media varied from the 1940s to the 1980s. The journalists in Sweden believe that the main reason for this lag is the “brutal political landscape” in Russia (M, political reporter, male), and the absence of consensus, which to a big extent shapes the national culture of political journalism:

Russia is a macho country, from my point of view. There are very few female Russian politicians. [...] They don't write so much about female politicians [...] Women have difficulties to become politicians, they try to look a bit down to women – overall. I mean, overall. And there is a risk it will be also in politics... I mean, we are a much more equal society! 50%, or almost 50% of our Parliament are women [...] We are used to having women in leading roles in politics! Mona Sahlin was leading the Social Democrats, which was the biggest party. So we are used to treating women equally [...] To me it’s a culture. And it takes generations to change it (J, international reporter, male).

One of the interviewees suggested that the Russian political journalists need to close this gap by starting a “movement” like the nineteenth century artists’ movement of Peredvizhniki\textsuperscript{65} to overcome the existing reproduction of stereotypes, which is perceived by the Swedish journalists to be a social mission of political journalism:

I guess, in Russia [there is a need] for the new Peredvizhniki when it comes to women and gender issues in Russia. Because at that time [in the 19th century] the paintings and the painters – they took this mission to show to the people what reality was. Not only making portraits of the tsaritsa and the noble – no, they considered that they had a social mission. And, obviously, this is something that should be done today in Russia, when it comes to gender (H, international reporter, male).

The Swedish journalists placed the texts from the Russian media on the op-ed pages of the newspapers, suggesting that the Russian articles are too opinionated, lack the facts, and have “awkward angles.” One of the articles from the Russian magazine (Appendix 2, example 2) got a reaction that “the values

\textsuperscript{65} Peredvizhniki (in English the Itinerants) were a group of Russian realist artists who, to protest academic restrictions, formed an artists’ cooperative at the end of the 19th century. They portrayed the social life by criticizing inequities and injustices and condemning the aristocratic orders and autocratic government. At the moment of the interview, a large exhibition of Peredvizhniki art was exhibited in Stockholm, which is the reason why the quoted interviewee suggested this metaphor.
that are represented in this article are too far from what’s seen as politically correct in Sweden” (C, political reporter, male). Moreover, the Russian colleagues’ choice of gender-spotlighting in the language raised critique:

It’s very hard for me to think about a news story in Sweden where we would use the word “damen-presidenten” [lady president] without quotation marks, because somebody called her that, or if you want to make fun of it, or something like that (V, editor of news department, male).

The Swedish journalists are proud of the level of gender-awareness, which, according to them, is common both for the culture of political journalism they inhabit, and more generally for the society that surrounds them. From the perspective of “maturity” they also judge the Russian journalism, which is perceived as lagging behind. The Swedish journalists relate this to the political pressure that the journalists in Russia might feel, and to the different type of politician-journalist interaction. However, the Swedish journalists believe that individual actors among the Russian journalists, new Peredvizhniki, could change the pattern and bring the Russian journalism closer to the gender-aware Swedish one.

**Sweden: discussion**

The journalists in Sweden relate the media representations they produce to the broader cultural context they are situated within. This context is characterized by a long history of discussions on gender issues. Arne König, the former head of the Swedish Union of Journalists, suggested that there is a general level of gender-awareness in the society, which journalists acquire by “being a part of the general debate” (interview from November 4th, 2009).

Still, this society, according to the journalists, is filled with the gender-related problems, and it is rather a self-image that it has of being gender equal than a reality (Holli, Magnusson and Rönnblom 2005). Interestingly enough, although this perspective, which suggests that the Swedish society has come much further than most other countries when it comes to gender equality, was common for all the interviewed Swedish journalists, men tended to be much more positive and uncritical when it comes to the gender equality achievement in the political sphere. As such, one of the male journalists who suggested that it is common to see female leaders in Swedish politics could in
fact only name one current female co-leader of a political party and one female leader who is no longer active in politics (Mona Sahlin). This tendency of presenting individual cases as a justification for existing gender equality is criticized by scholars and experts. For example, Helena Giertta, chief editor of the professional magazine *Journalisten*, suggests that while Sweden together with the other Nordic countries indeed can be considered to be in the avant-garde when it comes to gender equality, there are still political heights that are not reached by women:

We have come a bit further [...] Anyway, it is strange that we haven’t had a female prime minister in Sweden. Mona Sahlin was very close, that’s probably why we take this example all the time, when we look upon ourselves. She was the closest we’ve had (interview with Giertta from May 29th, 2012).

Axel Andén, chief editor of the professional magazine *Medievärlden*, also suggests that the possibility that there are journalists who disagree with the gender equality ideals spread in the society should not be excluded. However, it is the journalists’ background, the way they live, the area where they live, the people they communicate with, and, ultimately, the risk of being criticized by colleagues and others that force journalists to hide their thoughts if they think anything other than what is accepted in the Swedish society:

All journalists are so smart, so they can hide that [chauvinist stance] enough to be functioning. They could not make it in full bloom, I think – because of the rest of the newsroom, and the management. Newspaper wants to be perceived as modern, not as something with old values. Except for the editorial pages, where you can have conservative [views] – but that’s another thing, and they have their own newsroom (interview with Andén from November 11th, 2011).

Thus, the Swedish journalists do not distance themselves from a responsibility for gendering in the content and do not outsource it to the political sphere. Rather, they tend to take on the responsibility and refer primarily to the public debates on the gender equality issue as the determining factor in their choice of perspective in the news stories where gender as a societal issue becomes a center for the discussion.

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66 The journalist talked about Åsa Romson, one of the Spokespersons of Miljöpartiet de Gröna/The Green Party. Together with Annie Lööf, the head of Centerpartiet/The Center Party, they are currently the only female leaders of the parties presented in the parliament.
4.4. Comparative discussion and conclusions
This chapter answered a question about how gendering is conceptualized and contextualized by the inhabitants of the Russian and Swedish cultures of political journalism. I found that, first of all, the Russian and Swedish political journalists have different conceptualizations of gendering. In Russia, gender is mainly viewed as a personal characteristic (which is mainly “recognized” in women politicians), rather than a societal issue. The journalists, thus, refer to gendering as a process of defining a political actor according to this personal characteristic. In Sweden, gender is viewed critically, as a societal issue. Gendering for the Swedish journalists appears to be a process of highlighting the problem of inequality in the political sphere, which corresponds with the definition of gender mainstreaming (Bacchi and Eveline 2010). These approaches pre-define the type of gendering appearing in the content: in the Russian political journalism, essentialist gendering is more characteristic, and in the Swedish political journalism, reflexive gendering is more common.

Gendering, according to the journalists, is highly dependent on the broader cultural context – on whether there is a tradition of discussion of gender issues in the society, and on whether it is the political context or the cultural context that appears as more influential and powerful to the political journalists. The symbolic location of the two cultures differs. While the Russian journalists talked about the in-betweenness of the post-Soviet space – located between Europe and Asia (cf. Vartanova 2013) – that their culture of political journalism belongs to, their Swedish colleagues talked about a timeline and a maturity of their culture, as well as an assumed immaturity of the Russian culture of political journalism.

Moreover, the Russian journalists defined the borders of the Russian culture of political journalism by suggesting that the Swedish journalism seems to be too opinionated, almost tabloid-like. This can be explained by the fact that gender is perceived by the Russian journalists as referring mainly to personal characteristics and, thus, is considered to be a tabloid issue (cf. Ross 2002). The Swedish journalists reacted similarly to the Russian journalism, suggesting that there are different understandings of what is “politically correct” to publish in the political news in the quality newspapers and magazines, and of what can count as news and as opinions.

Gendering, thus, in a way demarcates the national culture of political journalism it is produced within. This corresponds with the findings of the previous studies on journalism cultures, demonstrating that societal influ-
ences and political systems define the variation between the cultures of journalism, thus, once again confirming the relevance of comparing national cultures of journalism (Berkowitz et al. 2004; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Heikkilä and Kunelius 2008; Weaver 1998; Örnebring 2009b). However, a reservation should be made for the cultures of political journalism in quality press. As the next chapter will demonstrate, the interpretation of quality is very similar across the contexts, yet it is not universal. Another observation that can be made is that it is not only the differences within the cultures of journalism that are defined by the national context, but also the journalists themselves construct borders between the national cultures by referring to the context these cultures are located within.

Thus, gendering, according to the journalists, is determined by the broader cultural context in which the political journalists are acting and to which they orientate when producing the content. However, I argue that gendering is also produced within a more narrow framework of a culture of political journalism, which is situated within the broader cultural context. The next chapters suggest looking into the cultures of political journalism to identify the processes and modes of origin of gendering.
5. Ethical ideologies and gendering

There are internal non-written standards, which do not allow in any way any gender discrimination in relation to anyone – be it a businesswoman, a female criminal, or a politician. Such an approach is typical for the Russian quality press, so on the level of newspaper Vedomosti, RBC – serious press; not tabloids, not Komsomolskaya Pravda.67

X, political and economic observer, international group, male (Russia)

We don't have any written words about this, but it's a thing we talk about a lot, I would say, every week. We try to talk about this balance between women and men, we're counting pictures in the magazine, and also talk, discuss about how they are being portrayed... All of these problems reflect wider gender inequality in society. [...] If we wrote about the society as if women and men had the same possibilities, then we would neglect the issue.

C, political reporter, male (Sweden)

This chapter turns to the ethical ideology as a part of the culture of political journalism. It illustrates how the formulation of the ethical ideal within the culture of political journalism influences the production of gendering from the view of journalists. Ethical ideologies define how representatives of the journalism culture respond to the ethical dilemmas, formulate the ideal and the unacceptable ways of carrying out their professional routines, and standards building the framework for the journalists' everyday practices (Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch 2012). These formal and informal rules, moreover, define the functioning of the media organization, and the conditions under which mediatization of other institutions (such as politics) is taking place (Hjarvard 2013).

Today, scholars continuously discuss the challenges that media ethics in general, and journalism ethics in particular, are facing in the changing media landscape, where “everyone can produce something that resembles journalism” (Ward 2013), and question whether and how journalism should consolidate its ethical foundation. According to gender media scholars,

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67 *Vedomosti* is a business daily newspaper published by the media group Sanoma. *RBC Daily* is a business newspaper published by the media group RBC Information Systems. *Komsomolskaya Pravda* is a popular Russian tabloid, one of the top-selling newspapers in the country, with editions for Russian speakers living in other countries.
The media content production environment is fraught with structural, ideological and practical complexities that work together to generate the resultant visible gender disparities. Creating a gender culture in the media should become a priority to fight the effects that gender-biased content has on the public’s perception of women and men, and the relations between them (Macharia and Morinière 2012, pp. 4-5).

This gender culture promoting gender-ethical journalism rests on definitions of what is ideal and what is unacceptable in journalistic practices more generally, as ethical ideals and values of journalism and its practice are strongly linked with the responsibility to provide society with balanced and correct information (see e.g. Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996; Hadenius and Weibull 1993). Gender media scholars link the appearance of gender stereotypes and unnecessary gender spotlighting in the news content to the level of gender awareness within the newsroom. In the words of gender media expert Amie Joof,

Where awareness is low, stories will tend to reinforce gender stereotypes rather than challenge them. Where awareness is high and there are in-house gender policies, guidelines, materials and resources, the tendency will be to produce stories that will challenge gender stereotypes, highlight gender equality or inequality and even utilize national gender equality policies or human and women’s rights legal instruments as bases for programming and news content. Most media houses lack resource materials and policy guidelines that can serve as a guide for reporters (Joof in GMMP 2010, pp. 25-26).

Thus, the ethical ideology, or more specifically gender-ethical ideology, is comprised of both in-house and external policies and guidelines defining the ideal and the unacceptable when it comes to covering women and men in the journalistic content as well as gender issues, and applying a gender angle in the news stories. The key elements that create a framework for the gender-ethical ideology are the legislative and self-regulatory frameworks, as well as the format (quality press) and genre (political news journalism) requirements. While, as we will see, the format of the quality press and the genre of political news journalism seems to impose universal requirements on journalists across cultures, legislative and self-regulatory frameworks include both international and country-specific restrictions.

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Gender-ethical – confronting discrimination in news and maintaining gender-aware journalism through the professional ethical standards, making journalists cognizant of and responsive to gender concerns (Macharia and Morinière 2012).
The question of universality versus country-specificity is often dealt with in the discussions about ethical ideologies (Hanitzsch et al. 2011; Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch 2012). While there are universal ethical standards and a certain degree of an ideological consensus on the acceptable approaches and responses to ethical dilemmas across the journalism cultures (Elliott 2009; Ward 2005, 2009, 2010), country- and news organization-specific standards, as well as individual ethical beliefs also frame the ethical orientations of the representatives of various journalism cultures69 (Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch 2012). As it is, according to Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch (2012), “diverse cultural and ideological contexts, not universally internalized values, [that] often drive journalists’ ethical orientations” (p. 656), I here turn to the ethical ideologies in the Russian and Swedish national cultures of political journalism.

This chapter first provides normative and self-regulatory backgrounds against which the practices of the journalists in Russia and Sweden are exercised. These frameworks are usually discussed as the ones restricting essentialist gendering in the news content, and promoting gender-aware journalism. The chapter then turns to the experiences of the representatives of the Russian and Swedish cultures of political journalism, and in-house guidelines and prescriptions that they say frame gender-ethical ideologies.

5.1. Normative background

The call of international and national laws and conventions’ for equal opportunities and rights for women and men defines the most general contours of the political journalism gender-ethical ideologies. As far as gendering in the content is concerned, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966/76), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the UN Millennium Development Goals (2000), the European Convention on Human Rights (1953), the Helsinki Accords (1975), along with

69 There can be very different gender-ethical ideologies even in geographically proximate national journalism cultures. For example, Portuguese scholars state that there is an urgent need to work out what they call a “Good Practices Guide” in order to promote gender-balanced journalistic content, since media employees in Portugal consider gender equality to be a non-issue to discuss in the newsroom (Cerqueira et al. 2014). At the same time, in Spain journalists are required to follow professional style guides, where a special section is devoted to coverage of women and men and to gender issues (Fernandez Garcia 2014).
a whole range of protocols, indirectly guide journalists in producing content – they constitute the “exterior shell” of the ethical ideologies of journalism.

At the national level in Russia, the 19th article, part 3 of the Constitution guarantees equal rights and freedoms for women and men as well as opportunities for their realization. Despite this since mid-1990s gender activists and experts have been calling for the introduction of a special law that would articulate gender equality specifically. Whereas the law “On State guarantees of equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for women and men in the Russian Federation” (2003) passed the first parliamentary reading, the second one, needed for the law to be accepted never did. There have also been several presidential decrees devoted to strategies of promotion of gender equality. In 2004 a project was published, “Gender strategy of the Russian Federation,” where the key points of the gender policy were stressed. The strategy stated, e.g., that there is a need for broad national and international campaigns aimed at increasing the level of the gender culture in the Russian society, and of social responsibility in media (Gender strategy 2004).

In Sweden, the first laws forbidding discrimination based on sex were adopted already in the 1970s, and in 1972 the National Council for Equality between Men and Women was formed, followed by the Ombudsman for Gender Equality and the Commission for Gender Equality (1980). Today the overall tendency in Northern Europe can be described as subordinating concerns for gender equality to concerns for diversity (where the intersection between gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, age etc. stands at the core of the approach). Following this trend in 2009 goals of ombudsmen for different types of discrimination were consolidated under the roof of the Ombudsman against discrimination (Diskrimineringsombudsman), and a new law, The Law against Discrimination (2009), was introduced. The law is aimed to confront discrimination, e.g., in the workplace and in professional careers, in education, in health care, in organization membership and in social services. While it covers almost all spheres of social life, it cannot regulate gendering in the media content, as the media regulation acts – Tryckfrihetsförordningen/The Freedom of the Press Act (1949) and Yttrandefrihetsgrundlagen/The Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression (1991) – defend the media against interference with the production of con-

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70 As explained by Temkina and Zdravomyslova (2014), due to a block from conservative lawmakers and civic organizations.
tent. According to Swedish researcher Maria Edström, this conflict highlights the necessity of a well-developed system of self-regulation (interview with Edström from October 5th, 2009).

5.2. Self-regulatory background

The existence of the gap between the normative guarantees of equal rights and freedoms and the actual media production is recognized not only by the experts, but also by the professional journalistic community. According to Aidan White, the General secretary of the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), “Fair gender portrayal is a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty” (White in Getting the Balance Right 2009). According to a survey conducted by the IFJ in 2001, most of the IFJ member unions in the world have adopted codes of conduct or practice defining ethics in journalism that include a clause with a call to professionals not to publish materials discriminating against persons on the basis of race, sex, religion or ethnicity (Peters 2001). Moreover, all of the IFJ member unions have signed the IFJ Principles on the Conduct of Journalists, which states in paragraph 7 that:

The journalist shall be aware of the danger of discrimination being furthered by the media, and shall do the utmost to avoid facilitating such discrimination based on, among other things, race, sex, sexual orientation, language, religion, political or other opinion, and national or social origins (Peters 2001, p. 15).

More recently, after the publication of the results of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) in 2010, the IFJ called on media owners to take steps to raise women’s profile in the news, both as professionals and as news topics. As Aidan White commented, “Fair gender portrayal in news is not a side show. It needs to be taken seriously. We cannot continue to ignore the needs of half of the world’s population” (White 2010).

The IFJ has worked out specific gender equality modules to be used in news reporting training. For example, the brochure Getting the Balance Right: Gender Equality in Journalism (2009) suggests particular recommendations for journalists in order to avoid gender stereotyping in the production of the journalistic content (for example refraining from using descriptions of women that include physical, marital and/or family status, unless it is essential to the story; respecting the gender balance in the choice of experts and witnesses; and avoiding descriptions of women that pander to societal expectations of women that are inherently limiting – e.g., “mother of six” – or in other ways trivialize, diminish, or exploit women).
Together with the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC), the IFJ also published a resource kit on gender-ethical journalism and media house policy (Macharia and Morinière 2012). It presents findings from research undertaken in 2011 to establish the status of gender in media codes of ethics worldwide, and suggests that

the emphasis on codes and guidelines is driven by an understanding that these factors interact with age-old journalistic routines to produce and maintain the gender inequities and inequalities seen in media output. Robust, gender-focused media codes of ethics can potentially institutionalize a different kind of practice that is cognizant about and responsive to gender concerns (p. 20).

The research, which was undertaken by the IFJ and WACC, found that there are different statuses given to gender in the ethical codes (from gender concerns being integrated as a general norm to integration of gender concerns as a strong prescription) (Macharia and Morinière 2012). Moreover, scholars noticed that macro-level policies underscore gender concerns in journalistic practice; the only way to influence the actual practice is then to concretize policies into particular “implementable media-house level codes and guidelines” (Macharia and Morinière 2012, p. 22). The latter practical guidelines concentrate on thematic concerns, one of which is “reporting politics from a gender lens, and particularly writing on women in news pertaining to elections, government and politics in general” (ibid.).

In addition to the guidelines suggested by the IFJ, there are other organizations that provide journalists with specific tools that contribute to the production of more gender-aware and balanced content. Among them is 1) the toolkit developed by the Global Media Monitoring Project called Mission Possible (2008), 2) suggestions for becoming more gender-sensitive in reporting developed by UNESCO – Gender-Sensitive Reporting (n.d.) and Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media (Grizzle 2012), 3) guidelines for journalists implemented by the Council of Europe called Gender Issues (n.d.) and Women and Journalists First (Hermes 2013), and 4) a special project aimed at political journalists called Portraying Politics (c. 2006). The latter project was developed by a European consortium of broadcasters, trainers, and journalists’ unions, and advises journalists and program makers to reflect on the gendered mediation on television.

In Russia the problem of lack of special regulations related to gender equality is often highlighted by the experts, both outside of Russia and in the country. For example, the IFJ worked out a Regional Plan of Action in
the sphere of gender equality in the media for Central Asia, Caucasus, Russia, and Mongolia, stating that there is a lack of gender strategies aimed at reaching gender equality and balance in the content, as well as a low level of gender awareness among journalists in the region (see Azhgikhina 2008). According to Nadezda Azhgikhina, Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and the IFJ Regional Gender Council coordinator, “Gender aspects are not highlighted either in the media legislation, or in the Ethical Code, or in the documents regulating the activities of the TV and radio companies” (interview with Azhgikhina from April 12th, 2010). She believes, however, that “the [existing] legislation implies that equality is guaranteed, and the rest is the business of the self-regulatory bodies” (ibid). Moreover, according to her, the overall tendency when it comes to the promotion of gender equality in Russian journalism is positive:

In the recent years the awareness of journalists has grown. Many people think today that discrimination is non-comilfo, a bad taste. Our profession has become female, but the sexist content is often produced by women, as advertisement is given for such a content. There is a need for work with the audience, with the media representatives. There should be a responsibility of the female community, there should be promotion of awareness. But a lot is conducted already today – both by our own resources, and within collaborative projects of the Russian Union of Journalists, Faculty of Journalism of Moscow State University, Swedish projects FOJO, Kvinnoforum, and other gender programs (interview with Azhgikhina from April 12th, 2010).

There is, however, a different point of view. Olga Voronina, director of the Moscow Center for Gender Studies, who from the 1990s has been involved in gender expertise of the media legislation (e.g. Voronina 1998), believes that only strict legislative norms can positively change the situation with production of gendered media content in Russia:

If there are articulated ethical norms in relation to, let’s say, propaganda of fascism; discrimination of women, or insulting of women, or humiliation of women – as a sex – is by no way regulated in the laws. That’s why we can never tell a journalist: “You are a sexist.” Because he can reply: “That’s how I see it.” And in this situation, it is impossible to prove that if you are a journalist, then you have to hold to certain norms. You cannot punish a journalist for public offense of the female sex […] Against this you can set only one thing – strict legislative framework (interview with Voronina from April 14th, 2010).
Even though experts are critical to the existing legislative and ethical frameworks, there are in fact two statutes of the Code of Ethics for Russian journalists that restrict the creation of gender-imbalanced content in journalism. One of them states that it is a professional responsibility of a journalist to *counteract* extremism and limitations of civil rights in relation to sex, race, language, religion, political and other views, as well as social and ethnic background. Another one calls for *abstaining* from any disregarding hints or comments in relation to race, nationality, religion, social background, or sex, as well as in relation to physical defects, or illnesses (Code of Ethics 1994).

In Russia there are several self-regulatory bodies that control the compliance of the Code of Ethics when it comes to gender issues: the Russian Union of Journalists (and especially its Association of Female Journalists, which since the early 1990s has been conducting gender monitoring of the media, and trainings aimed at promotion of gender-awareness among both female and male journalists), the Big Jury\(^{71}\) (the self-regulatory professional court dealing with all kinds of ethical issues in the content of the media), and the Press Council\(^{72}\) (organization dealing with public complaints of media content). However, according to Nadezda Azhgikhina,

> the problem is that people seldom apply to these organizations for three reasons: the legal culture is not developed enough, there is no moral support, and citizens have a low self-esteem. So, many of them just complain to each other. Moreover, many people do not perceive gender issues as serious (interview with Azhgikhina from April 12\(^{th}\), 2010).

\(^{71}\) In 2003 about one hundred women’s and other organizations wrote a complaint to the Big Jury about an episode of a TV show “Kulturnaya revolyutsiya”/“Cultural revolution” titled, “A masterpiece can only be created by a man.” The episode was considered by the Big Jury to be sexist, and created a precedent, drawing the attention of the media to the problem of gender discrimination in the media content. Moreover, it opened up for a discussion of the possibility of combining a journalist and a political careers, since the show was led by Michail Schwydkoj, who in 2000-2004 also held the position of Minister of Culture.

\(^{72}\) In the Press Council’s history of dealing with gender-related issues, two cases became resonant. The first one concerned the article titled “Say a word for a poor man!” (my translation) published in newspaper *Novye izvestiya*. A group of feminists accused its author of justification of violence against women, as the journalist referred to a psychologist claiming that women often send erotic signals that are misunderstood by men, which causes rapes. Following the decision of the Press Council, the newspaper published the article response from the feminist group. Another case involving the most popular national tabloid *Moskovskij Komsomolets* is described in Chapter 6.
In Sweden there is a similar debate about the adequacy of the existing legislative and ethical framework for creating gender-aware and balanced content. One of the most important guarantees for gender balance in the journalistic content is the Code of Conduct for Swedish journalists, which tells journalists not to focus on the ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, political view, sexual orientation of the person covered in the article if it is not relevant in the context and if it is disrespectful (Code of Conduct n.d.).

According to some experts, the existing ethical rules are not sufficient for creating the gender balanced content. For example, the scholarly and activist group “Allt är möjligt”/Everything is Possible some years ago called for the media community to specify the rules, suggesting that the ethical code needs to emphasize that journalists should counteract discrimination based on the stereotypical representations of people in pictures and text, which concerns both groups and individuals in relation to sex, ethnicity, religious views, sexual orientation, physical capability and age73 (interview with Maria Edström from October 5th, 2009). However, the journalistic community was not enthusiastic about accepting the suggested changes. As the then head of the Swedish Union of Journalists Arne König formulated it,

> When it comes to the content, we are reluctant and careful not to tell members what to write […] We think that it’s a matter for the employers to deal with […] If you go to the UK, they have very detailed rules on how to write about this and that – minorities, women’s issues. We don’t believe that you can regulate everything. People need to think themselves, not going to the rules (interview with König from November 4th, 2009).

The Swedish Union of Journalists mainly functions as a professional union, but incorporates the Council for Professional Ethics (YEN). Its board members – journalists working for different media companies – know firsthand about different ways of upsetting the gender balance in the content and ways to prevent it. The task of the YEN is to investigate cases related to professional ethics (in any type of media) and to determine whether alleged ethical violations are indeed violations. The Council also participates in the professional ethics debate and assists in press ethics-related education both inside and outside the Union.

The other two Swedish organizations dealing with professional media ethics are The Office of the Press Ombudsman (PO) and the Press Council (PON). These two bodies are tasked with monitoring the printed media and

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73 The group has prepared its own handbook in gender media critique with guidelines for journalists (Allt är möjligt 2004).
making sure that it follows the Code of Conduct. The task of the PO is both to advise and to help individuals who feel wronged by publicity, either on their own initiative or as a result of a complaint. The PO can forward cases to the PON which may lead to accusations of the media not acting according to the professional press ethics.

The common view within both the Swedish and the Russian journalistic community is that the key for a functioning media is their freedom, and that when it comes to the production of content, it is the journalistic community itself that should decide on what to write and how. In the words of the Swedish Press Ombudsman (PO) Ola Sigvardsson,

According to the law, you can publish almost anything. You could absolutely publish that you think that women are to blame for rape. That's not against the law! [...] But it is against the ethics, the ethical code. I mean, the ethical code is much harder when it comes to these questions [...] You are not punished if you break the ethical code! You are punished if you commit a hate crime, or if you are defaming people, but if you break the ethical code, if I say so, and the Pressensopinionsnämnd [the Press Council, PON] says so, the newspaper must publish that they did wrong. That's all that happens! And I think that's enough. I mean, newspapers do not like to be told that they acted in an unethical way (interview with Sigvardsson from March 2nd, 2012)

Not restricted from above, but instead holding to the international norms, the journalistic community in both Russia and Sweden, according to the experts, is assumed to have formulated its own rules and established its own bodies to maintain gender balance in the content. However, as we will see from the interviews with the Russian and Swedish political journalists, they seldom refer to these legislative and self-regulative frameworks when discussing gender-ethical ideologies. We will observe a clear gap between these frameworks and the actual practices (cf. Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996).

5.3. Russia: gender-neutral journalism ideal

Many of the Russian interviewees doubted that the topic of our discussion had anything to do with their daily work. Gendering seemed to them to be something that had nothing to do with political journalism in quality press at all. At least the very first reaction of nearly all of the Russian journalists I talked to was to deny gender as being an issue in their professional ideology – it was neither related to their aims, nor an ethical dilemma:
We are walking in a circle. I am telling you that, from my point of view, this is not a problem or a goal. And you are making me model my behavior in the situation, which I cannot quite imagine. I cannot do it at the moment. Gender issues are not blazing at the moment, from my point of view (H, editor of political department, male).

The only difference they could point to was the number of women and men politicians they write about, which, according to them, is something they cannot control: as their mission is to reflect society, they represent “the politics as it is” (see Chapters 4 and 6.1). However, what is under their control, is the way they are writing about politics, i.e., the way they describe politicians, the issues they pay attention to, and the angles from which they cover politics. In relation to all of this, political journalism, according to the journalists, is or should be gender-neutral, which means free of any gendering – be it in the form of gender-spotlighting, stereotyping, or counter-stereotyping and gender-aware stories. There were two distinct perspectives on gender-neutral political journalism among the interviewees – one suggesting that political journalism is gender-neutral by definition, another stating that it becomes gender-neutral through devotion to such values as objectivity,74 neutrality (in general), and political correctness.

**Gender-neutral “by definition”: a nihilist approach to gendering**

“Political journalism as a genre is gender-neutral by definition” – this was a common refrain in many of the conducted interviews. This approach, which I define as “nihilist,” suggests that gender in general is something “foreign” to political journalism – neither a part of the political sphere that journalists cover on a daily basis, nor a part of their own culture and world, and, thus, there are no ethical dilemmas related to gendering:

74 As mentioned in Chapter 2, objectivity has an ambiguous character. On the one hand, it is named by the journalists as an ethical ideal, and on the other, it refers to the epistemological beliefs of journalists (see Hanitzsch 2013). In this chapter, objectivity is discussed by the journalists in normative terms – as an unquestionable value. Yet in Chapter 7, objectivity is discussed from the perspective of journalistic practice, where it is challenged by multiple factors, such as practical convenience and an individual journalist’s subjective values. The reader will be able to see how these two understandings of objectivity enter a dialogue in the journalists’ attempt to narrow (at least in the interview talk) the gap between ideal and actual practice (see more about this gap in Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996).
We don’t write about gender in power! We are not conducting any philosophical studies... We write about quite particular subjects, themes, events. We are not interested in gender (F, political editor, male).

This nihilist approach suggests that political journalism is gender-neutral due to the specificity of politics as a profession, where sex – as a category – disappears, dissolves, especially when it concerns characteristics of political personalities (recall “gender-less screws” in the state machine mentioned in Chapter 4). Thus, the journalists suggest that any attention to gender issues in political journalism would rather feed into the existing gender hierarchies than question them:

Gender is far from being the main thing, especially in politics. If a person decided to do politics, he understands what he is going for, what kind of business it is, so among politicians there are professionals, and it is both women and men. And women just like men completely understand what they do. Those who don't want to go to politics, become home-keepers and so on. Maybe the differences in the perception, the differences in the behavior of male and female politicians [caused by the societal perception] do exist, but there is no need to overstate them (P, international reporter, male).

Gendering (either essentialist or reflexive) from this perspective appears as nonsense, something contrary to the very nature of political journalism, and as irrelevant to the political journalism culture as a discussion on birds chirping. As one of the interviewees formulated it, “This topic is like ‘What is your attitude to screaming sparrows?’ I have no attitude to them!” (G, editor of international department, male). Thus, political journalism in the quality press often appears to the Russian journalists to be gender-neutral by definition. It should be noted here that this perspective was mainly shared by the male journalists, who, in a way, free themselves from gender-ethical dilemmas. Yet these dilemmas, as we will see in the next subchapter, are noticed by their more gender-sensitive colleagues, and, thus, are just made invisible by neglecting them.

**Gender-neutral as a demand of quality press: an objectivist approach**

Another approach to gendering within the Russian culture of political journalism suggests that political journalism can be gendered, but should be gender-neutral, especially as long as we talk about the quality press. This approach suggests that gendering exists in political journalism – if not in the media where the interviewees work, then in other ones (in the yellow press, in differently politically-oriented media, or in other countries). According to
the journalists suggesting this perspective, it is the features specific for the Russian quality press that should prevent journalists from gendering.

The journalists emphasize that it is not the norms, but rather the culture of quality political journalism\(^{75}\) (its tradition rooted in the 1990s, when a new type of journalism was launched in Russia) (cf. McNair 2000; Vartanova 2013; Zassoursky 2004), that defines the main values that journalists subscribe to. These values, i.e., neutrality, objectivity, equal approach to everyone, and correctness, signal the press as “serious” and of quality. This corresponds with the previous research findings that the Russian journalists have taken on Western journalism cultures’ principles, where objectivity and impartiality score high as professional standards (Anikina and Johansson 2013; see also Mancini 2000; Schudson 2001 for a discussion on the traveling journalistic values).

If we consider *Kommersant*, it is a serious newspaper. It is serious in everything – in its approaches, choice of newsmakers, and serious when it comes to conscious cutting off the “yellow-ness.” It means that for *Kommersant* there is generally no difference between a female politician and a male politician. We are interested in Angela Merkel\(^{76}\) because she is the federal chancellor of Germany, not because she is a woman. In this sense, we are just as interested in her as in Nicolas Sarcozy\(^{77}\) (journalist, *Kommersant*).

The culture (or even the “nature”) of quality political journalism, according to its inhabitants, qualitatively differs from the other types or cultures of journalism, especially from the tabloids. Political news journalism in the quality press appears as a specific genre, as it assumes that there is as little attention placed on personal characteristics (including gender) of the subjects of stories as possible: “We almost don’t have evaluative staff. What we have is: event – action – description” (D, political reporter, female). Moreover, this format provides a very limited space for details and opinions, which in a way “de-genders” political news journalism:

Quality journalism is a “gender-less” journalism [...] For some reason evaluative stuff – things concerning gender, emotional characteristics – they are

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\(^{75}\) Of all the interviewees only two referred to the international human rights and to the Constitution when speaking about the norms framing their practices.

\(^{76}\) Angela Merkel has been the federal chancellor of Germany since 2005, and the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since 2000.

\(^{77}\) Nicolas Sarcozy was the president of France from 2007 to 2012.
not popular. Well, they all are there – but in the tabloids (Z, political and economic reporter, male).

Appearance, marital status, personal characteristics in general, as the journalists suggest, ideally should be dried out from the political journalism in quality press. The editorial board in the quality media is concerned that the different formats remain as far from each other as possible. What happens if a journalist allows her- or himself to add some gendered characteristics of a politician, i.e., if he or she describes the appearance of a woman politician, is that two or three times such phrases would be cut out and changed to drier ones. If it happens a fourth time, there would be a remark [from editors], that there exists a format of a column, where an author has a relative freedom of utterances – they can be written by experts, politicians, diplomats; there is also a format for a story, where an author has a relatively big freedom. But 90% of the materials are news materials and there, such things are unacceptable (L, international reporter, female).

Editorial policies concerning keeping to the ideal of gender-neutral journalism are strict and leave no space for any frivolousness or jokes when it comes to the gender of politicians – be they women or men. Even when journalists wish to highlight the gender of politicians as a certain positive feature, they face such restrictive standards that spotlighting of gender even for noble purposes doesn’t meet the quality journalism requirements. For example, the interviewee quoted above wrote about a session in the European Parliament, where one of the parliamentarians made what the journalist found to be a very clear and interesting statement. This parliamentarian happened to be the only transsexual person in the European Parliament. As the journalist commented,

Honestly, I so much wanted to capture the atmosphere, and I had a will to write that the brightest quotation in this discussion came from this whether a woman, or a man – well, at least specify it for the reader. But the editor set strict limits: no giggling, no hints to the transsexual story, we just represent her. I asked: “So, do we write ‘he’ or ‘she’?” And the editor said: “What is written on the European Parliament’s website?” I said: “She.” “That’s it, that’s what we write, no insinuations” (L, international reporter, female).

Despite the existence of these requirements set by the editors, the journalists stated that these are not set as norms – unlike, for example, the usage of swear words or folk words, or technical details, these ethical guidelines are “not articulated, it is on the level of understanding how it has been set”
(K, editor of news department, male). The journalists said that they would be surprised to learn that there are any special standards concerning coverage of women and men politicians, or of gender issues (even though, as we learned, such guidelines exist). The value of objectivity and the requirement to focus on politicians’ deals, programs, and strategies, as well as the inner critical voice, thus determine the way the journalists cover politics in the quality press:

I would say there is nothing like “Write about a woman like about a dead person: either good things, or nothing.” There is nothing like this, just as there is nothing like this for men [...] We try to write objectively to the maximum, based on facts, and due to this there appears a certain image (V, political reporter, male).

Thus, the view that is prevalent among the Russian political journalists suggests that political journalism has a potential for gendering (of both types), but it should not be done. They suggest that the demands of the quality press – objectivity and neutrality – frame the borders of the acceptable and the unacceptable as far as gendering in the content is concerned.

**Russia: discussion**

Fullfillment of the ideal of gender-neutral journalism seemingly satisfies the value of objectivity and annihilates all the problems with gendering in the media content, as gendering then – assumingly – disappears from the political news journalism. However, in the words of the gender media scholars, such professional ethics has a lens “devoid of a gender filter” (Macharia and Moriniere 2012, p. 15), meaning that while the principles of truth, balance, and fairness are applied, they neglect gender equality and balance concerns. The Russian journalists justify the suppression of the gender-sensitivity in writing by referring to the formal requirements of the genre and format – objectivity and neutrality. The result is a self-imposed gender-blindness, which is their response to the requirement of producing gender-neutral journalism. In this sense, the concept of objective reporting becomes for the Russian journalists a defense strategy, assisting them in countering charges of gendering (Allan 1998).

Only one journalist I interviewed suggested that the standards of the media industry should in fact be changed, as essentialist gendering is a threat to the quality of political journalism. However, even in the answer the journalist put an emphasis on the uniqueness of his perspective:
I will now say things that journalists usually do not like to tell [...] I think, there should be a not very public, but a very mandatory agreement between the heads of the media that we should all work in this direction [towards overcoming essentialist gendering]. I emphasize, [that the agreement should be] not between the owners, but between the editors-in-chief. It is, however, very unlikely to happen [and to change anything], as any violation of this agreement will make it senseless (N, head of international group, male).

The reason why journalists react negatively to suggestions for making the professional standards stricter, is that they view any intervention into their culture as a potential threat to the democratic freedom of speech (see also Chapter 6.2). Freedom of expression is a democratic ideal that the political journalists seem to value the most, and they consistently oppose any new guidelines, standards, or requirements that would regulate their job (something that is strongly criticized by scholars, who claim that the gendering of women politicians in the media is often related to the gaps in the normative and ethical framework – see Voronina 1998).

This corresponds with what, for example, Voltmer (2013, p. 29) writes about how quality issues are left to self-regulation rather than state regulation because of the risk of censorship and political interference. Although some of the Russian journalists express the fear that weak professional ethics can negatively influence their independence, they simultaneously fear the growing state influence (manifested both in the regulatory and ownership dimensions) and owners’ increasing demands for profit (Anikina and Johansson 2013, p. 96). Any policies or guidelines that would restrict gendering of politicians in the media discourse, they believe, will become a “bee in the bonnet,” and will have a negative effect not only on journalism, but even on the readers’ perception of it:

The media, they are sort of free in these terms [when it comes to such tools as gendering]. Because if this becomes regulated, then the reader will immediately understand that this all is handed down (E, political reporter, female).

However, even if the journalists claim that they always remember about the need to abstain from gendering due to “the reaction on the part of the persons involved in the theme, because there always is a possibility to chance upon a legal action” (X, political and economic observer, international group, male), the Russian political journalism culture with its gender-neutral, but not gender-sensitive, ideal of journalistic content is very vulnerable. While journalists “aim to keep to a minimum external definitions of how the media should perform their role to serve democracy” (Voltmer
2013, p. 25), the absence of guidelines worked out internally, within the culture of political journalism, may in the end lead to interventions from the power holders. Vladimir Kasutin, Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and chief editor of the professional magazine Zhurnalstika i mediynok explains that at least 20% of the Russian newspapers do not have any internal documents regulating the practices of producing content (interview with Kasutin from December 19th, 2011). He warns that the lack of such standards, and the general lack of ethics, will sooner or later harm the Russian journalists:

Journalists blame the power, but do not want to limit themselves [...] In any normal newsroom there should be various documents [toolkits], which, on the one hand, help to quickly prepare the content, and on the other, set the ethical norms. How can you talk about independence, freedom, and other important things, when you yourself are like a wind vane, when you do not take a firm position, and you are ready to renounce for an interest of a minute? (Interview with Kasutin from December 19th, 2011).

Thus, the first paradox of the journalists’ strive for producing gender-neutral journalism is its relation to maintenance of the freedom of expression, and we will be able to see how the conflict between the journalists’ ideals and practices is manifested in the process of political communication in Chapter 6.2. A second problem concerns the process of commercialization and tabloidization of journalism, which challenges the quality outlets’ values and ideals (Kammer 2013; McManus 2009; McQuail 2005). The Russian journalists generally are critical towards the quality of journalism in the country. According to Anikina and Johansson (2013), 47.6% of the Russian journalists believe that the quality of journalism in the country has decreased in the last 5-10 years (p. 109). The journalists I interviewed are also of this opinion and share the vision that “gender stereotyping is a litmus test for the quality of (public) journalism” (Hermes 2013, p. 14). However, the journalists see the difficulties in formulating particular rules to guarantee that quality journalism remains faithful to its ideals, including production of gender-neutral journalism, although they continue to believe that the normative value of objectivity, which they understand in terms of veracity, factuality, and truthfulness, will serve as a shield for quality journalism against both the political and the market logic. This perspective, however,

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78 As we will see in the next subchapter, this differs from the Swedish journalists’ interpretation of objectivity as a balance of opinions (read more about this understanding of objectivity in Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996, p. 21).
Gendering in political journalism may make the media vulnerable not only to the interventions from power holders, but also to the imperatives of the market (see Chapter 6.3).

5.4. Sweden: gender-balanced journalism ideal

The Swedish journalists also prefer to talk not about the written instructions or norms framing the way they cover women and men politicians, and gender issues in politics, but rather about a specific culture of political journalism, within which the expectations of quality are formulated:

There are these unwritten rules, or culture, I would say, rather than rules, culture that we try to achieve balance. If someone wrote something about a female politician that differed very much from the way that we normally cover politics, that would lead to a discussion, or somebody would notice or say something on one of these morning meetings that we have in the newspaper (V, editor of news department, male).

Political journalism, as the representatives of the Swedish culture of political journalism claim, is specific in that it is difficult, or even impossible to regulate the interactions between journalism and politics. While the journalists are reluctant to any interventions in the form of rules (as one of the interviewees formulated it, the journalists are “allergic” to policies), they are ready to discuss the various mechanisms – gendering being one of them – that are at work as far as the interrelations between them and politicians are concerned:

You asked about norms, and regulations, and rules, and how that works, and who is in control, and I am thinking: well, this is an unarticulated system we have to deal with, because we don’t want it to be regulated, or with a lot of rules... In the relations between media and politics, I don't think you can actually regulate it. You can reflect on it, you can debate it, you can try to make people aware about different mechanisms, but you cannot regulate it (K, political reporter, female).

While the Swedish journalists deny the existence of special policies concerning gender equality in the content, unlike in Russia, gender-sensitivity is articulated in the Swedish culture of political journalism as one of the values along with objectivity, neutrality, and political correctness. Rather than aiming for gender-neutral journalism, which denies interest in gender – be it a characteristic of a person or a political issue - the Swedish quality press employees choose a different goal, gender-balanced journalism, which implies a specific focus on gender (both as a feature and an issue) aimed at
re-evaluating of what was produced before and formulating step-by-step guidelines for future production.

**Gender-balanced through counting: a quantitative approach**

The professional ethics in Sweden are not devoid of a gender filter. Rather, the ethics articulate particular approaches to producing gender-ethical content, not in the form of written rules, but rather in the form of more invisible, but still strict, cultural requirements. The first of these approaches concerns the quantitative characteristics of the news content. Newsrooms must control the number of female and male sources and must have discussions before and after the publication of articles, making it “a natural part” of journalistic work:

That’s not written rules, but you don’t want to have men, men, men in ordinary articles, in ordinary stories. [...] That’s more of a vibrant discussion than rules or regulation (K, political reporter, female).

We discuss this, we don’t have any policies, but the more we talk about the journalism before it’s in the paper, the more you decide that “today we should have a piece about this, and there we would like to have women,” the more we can make, I think, this mix work (P, editor of international department, female).

One of the main components of achieving the quantitative gender balance is counting the number of women and men represented in a newspaper or a magazine. According to the Swedish Pressombudsman Ola Sigvardsson, the counting of sources started approximately 10-15 years ago, when

many newspapers and many newsrooms were discussing how many men and women they had on their front page. And, for example, in the paper I used to work for, Östgöta Correspondenten, we did make statistics and evaluate it! And many times during our morning meetings, for example, I would say: “Today it’s five men on the front page, and no woman – we cannot have that!” So, those kinds of discussions I have been involved in. And I think many newspapers did this (interview with Sigvardsson from March 2nd, 2012).

Counting is still a common practice within the Swedish newsrooms in general (Edström 2011). According to the Council for Professional Ethics (YEN), in almost all of the media companies, there are special gender guidelines for the employees worked out by the management of the media companies (discussion with the representatives of the YEN from November 4th, 2009). The journalists I talked to perceive counting as a natural part of their work:
Some departments [...] calculate the pictures: How many pictures with women do we have in the paper? How many pictures of men do we have? Or they count quotes: Are we using, for example, female experts as often as male experts, if you call an expert to get a view or something. We don't have it on the international pages right now, in my department, but I know others – the business department – they have this thing (N, editor of international department, male).

Counting, however, is not unproblematic, and it does receive criticism. The problem is not the strategy of trying to achieve a quantitative balance as such, but the quality of such research, which, according to the journalists, is not sufficient – not “scientific” and not “deep enough.” For example, Axel Andén, editor of the professional magazine *Medievärlden*, suggests that the journalists in most of the media outlets do not go as deep as to analyze the text and the context (interview with Andén from November 11th, 2011). According to the journalists, it is difficult to improve the practice of counting for economic reasons:

We thought that the easiest way is to measure how many pictures we have with women, and, of course, it is not very scientific way of doing it, but on the other hand, we have to be able to do it. I mean, we are not scientists [...] Someone from the staff [does it], yeah, no one from outside; no, we do it ourselves. Otherwise, it would cost money (N, editor of international department, male)

Despite being called an “infantile game” (Y, editor-in-chief, male), counting, according to the journalists, remains the most efficient way to establish a goal of an equal representation of the society in general, and the political sphere in particular, as it allows for asking further questions and improving the quality of produced journalism. According to the journalists, if you have statistics, “You can start thinking about it, you can ask: Does it have to be this way?” (Y, editor-in-chief, male). The main aim of counting is, thus, to achieve a “goal for the newspaper as a whole to have more women in the news, more women’s faces, more women in the photos” in the long run (H, international reporter, male). Yet the more general ambition of the media is “to have a more equal picture of the world, where you have more than 50% women” (M, political reporter, male).

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79 A quantitative goal of the equality policy accepted in Sweden is 40/60. For example, the internal policy of the Swedish public TV channel *SVT* provides that 40/60 is a sufficient level of distribution of sexes in every program category (Edström 2006, p. 58).
Thus, in the Swedish culture of political journalism, gender is at the center of journalists’ attention. In the process of producing materials, the Swedish journalists choose a gender-sensitive approach, paying attention to the gender of politicians in order to reach the quantitative balance in the coverage of politics.

**Gender-balanced through critical thinking: a self-reflexive approach**

Although it is considered to be a good basis for questions about the work required to reach it, the ideal of gender-balanced political journalism cannot be reached by only controlling the quantitative representation of women and men in the content. Objectivity and neutrality are, in the Swedish political journalism culture, valued as the key requirements for the type of political journalism produced by the quality media (see Nygren and Appelberg 2013 and Wiik 2012 for findings among all Swedish journalists). The fact that the objectivity ideal has been strengthening among Swedish journalists in recent years, according to the scholars, can be explained by increasing commercialization and an increasingly tough competition in the market, and by an orientation towards the liberal media model (Wiik 2014). When it comes to achieving a gender balance in coverage, according to some of the Swedish journalists, the basic values of quality journalism already imply gender-awareness and neutrality, suggesting that the main rule is “more like – no extra rules, no special treatment” (K, political reporter, female):

> You have certain tools: impartiality, allowing both sides to talk… If you use those very basic tools on every issue that you write about – it is more than enough! [...] If one needs to cover a female politician, then you have it: “I should be impartial, I should allow both sides to talk,” and that’s it (L, political observer, female).

Many of the journalists suggest, however, that there is a need to go further and pay a special attention to the ways media cover gender issues in politics and women and men politicians. For example, one of the interviewees initiated an intense discussion of diversity in coverage at her previous place of work by creating a so-called “Diversity group” (Mångfaldsgruppen) within the newsroom. This example is important, insofar as it shows that the Swedish journalists are themselves initiating changes in the standards of coverage. This allows them to avoid unwanted top-down initiatives, when the standards would be changed by other actors. Moreover, this defends the journalists from criticism from the readers and subjects of news stories:
It was me, and the editor-in-chief, and 5 or 6 other reporters, so we discussed these things a lot and we analyzed the newspaper and said: “Well, ok, this is how we write about Muslims, this is how we write about women, this is a problem, this is what we need to learn” [...] We made a plan: this is the way we write about that, this is what you should think about... And everyone has that plan now – everyone who works in the newspaper... Just, yeah, quite normal things like what to do and what not to do (S, political reporter, female).

The idea of discussing the “not-to-do” issues when it comes to gendering, as well as the ways in which to achieve gender-balanced journalism, according to the journalists, are supported by almost everyone in the Swedish culture of political journalism. The responsibility for production of gender-balanced content is given to the newsrooms and individual journalists, even if the debate generally continues to be encouraged by the self-regulatory bodies. As Anita Vahlberg, in 2009 the head of the political department of the Swedish Union of Journalists commented,

> It should be done at the workplace. We do encourage debate, but it’s editors’ and publishers’ responsibility. Journalists should debate [...] The very approach of the whole set of our ethical rules is: “Think! Think before you write something, take into consideration what the consequences will be!” [...] You have to think – and that’s the way to vaccinate people from stereotyping (interview with Vahlberg from November 4th, 2009).

According to the journalists, these discussions comprise a very efficient tool in counteracting gender-stereotyping and unnecessary gender-spotlighting in the content. Critical thinking is promoted through the discussions, which become an inevitable part of the culture of political journalism:

> We have been discussing it all the time: How do we describe women? If we describe women as strange creatures... Like this “damen-presidenten” (“lady president”): we would never write anything like that! What does that say to other women? [...] This kind of discussion makes people more aware (P, editor of international department, female).

Even though most of the responsibility for discussing and achieving the ideal of gender-balanced journalism rests within the newsrooms, the influence of the ethical debates initiated by various professional organizations, according to the journalists, should not be diminished:

> You have to write within certain boundaries, you can’t trespass over certain boundaries. [If you do], then you can be reported to the PO [Pressombudsman]. And then it will be dealt with by the Pressensopinionsnämnd [PON],

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and then the one has to, so to speak, him/herself make a decision that he/she was wrong (L, political observer, female).

The sensitivity towards gendering affects various aspects of covering politics and politicians. While the basic reasoning is very similar to that of the Russian journalists, i.e., that it is the politicians’ dealings and not personal characteristics that should be the core of the coverage, there are still more nuanced requirements concerning what should not be done when journalists are writing about politicians:

That’s something we are quite hard on: you should not describe a woman in sort of a “male” description of a woman. If that is a female politician, [the story should be about] what she does, or says, or the way she acts, but not [about] how the people look or something like that […] Because that would be discriminating (N, editor of international department, male).

The Swedish journalists, moreover, talk about gender-spotlighting and stereotyping in very similar terms to the ones that are common in the scholarly discussions (e.g. Braden 1996; Falk 2008; Norris 1997; Ross 2002; Sreberny-Mohammadi and van Zoonen 2000). Indeed, many of the Swedish political reporters are aware of the academic critique of gendering in the media content, and the problems they define are the same as the ones scholars note:

Female politicians get their appearance described more than the male, talks about their family, and, yeah, much more… If they have children, if they work too much […] When you look at it generally, most women that speak in the newspapers are not women in power. They are victims of a crime or of some injustice in the society, but it’s not the most powerful people. Those who are represented as powerful are mostly men (S, political reporter, female).

While some of the journalists refer to the general feminist critique as a source of inspiration for striving for gender-balanced journalism, and “accept everything, the whole agenda of the feminist criticism about how politicians are being described in journalism” (T, political editor, male), others refer to very particular cases, when the scholars contacted them directly in order to point to the gender-stereotyped coverage:

I got criticized, and I think, ha-ha, that was a good criticism! When I interviewed Maria Wetterstrand, rather long time ago, I followed her for one day, and I wrote about how she put on her make-up before a debate. And there was someone from the university who called me and said: “If it was a

80 Maria Wetterstrand was one of the Spokespersons of Miljöpartiet de Gröna/The Green Party alongside Peter Eriksson between 2002 and 2011.
man, would you be writing then that he was combing his hair, or what would you do?” (E, political reporter, female)

Interestingly, many journalists work out special tools that allow them – as they view it – to reach the ideal of gender-balanced journalism by questioning the coverage of male politicians, which is often perceived as a norm in political journalism. They produce counter-stereotypes in order to create the “new” type of political journalism: both gender-balanced and more personal, more interesting for the audiences.

I don’t think we should stop asking [personal questions] to women, but we should start asking personal questions to men as well […M]aking them human, ‘cause obviously they are fathers, asking them, how it feels to miss their daughter’s ballet show, because they are on the business trip… I think it’s interesting for other fathers to read as well. They can recognize themselves in that (R, gender columnist, economic and political observer, female).

In addition to the critical voices from outside the journalism culture and the need to address the readers with a more attractive type of journalism (see more about this in Chapter 6.3), the gender-ethical ideology in the Swedish culture of political journalism is constantly re-evaluated by the journalists by the means of their self-reflexivity. The interviewees tried to evaluate their own practices and scrutinize themselves, wondering whether they themselves had ever applied gender spotlighting and stereotyping. One interviewee told me about what she called an “awful example” of an attempt to use gendering as a “funny twist” in an article about a Swedish female minister. The journalist considered the woman politician to be a very good negotiator, and wanted to emphasize this characteristic by using an ambiguous expression in the Swedish language, “Hon har gott sittfläsk” (literally, “She has a big backside”), which was used as a metaphor to show that the person can sit in negotiations for many hours. What happened after the publication of the article, was that the journalist had at least two or three reactions from readers who thought that it was very disregarding. And afterwards I felt: “Oh, that was not a very good expression!” Basically, I meant that she would be able to match [Minister for Finance in negotiations], it was a compliment! […] But maybe – if I am to be honest, maybe I thought it was a little funny twist as well! I do regret that though! I wrote to her press secretary and said: “I just want to tell you that I regret that expression!” (L, political observer, female)

Thus, the Swedish political journalists try to reach not only the quantitative balance in the content, but also aim to produce gender-aware, free of
stereotypes, and rather filled in with counter-stereotypes journalism. They suggest that it can be achieved through self-reflexivity, encouraged by the regular newsroom discussions and readers’ comments about the compliance of the content with the gender-ethical demands. They make sense of their own conduct regarding gender questions through discussions and public scrutiny. It should be noted that both male and female journalists demonstrated a self-reflexive approach to the coverage of women and men politicians. However, the female interviewees appeared somewhat more active and self-critical than their male colleagues regarding definitions of what the gender-balanced journalism ideal implies.

**Sweden: discussion**

The ideal of the gender-balanced political journalism, formulated within the Swedish culture of political journalism, calls journalists to be gender-sensitive and to apply a gender lens to their practices and to the content they produce. The fact that the Swedish journalists are eager to follow ethical guidelines can be explained by the fact that support for ethical rules is generally strong among them (Nygren and Appelberg 2013).

The first approach to reaching the gender-balanced ideal is the achievement of the quantitative gender balance. However, it is often questioned whether it is a sufficient goal for news journalism. According to the journalists, there is a conflict between the institutional role of reflecting and the ethical ideal of balance (see more about this in Chapter 6.1). The journalists’ main concern is the contradiction between the ideal of gender-balanced journalism and the imbalanced nature of the political sphere. Situated on the verge of the two ideals – to produce gender-balanced journalism and to cover the world “as it is,” Swedish political reporters try to find a middle way:

> [We] try to have 50/50 in paper. We don’t succeed... Partly because of us, because we are too bad. Partly because the world looks like it looks. Our job is not to change it, I think, our job is to describe it. So, I will partly say that the 50/50 strategy or goal is wrong, because if we really had 50/50 [representation in the content], we wouldn’t, I think, present the world as it is [...But] we have to have a 50/50 goal. It’s a goal that we *shouldn’t* reach, but we have to have it; that we *shouldn’t* reach, but we have to have it, ‘cause otherwise it would be 90/10 or 80/20 (T, political editor, male).

Moreover, as the journalists claim, the problem with the 50/50 goal is that when magazines and newspapers try to produce diverse output, they do get the voices of women, immigrants, and other underrepresented
groups, but then these people “only get to talk about what it feels to be an 
immigrant, what it feels to be a woman, and not the things that they do” 
(S, political reporter, female).

Yet another problem with reaching the 50/50 goal, as some of the jour- 
nalists confess, is the difficulty of fighting with themselves to change their 
practices of choosing sources and communicating with them. Many of them 
frame the need to fulfill the gender balance ideal in such terms as “struggle,” 
“effort,” yet they emphasize the necessity of facing the challenge:

You always want to have 50/50, and it’s a struggle, really, in the daily paper 
[...] Very often outside Scandinavia it’s hard to interview women: in the Ar- 
abic world it’s hard to interview women, in many places. Or I should say: 
it’s easier to get men – they step forward and say “You can talk to me.” And 
– I’ve been working as a reporter – it’s always like that! If you put your 
microphone, and ask someone, you have ten people, five are men, and five 
are women, the men will talk! So you have to make a little effort (P, editor 
of international department, female).

The efforts that are defined by these guidelines and that journalists are 
supposed to undertake also require time (cf. Cerqueira et al. 2014). Indeed, 
the Swedish journalists generally express concerns about the steadily in- 
creasing pace of media production and the growing requirements related to 
it, which consume a lot of their time (Andersson and Wiik 2012; Nygren 
and Appelberg 2013). As one of the interviewees commented, “The prob- 
lem is that we don’t have so much time for discussions anyway – because 
we are working all the time” (E, political reporter, female). Accordingly, 
not all of the employees are ready to follow the suggested guidelines defining 
the employees’ practices of news production. One of the interviewees re- 
vealed that at their newsroom not all of the colleagues want to discuss gen- 
der issues and follow the suggested strategies:81

On every conference [reporter meeting] we discuss gender. But there are some 
of my colleagues who would prefer us not to do this anymore. This is not 
different if you go to any other working place. People have their own opinion 
on these questions, as any other (R, gender columnist, economic and political 
observer, female).

81 See Holmkvist (2010) for an extreme case of such a protest to the active promotion 
of gender equality on the pages of the outlet, when one of the female employees of 
Veckans affärer was cyberbullied by her male colleagues for gender mainstreaming.
When it comes to the formulation of what gender-balanced journalism is in qualitative terms, there are also here critical voices coming from the journalism culture itself. While supporting the general idea of gender-balanced journalism, some of the journalists criticize the one-sidedness of the interpretation of what gender-balanced journalism implies. As one of the interviewees noted, articles about women politicians are often thoroughly scrutinized by editors questioning whether the article contains something that would, or would not, be there if it were an article about a man. However, the problem that remains is that “we think about it mostly when we write about women and not as much when we write about men” (S, political reporter, female).

Another problem expressed by the journalists is that it is often difficult to judge whether or not what came from the pen fulfills the requirements dictated by the gender-ethical ideology. Gendering has this ambiguous character that it can be either embodied in gender-spotlighting and stereotyping (thus, being an obstacle to gender-balanced journalism), or contribute to the production of more gender-aware content. A perfect illustration of this ambiguous nature of gendering is a story told by one of the interviewees about how one and same article can be interpreted differently from the journalists’ and from the politicians’ and readers’ perspectives. In co-authorship with another journalist the interviewee wrote an article about the two leaders of Miljöpartiet de Gröna/The Green Party – a man, Gustav Fridolin, and a woman, Åsa Romson. In the article, they mentioned that the party was searching for someone to “complete Gustav Fridolin, the star,” thus, confirming the fact that he is the star, while she is there to complete the picture.

We were saying that they [the Green Party] are a bit sexist! And they would probably find this article a bit sexist because we are sort of saying that, well, Åsa Romson will be in the shadow of Gustav Fridolin. So, it’s difficult, you know! You want to shed light on something that you find might be problematic, and actually it has a feminist angle too, but doing that, [...] you might also be sexist! (K, political reporter, female)

This consideration of the ambiguous character of gendering resembles the scholarly critique of gender mainstreaming policies: by pointing to gender as a relation of inequality, one can unconsciously also reinforce specific categories, such as “women” and “men,” and feed into existing gender hierarchy (Bacchi and Eveline 2010). Thus, the ideal of the gender-balanced journalism formulated in the framework of the ethical ideology of the Swedish culture of political journalism is not unproblematic. The problems the
journalists refer to include the challenges of the need to reflect the imbalanced world, to make efforts, and to persuade colleagues to follow the same guidelines. Moreover, the achievements accomplished by the gender-ethical guidelines are not seen as given. More specifically, the articles aimed at being gender-balanced are interpreted differently by different actors, and the main focus of the gender-ethics remains on women, questioning the idea of what gender balance implies.

5.5. Comparative discussion and conclusions
The Russian and Swedish cultures of political journalism adhere to the same international laws and conventions, and to similar regulations at national level – which define the general prescriptions when it comes to the production of media content in relation to gendering. In both Russia and Sweden there exist ethical codes and self-regulation bodies, which provide the media with a basis for self-control. However, neither the Russian, nor the Swedish political journalists refer to the legislative and normative restrictions when they talk about gendering in political journalism. Such a pattern was also noticed by Macharia and Moriniére (2012), who note that while “numerous survey respondents stated that they were unaware of any stipulations concerning gender in codes governing professional ethics” (p. 21), there were in fact industry- and association-level codes containing clauses relevant to gender-ethical practice in the countries the scholars surveyed.

The journalists in Russia and Sweden alike refer to the format and genre restrictions being the strictest definers of the way they cover politics and politicians. However, there are critical differences in both how this link between quality and gender equality is formulated in the two cultures of political journalism, as well as in what constitutes the gender-ethical ideal for the journalists representing them. The scholarly discussions of the traveling concept of objectivity (Mancini 2000; Schudson 2001) can, thus, also be referred to the contextualization of gender ethics.  

82 While the Swedish journalists refer to objectivity in the terms similar to those implied in the scholarly works (e.g. Asp 2014; Hopmann, Van Aelst and Legnante 2011), and suggest that objectivity as an ethical value requires that the journalism they practice and produce is fair (where no view is discounted) and informative, the Russian journalists rather understand objectivity as proximity to “objective reality,” which should be accurately reflected without a personal attitude added to it. This difference, as we will see in Chapter 7, crucially influences the journalists in their interaction with the politicians, where objectivity and subjectivity enter a never-ending dialogue.
The Russian and Swedish cultures of political journalism are equally reluctant to any intervention from outside of the journalism culture in their practices. What matters to the journalists, irrespective of the country, is quality, and its attributes – objectivity, neutrality, and political correctness, which are understood as unquestionable values. The journalists generally agree with the gender media experts who suggest that “gender balance and fairness are integral components of professionalism” (Joof in GMMP 2010 Report, p. 25):

It [gender-neutral coverage of politics] is an indicator of quality, maturity, and respect towards the audience (M, international observer, male, Russia).

This is something we can agree on, and it's important – to treat women and men the same, to give them equal [coverage...] I would say that it's a feature of quality (C, political reporter, male, Sweden).

Indeed, quality is strongly linked to gender equality (Edström 2011; Hermes 2013), which implies that quality press in general is expected to produce more gender-aware and gender-balanced content. For example, the Gender Council of the IFJ suggests that the fight for gender equality is at the heart of its programs, linking the struggle for gender equality in the society with the defense of quality journalism, professionalism, democracy and pluralism (Gender Council 2013). The entire vision of the quality press as “the best space for the public dialogue” (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007, p. 83), defined by the standards of informational behavior – reliability of facts, pluralism of opinions, argumentation of viewpoints, and deliberateness of critical evaluations, as well as non-engagement and non-bias – links to the ideal of gender-conscious and gender-ethical journalism, which

is in line with the news media’s traditional, key role in democratic societies: creating what is known as the “public sphere,” where information essential to citizen participation in national and community life is presented and where issues of importance to the public are discussed and debated (Macharia and Morinière 2012, p. 11).

The difference between the gender-neutral and the gender-balanced journalism ideals is that, in the first case, gender is consciously placed out of the journalists’ focus, while the latter suggests that gender should be in the focus of the journalists’ attention all the time. This difference in the formulations can be explained from a gender media studies perspective as the lack of detailed and operationalized definitions of gender, gendering, gender balance and gender ethics within the Russian journalism’s ethical ideology, which
mainly refers to the more abstract and less defined categories of objectivity, political correctness, and accuracy. On the other hand, the ethical ideology of Swedish journalists is framed by more articulated and detailed guidelines on the level of the news organizations (see Macharia and Moriniere 2012, p. 21).

The Russian gender-neutral ideal determines suppression of gender-sensitivity: it implies the denial of the problem of gendering in political journalism in general, which opens up for a possibility of unconscious production of gender-spotlighting and gender stereotypes. Viewing the existing normative, ethical, format and value framework as sufficient, the Russian political journalists perceive the formula “quality = gender equality” as something unquestionable, i.e., they do not believe that there is a need to take any extra steps in order to create quality journalistic content, as the requirements of objectivity and neutrality, even if they do not articulate the gender awareness and neutrality directly, de-problematize gendering as a product of the quality media. The Swedish self-control over the production of gendered content seems to them unnecessary and exhausting. One of the Russian interviewees even called it “a fad, a complex,” and another one disclaimed “God save us from something like this!”

This reluctance to any “extra” guidelines makes the Russian political journalism culture vulnerable: if there is no self-control, there appears to be a possibility of handed down control in the form of new regulations, regulative bodies, and interventions from the political actors (Voltmer 2013). The development of the ethical codes, according to media scholars, is strongly linked with the autonomy of the media from other institutions (Hjarvard 2013, p. 24). Thus, if the ethical codes are not sufficiently developed, there is a risk of political intervention in the media sphere.

The Swedish culture of political journalism with its articulated steps towards reaching the gender-balanced ideal is, however, also not unproblematic. First, both the journalists themselves and the experts often consider that these steps are not sufficient for creating gender-balanced journalism. Not all of the employees are happy about the existing guidelines, which require time and effort. The Russian journalists, for example, believe that the Swedish quality press’ practice of paying attention to gender of the news subjects can only exaggerate the gender differences, and deepen the problem of gendering in the content. The Swedish journalists meanwhile answer that aiming at gender-neutral rather than gender-balanced content would ruin the idea that the media should promote gender equality.
As we will be able to see from the chapters that follow, the Swedish system of self-control over gendering in political journalism content appears to be beneficial for the inhabitants of the culture of political journalism. First, it makes them less vulnerable in their relations with politicians. Second, this system, even though it is time- and energy-consuming, brings economic advantages to the media organizations. As one of the interviewees formulated it,

this is not about being politically correct, this is about a question: what do you want to be? [...] We want to be a smart magazine, a modern magazine, a magazine for educated people. It’s really quite that simple. Not having those things straight – then you are not being smart, not being modern, you are not being anything, you are a part of the past (Y, editor-in-chief, male).

The Russian and Swedish journalists working for the quality press both aim at producing journalism free of gender inequalities, despite the different formulations of what is considered to be gender-ethical. There are also, as we will see from the next chapter, different mechanisms in the political and cultural contexts that both enable and counteract the possibility for journalists to fulfill this ideal, as the journalists have to orientate to the media market, the political sphere, and the audiences.
6. Institutional roles and gendering

This chapter looks at gendering in the framework of the political journalists’ perceptions of their institutional roles (Donsbach 2008; Hanitzsch 2007; Hanitzsch et al. 2011). It is structured differently than the other empirical chapters. As it is suggested by Hanitzsch (2007), journalists’ perceptions of their institutional roles can be analyzed in three dimensions: 1) interventionism, 2) power distance, and 3) market orientation. This chapter traces the origins of gendering in each of these three dimensions. The chapter concludes with a discussion on gendering and the three dimensions of the institutional roles.

6.1. Gendering and interventionism

I cannot imagine that at the level of the chief editor someone would say: “And now we write about women! 40% about these, 60% about those.” You see, we are a reflection of society. Not that we are tied to the chariot, but to a certain extent we pick up the societal trend. Probably we are the first ones to do it, but it first born in the society, and then goes to the media.

Z, political and economic observer, male (Russia)

Media have the power, so we should definitely try to use this power to make a change. That’s our responsibility. I think it’s crap when journalists say that we should only reflect: that is not taking responsibility for the power that you have been vested with.

R, gender columnist, economic and political observer, female (Sweden)

Chapter 5 provided an insight into the Russian and Swedish political journalists’ ethical ideologies. This subchapter deals with gendering in the area of what can be labelled “impact-ethical” responsibility (Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996, p. 25), the practices of fulfilling the gender-ethical ideal that to a large extent depend on the journalists’ perception of their influence in the society. In other words, gendering here will be viewed in the dimension of interventionism - “the extent to which journalists pursue a particular mission and promote certain values” (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 372).

Gender media scholars usually view the origins of gendering in the journalists’ perception of the media’s institutional role as a “mirror” of the societal processes, rather than as an active constructor (Jarlbro 2006; Ross 2002). Journalists, according to the scholars, place the responsibility for gendering on society, denying its origins in the journalism culture, and not acknowledging the consequences of the media constructions (Ross 2014a). I pose a question, whether the journalists in Russia and Sweden consider gendering in the
political news content to be a reflection of the political realms, or to be a conscious and motivated intervention into the societal processes, a construction linked to a certain “mission” and meant to introduce changes in the political sphere and in public opinions. Do journalists consider themselves as passive information transmitters, or as active constructors of social reality, and how is it related to the production of gendering?

Russia: gendering as a pure reflection

As Chapter 4 demonstrated, the Russian journalists see the political context as to a large extent pre-determining the way politics is covered in the media. An expression coined by one of the interviewees – “Such a political journalism as politics” – can serve as an epigraph to the discussion of gendering in the dimension of interventionism. According to the Russian political journalists, their work is all about reflection, whether they speak of the quantity of women and men as political news’ subjects, their textual portrayals, or discussion of gender as an issue.

Reflecting the quantitative inequality in the political sphere

According to the political journalists, the main explanation for the little attention political journalism in Russia pays to women politicians is their low representation in the Russian politics and the fact that they “hold such positions, where their deals are rarely covered.” The journalists believe that the choice of story subjects and news sources hardly depends on them: if there are no women in politics, there are no women in political news:

> Everything depends on the number. Earlier Khakamada was active, she was covered constantly, [media] sometimes even picked up her suggestions, initiatives! Here [in Russia] everything is connected to the fact that we really have very few deedful women […] It doesn't depend on the media, media would write about them with pleasure if they were more (E, political reporter, female).

Moreover, on the individual level the journalists justify the lack of female news subjects in their articles by referring to the particular assignments they get in the newsroom. As such, journalists are “ascribed” to cover certain political parties. A journalist covering the United Russia party suggested that she almost never had a chance to interact with women politicians, as

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83 Irina Khakamada was a State Duma member in 1993–2003, and one of the leaders of the Union of Rightist Forces. In 2004, she ran the presidential election and received 3.9% of the votes. She is a member of an oppositional coalition The Other Russia.
within the party “there are only men in the executive positions” (D, political reporter, female). Another journalist suggested that he has a “male specialization,” implying that he covers the activities of the Ministry of Defense, where “the role of women is minimized” (V, political reporter, male). Thus, a reflection of the inequality in the political sphere is named by the journalists as one of the reasons for the lack of coverage of women politicians in the Russian press.

Reflecting the politicians’ “real characteristics”

Journalists refer to the institutional role of the media as a “mirror” of society to also explain the textual means applied in order to describe the politicians’ personalities. Politicians as a group appear as “genderless human beings” (O, political reporter, female), unhuman “genderless screws” in the machine of state (U, co-editor of international department, male), and, as the journalists suggest, thus, should be represented as such. However, when it comes to describing individual politicians’ features, women politicians stand out, as they, according to the journalists, often appear as more human political actors. “Humanization” of politicians goes along the same line as essentialist gendering, although the journalists do not consider themselves to be constructors of the politicians’ personal characteristics. They refer to the “natural” features of the politicians they cover as information for their readers to receive:

I don’t think I have ever written sexist material. Well, it all depends on stresses, right? You see, maybe if I wrote about Sarah Palin, I would mention ten times that she is a silly woman from Alaska. And that would be not because I am sexist, but because she is a silly woman from Alaska (N, head of international group, male).

According to the journalists, women politicians often expose themselves to the media by demonstrating “typically feminine” features of character or behavior, which attracts the journalists’ attention by being different from the seemingly gender-neutral male politicians’ public performance:

There is more “yellow” material about women, well, about their clothes, jewelry. Women are more exposed in terms of details, tastes than men. What does a man have? Suit and watch. And a woman always has a certain image. This draws attention and is always discussed. Matvienko’s countless fur

84 Sarah Palin is an American politician, Governor of Alaska, 2006-2009. She ran for Vice President in the 2008 presidential elections as the Republican Party nominee.
coats have been discussed, her crazy jewelry, hair-do. About Lyubov Sliska there always appears to be some information that she spends most of her working time at the hairdresser. Yes, it is more often that you can read such things about women than men (O, political reporter, female).

Such a vision of women politicians “exposing” their femininity, appearing as gendered human beings, corresponds with the previously discussed “gender-as-difference” approach, which, according to the journalists characterizes the Russian political sphere and the society in general (see Chapter 4). It also links to the scholarly discussions of masculinity, which presents itself as “the normal, the universal, and the unidentified” (Hirdman 2007, p. 159; with a reference to Easthope 1990). While masculinity seems to the journalists to be symbolically “deprived” of gender, and appears as a norm, femininity attracts more attention. Women politicians challenge the power of dominating masculinity, because when men politicians are compared with women, their masculinity becomes visible, and, thus, loses power (Easthope 1990). Though the journalists attempt to analyze the challenge to the power of masculinity that women in politics constitute, they rather pay attention to the surface manifestations of what they refer to as “typically feminine” or “typically masculine.” Moreover, women politicians behaving in a more “masculine” way are not perceived as a norm, although their behavior appears to the journalists as a positive “additional feature”:

When a woman exhibits typically masculine traits, like Margaret Thatcher, for example, – her rigidity was often noted, it for some reason commands respect, and is specified as some kind of an additional feature. But if she had been a man and behaved this way, it would have been considered just normal. So, probably, it draws more attention (O, political reporter, female).

Thus, the journalists justify essentialist gendering and somewhat more “yellow” character of news stories about women politicians by referring to the reflection of the “real.” They seldom critically reflect upon the constructed character of what is labeled as “feminine” and “masculine” features in society. However, as we will see, essentialist gendering appears in the content not only for the sake of reflecting politician’s “real characteristics,” but is often done with a purpose of critique or promotion of a politician.

85 Margaret Thatcher, who passed away on April 8th, 2013, was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, 1979-1990, and the leader of the Conservative Party, 1975-1990. She was the longest-serving British Prime Minister of the 20th century and the only woman to have held the office. She was often referred to as the “Iron Lady,” a nickname that became associated with her uncompromising politics and leadership style.
Reflecting the public ignorance of gender issues

According to the Russian journalists, reflection is the key role of the media not only when it comes to the quantitative balance of women and men politicians in the content, or to the descriptions of their personalities. As far as gender is being considered a political issue, the journalists state that they are not ready to take an active role in changing the public attitude to the problem of gender inequality. They claim that what is left to them is a passive expectation for changes in the public opinion:

If in the society there appeared a wave, if the moods turned otherwise, then media would immediately pay attention to it, and then we could... But there is no reason for the public opinion to turn otherwise, because there are no women. Women are invisible (N, political reporter, female).

The journalists constantly frame their role in producing politicians’ media representations through the restrictions imposed on them by the profession. It corresponds with the academic theoretical discussions about the reflection ideal being one of the media producers’ justifications for gender-spotlighting, stereotyping, and the absence of women in the media discourse (Jarlbro 2006; Ross 2002). They suggest that they have no possibilities to raise topics unless these topics fit the “news peg”:

If I had a news peg and a basis to collect materials... Figuratively speaking, if tomorrow LDPR\textsuperscript{86} introduces a law on the mandatory presence of 30% women in the power structures, then, while this law is at the center of attention, we will write all we should. We will take all the commentaries, we will gather the information, we will count the number of women and men, we will get to know how it is in other countries, we will make interviews with the initiators and so on. But while the theme is not in the information realm, it is out of us! (H, editor of political department, male)

The journalists, thus, expect that it will be other actors in society than the media, who will bring the topic of gender on the political agenda. Some journalists suggest that politicians, especially women, should “themselves raise this topic [...] They need to try to introduce it into discussion: “Why woman cannot?” and make some kind of round tables” (E, political reporter, female). Others hope that researchers will provide them with data, interesting and original investigations into gender issues in politics:

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\textsuperscript{86} The Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) is identified with right-wing populism and conservatism, so such a law would hardly be introduced by this party.
If there is a survey – the topic pops up, like, there are few women politicians, and then we should write about it […] Scientists could publish some reports more often, so that we could push off them (N, political reporter, female).

The journalists themselves take the initiative to address gender as a political issue only in exceptional cases, which are mostly dictated by the absence of “hot” political themes. As one of the interviewees noted, in their outlet once a year one of the employees writes about the lack of women in the political sphere. However, what pushes the journalists to write about gender equality in politics is not the perception of the issue as problematic, but rather an absence of newsworthy events: “When we have no themes, then, ha-ha, such [gender] themes always occur!” (E, political reporter, female). Thus, the journalists suggest that the responsibility for covering gender issues in political journalism rests with the actors outside the culture of political journalism, e.g., politicians, scientists, and readers, who are expected to raise the topic on the agenda themselves.

There were, however, a few exceptions to this pattern. Some journalists suggested that media have the power to promote women politicians and make them more accepted in the context where feminism still appears as a foreign phenomenon. One of the interviewees had the most articulated vision of the constructive role of journalism. According to him, in the current Russian context, their magazine, The New Times, takes upon itself a unique role as a promoter of women’s leadership in the political sphere. Introducing gender equality discussions on the media agenda is viewed by him not only as a possibility to change the public opinion towards a more gender-aware way of thinking, but also as a way to detach from other quality media:

As in our outlet there is such a sacred thing as human rights, we cannot in this or another way step over this border, evaluate events based on racist, ideological, or other prejudices. Accordingly, due to the same liberal, advocacy tradition, we have a better understanding of feminism and the feminist movement than maybe other quality media in Russia (journalist, male, The New Times).

Interestingly, this is the same media outlet where other interviewees voiced the most sarcastic opinions concerning what the media content should be like when it comes to gendering. As already discussed in Chapter 5, it is possible within one and same newsroom that while one department sees its role as an active promoter of gender-awareness, other departments’ employees might be reluctant to this ideal. Thus, views suggesting that a journalists’ primary role is to construct the social reality in the Russian culture of political journalism are rare, and seem to be exceptional even within one and same media.
Russia: discussion

As shown in the interviews with the Russian journalists, their perception of the media’s role as a “mirror of the reality,” as it is suggested by the gender media scholars (Jarlbro 2009; Ross 2002, 2014a), indeed becomes an obstacle to gender mainstreaming. Even if they are gender-aware, acknowledge the existing absence of women in the political news content, and admit that gender-spotlighting and stereotyping take place in the journalistic discourses, the political journalists state that they have to reflect the existing “political reality” with its quantitative gender imbalance, absence of authority and citizen interest in gender issues, and gendered public images of the political actors. The will to produce reflexive gendering, aimed at the promotion of gender equality in the political sphere, is seldom expressed. This corresponds with the findings of previous research on the Russian culture of journalism in general. As such, Anikina and Johansson (2013) show that social participation and educating and mobilizing the public are not among the professional duties that the Russian journalists are ready to take upon themselves, and the opportunity to influence society is not high on the list of their values.

Vladimir Kasutin, Secretary of the Russian Union of Journalists and the chief editor of the professional magazine Zhurnalistika i mediarynok, relates the political journalists’ passive expectation of changes to the lack of self-reflexivity among the Russian journalists in general. News media write about men in power who “are more active, have money, or they can either force, or pay, or convince” journalists in order to appear in the media, “but there are no meaningful attempts of our journalists to attract somewhat different people to their pages” (interview with Kasutin from December 28th, 2011).

This passivity of the journalists contradicts their resistance to any changes being implemented from outside of the journalism culture. The journalists talk about the freedom to produce the content they think fits the ideals of the quality press and are reluctant to any intervention in their practices (see Chapter 5). At the same time, they suggest that they should wait for politicians to change their agenda and to raise gender issues as problematic, for the audiences to become more gender-aware, and for the researchers to provide them with data and investigations so that they can introduce changes in the content. This ambiguous perspective resembles what Voltmer (2013) labels a liberalist position of non-responsibility, as the journalists absolve themselves of any responsibility concerning gendering in the political news.
Sweden: reflexive re-construction

The Swedish political journalists believe that the key role of journalists is to reflect political and societal processes. However, they say, this reflection should be reflexive. Thus, if journalists cannot change the sources they cover (mainly men), and the political agenda (not necessarily gender-aware), they can change the public attitude to it:

[I]f the political power is in the hands of Fredrik Reinfeldt\(^{87}\) and Anders Borg,\(^{88}\) then, of course, we are going to write a lot more about them than about Annie Lööf\(^{89}\) or Beatrice Ask.\(^{90}\) We can’t change the world, but we can change how we look at the world (Y, editor-in-chief, male).

This quotation almost word for word coincides with the mediatization of politics perspective on political and the media powers. According to Strömbäck (2009, pp. 50-51), while the political parties and individual politicians in the institutional bodies have the power to influence reality, the media hold the power to influence the image of the reality. Such a perspective is common for the interviewed Swedish political journalists when it comes to their vision of their role in society.

Gendering in politics and journalism: “the same mechanism”

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Swedish journalists recognize the problems existing within the political sphere in Sweden and other countries, and suggest that the lack of women politicians as subjects of news stories can still be explained by the low representation of women in political institutions. For example, the interviewee covering such parties as far-right Sverigedemokraterna/The Sweden Democrats, and social-conservative Kristdemokraterna/The Christian Democrats, stated that a low representation of women in these parties serves as the main explanation for the low representation of women in the news stories he produces.

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87 Fredrik Reinfeldt has been Prime Minister of Sweden since 2006. He has been the chairman of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party since 2003.

88 Anders Borg has been Minister for Finance since 2006. He is a member of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party.

89 Annie Lööf is Minister for Enterprise and the leader of Centerpartiet/The Center Party (since 2011). She has been a member of the parliament since 2006.

90 Beatrice Ask is Minister for Justice (since 2006), and a member of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party. She has been a parliament member since 1988, and served as Minister for Schools, 1991-1994.
According to the journalists, the mechanisms of “squeezing women” out of the political sphere co-exist in politics and media (cf. Falk 2008; Mbilinyi and Omari 1996). Political scandals, as discussed in Chapter 4, are the most obvious examples of this parallel “dramaturgy.” The journalists, however, emphasize that although “the media kind of fancy the state man,” they “didn’t invent this mechanism” (K, political reporter, female):

> Media loves to “kill” people and, I think, media loves to “kill” female politicians more than male politicians. It’s not necessarily just media [...] It’s the same system mechanism that works within media against female politicians that works inside the political system (T, political editor, male).

The journalists believe that both the representational politics and the media coverage may contribute to the marginalization of women as the “outsiders” in the political system. However, it is difficult to say where exactly – in politics or in journalism – this mechanism of “double gendering” (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996) originates:

> Women have to prove that they are good! And men have to prove they are not good! For example, the new social-democratic leader, Stefan Löffven, now has a chance. [I]f he does mistakes, he will be criticized, we will write about his money and everything. But when Mona Sahlin was chosen, I think, she had to prove that she could do something, she wasn’t really accepted in the same way. [...] Women need to prove it both to the media and to the parties. This sticks together, because if you have criticism in the party – we get to know about it in the media, and we write about it. It’s difficult to say, what the root is (E, political reporter, female).

Yet this interdependence of politics and journalism is also a mode of origin of what the journalists define as positive changes in the media agenda. As such, the journalists believe that the fact that the political sphere has become more gender balanced (as more female politicians have appeared in the Swedish politics since the 1990s), changed the attitude of journalists to women politicians and gender equality in general. The “fact that there are successful women,” such as Maria Wetterstrand and Anna Lindh (Z, international reporter, female), who have become role models for other

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91 Stefan Löffven has been the leader of Socialdemokraterna/The Social Democratic Party and the leader of the Opposition since January 2012.

women, has influenced societal acceptance and the journalists’ perception of women as political actors:

I think, still there is a dimension of sexism,93 and so on, in politics in Sweden, although we are one of the most equal countries in the world […] But still if I compare [the media coverage to the one in the 1990s], I would say that we are moving in the direction where for every female minister, for every female party leader it will be more of a normal thing [to be present in politics]. And then the press will not deal with this differently (M, political reporter, male).

The promotion of gender as a political issue also within the parties has been reflected in journalism, both as a news subject, and in terms of angles the journalists choose when producing content. As such, according to the journalists, what influenced the media agenda is that “more parties have said they are feministic parties” (M, political reporter, male), that both rightist and leftist parties discuss gender equality, and that this discussion engages key political actors (such as Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt). However, this direct relation of gender equality being a parallel issue in the political and media agendas today contributes to a tendency for it to be replaced by other themes when the discussion of gender issues gradually disappears:

[Gender equality] is not a big political subject anymore. […] The two main parties agree in theory anyway that equality is important […] So, what was a really big debate during the [19]70s, is now accepted by the broad political landscape. And, I think, that’s why it’s not really a big issue in the media either! If it’s not a big issue in the political landscape, it’s not a big issue in the media (M, political reporter, male).

Thus, the Swedish journalists suggest that the primary role of journalism is to reflect, yet they note that political journalism should reflect not only the existing gender gaps in the political system and society, but also the positive tendencies that are occurring.

Gendering and responsibility of the media
The Swedish journalists highlight the media’s responsibility for the images of politicians they create, and for the agenda they promote in the content. They suggest that the media have the power and are a “big part of creating an equal society or preventing it from happening” (S, political reporter, female). This vision corresponds with the more general findings, showing that

93 Sexism – assertion that one sex is superior to the other.
both journalists and the public in Sweden believe that media have the biggest influence over the agenda in society (Asp 2012a).

Even though the journalists believe that it is problematic to represent the world in its diversity when it comes to the political sphere, as the latter is not always gender balanced (see Chapter 4), they still try to reflect the political sphere in a reflexive and critical way. To them, responsible reflection is being committed to the ideal of gender balance (see Chapter 5):

I think, it’s about the core of our job to describe the society as it is. And since there are men and women in politics, so, of course, we should have both male and female politicians in the newspaper, otherwise we would fail in trying to do our job as professional journalists! (V, editor of news department, male)

The journalists recognize the power of the media, and suggest that they are responsible for being able to direct public opinions about politicians and the problem of gender inequality in the political sphere. As they find equality between people to be “important for the whole society” and, as the public “image of the society comes from media” (D, political reporter, female), they believe that gender equality “should be mainstreamed” (Z, international reporter, female) in the journalistic content. According to them, the existing problems of inequality should be highlighted in political journalism on an everyday basis in order to change the world, even if it happens at a slow pace:

[What about] this thing about lifting women on one day of a year [March 8th] in the newspapers?! I think it should be an issue every day […] to convey this message of equality and that women are half of the population of the world. That should be reflected in the news! (H, international reporter, male)

The Swedish political journalists, thus, balance on the verge of reflection and construction, suggesting that while they cannot fully construct the world, they can de-construct the common assumptions and reveal the existing gaps and problems:

I haven’t the goal to change the world; I am not that kind of journalist. My main goal is... less ideological thoughts, actually. I am about describing. But, as soon as you describe the thing, you have power, you take power that will, could be used to change this, or not to change that [...W]e have to wash our brains from things, that we are, that our brains are destructed by – ha-ha – I think, so that we can really see and can really hear (T, political editor, male).

Hence, the journalists take on an active role. They suggest that journalism has a pedagogical role (Melin-Higgins 1996) and that they have a responsibility to not only point to the problems, but to also indicate what
should serve as an ideal for the society they write for. The journalists believe that their role is to popularize critique of gender inequality:

I wanted to write a gender story. Because it had to be said! [...] It was kind of interesting: isn’t politics a male thing? [...] I thought that it hadn’t been written in a popular way. It’s always written in feminist papers like Bang,\textsuperscript{94} or by feminist scientists, or nowadays even by other scientists, but it hasn’t been written completely. So, I thought it was our job to do it. I, actually, didn’t have a thought whether the audience would like it, ha-ha, or not. I don’t think the audience disliked it! (T, political editor, male)

Thus, the Swedish journalists believe that they should exercise the power to influence the image of the reality they hold, by producing critique of existing gender inequalities and, by doing so, change society.

Sweden: discussion

The Swedish political journalists view the key role of journalism as a reflexive reconstruction of society, which is connected to a deconstruction of common assumptions about gender. According to the interviewees, the world is difficult to change. A gender imbalance in the political sphere and mechanisms that marginalize women as political actors still exist – even in Sweden. Journalists cannot change this situation directly, unless they have a “magic stick” in their hands, so they first and foremost expect the changes to happen outside of the culture of political journalism, in the “social reality.” This, according to them, would make the fulfillment of the reflection role of journalism more harmonious:

Journalism is bound very much to be a mirror of what we cover [...] A magic stick would make it different [...] If there is 50/50 around the world, then I don’t think there will be a problem for the papers! (P, editor of international department, female)

The Swedish journalists suggest that they influence society by being critical to the existing situation and by mainstreaming gender equality in their articles. In this sense, the Swedish journalists can be referred to as “critical change agents” (see Hanitzsch 2011), who emphasize the importance of advocating social change and promoting political discussions. Indeed, having

\textsuperscript{94} Bang is a Swedish feminist culture magazine launched in 1991. It is named after Barbro Alving, a well-known Swedish journalist, writer, pacifist, and feminist, who used the pseudonym Bang.
an influence on society is one of the key reasons Swedish journalists generally choose their profession (Nygren and Appelberg 2013).

What characterizes the Swedish culture of political journalism, when it comes to gendering and the journalists’ perception of interventionism, is thus the conjunction of the reflective and constructive roles of journalism. As Ola Sigvardsson, the Pressombudsman, expressed it, “The media reflects the society; but the society doesn’t change if we do not take the discussion” (interview with Sigvardsson from March 1st, 2012). The Swedish political journalists position gendering in an inter-dependent chain, where the news content is influenced by the context, but the news, in turn, influences the societal processes.

**Comparative discussion**

In this subchapter, I analyzed the Russian and the Swedish journalists’ perception of gendering in relation to the way they formulate their institutional role as either a passive reflection or an active re-construction of social reality. The Russian journalists acknowledge the problem of gendered mediation of politics, but they do not see themselves as responsible for essentialist gendering in the political news content. This corresponds with the findings of the Worlds of Journalism study, which shows that Russian journalists express views common for 1) “populist disseminators” – detached observers, who do not take an active and participatory role in the reporting, and 2) “opportunist facilitators” – “constructive partners of the government,” who pay little regard to the mobilization potential of journalism (Hanitzsch 2011).

In other words, the perspective of the Russian political journalists confirms the gender media researchers suggestion that journalists are tied to reflecting the gender inequalities existing in society (Falk 2008; Mbilinyi and Omari 1996). As media expert Amie Joof states, “the media mirrors society to the extent that reportage and practices echo the bias and discrimination taking place in real, lived experiences” (Joof in GMMP 2010, pp. 25-26). Such a vision dictates the journalists to passively expect changes, and shifts responsibility for gendering from the culture of political journalism to politicians and other societal actors. It also silences the consequences

95 However, previous research also shows that the drive to influence public opinion has become weaker among Swedish journalists (Nygren and Appelberg 2013; Wiik 2010).

96 Still, as we will see from the next subchapter, this rather passive role of the journalists does not exclude attempts to act as critics of the authorities, thus, to a certain extent also fulfilling the role of the watchdog of the government.
of essentialist gendering (Azhgikhina 2006; Cabecinhas et al. 2014; Falk 2008; GMMP 2010; Ross 2002).

The Swedish political journalists, while also acknowledging their key role in reflecting the political actors, processes, policies, and public opinions, talk more about the influence they have on the society. They believe that the angles they choose when covering the political sphere, and the ways they view the political realms, are slowly changing the audiences’ and politicians’ attitudes to gender issues. As it was formulated by Arne König, the former head of the Swedish Union of Journalists:

> The role of the media is to promote democracy and debate, democratic values; and equality is, of course, a democratic value. In this sense, the role of the media is to promote equality (interview with König from November 4th, 2009).

With a reservation for the limitations given by the method and sample, it is possible to draw a conclusion that the journalists’ perception of their role as passive transmitters of the “social reality” almost annihilates the possibility to produce reflexive gendering in the content. If journalism only fulfills the role of a mirror, and the “reality” journalists describe is “already gendered” (i.e., few women politicians, politicians’ gendered self-images, ignorance of the gender issues in politics), counter-stereotypical content and gender-aware stories have almost nowhere to appear from. Thus, changes in the realms that journalists cover are expected to change the journalistic content. However, this is not the main engine for reflexive gendering. It is the acknowledgement of the journalism’s constructive power, which influences the journalists’ will and initiative to produce reflexive gendering in political news content. The more responsibility journalists take for gender mainstreaming, the more space is created for gender-aware and counter-stereotypical materials.
6.2. Gendering and power distance

In March 2013, one of the most popular Russian national tabloids Moskovskij Komsomolets (MK) published a column titled “Political prostitution has changed sex” (Yans 2013, my translation). The author labeled the political activity of three women\(^{97}\) as “political prostitution,” and suggested this:

for a long time political prostitution has been exclusively male business. From political prostitute Trotsky\(^{98}\) to the contemporary ones of all the political colors. Today, however, we witness a revolution in this issue. Either men have disappeared (from all the gender attributes they have only pens left), or emancipation has won in Russian politics, but political prostitution, just like an ordinary one, where women have an obvious majority, is becoming a weak sex’ job (Yans 2013, my translation).

The publication led to a big scandal. “United Russia,” the party two of the publication’s subjects are affiliated with, decided to defend “women deputies – mothers and wives” (as it was formulated in their complaints) by participating in a mediated “duel,”\(^{99}\) and applying to the Press Council with a complaint stating that utterances like the one in MK made by a man are “unacceptable in the civilized society” (Zheleznyak 2013). There was even talk about creating an extra regulatory body apart from the Press Council that would regulate information disputes, as well as have a right to fine media and suspend their license. The newspaper’s management and employees, as well as journalists from other media, supported the columnist and the newspaper, insisting that journalistic critique should be free in its choice

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\(^{97}\) Yans was talking about Olga Batalina, Irina Bergset, and Irina Yarovaya, labeling them “political concubines.” Olga Batalina has been a member of the State Duma since 2011. She is Deputy Secretary of the General Council of the United Russia party and Deputy Head of the State Duma Committee for family, women and children issues. Irina Yarovaya has been a member of the State Duma since 2007. She is a member of the General Council of the United Russia party and the head of the State Duma Committee for security and combating corruption. In 1997-2007, she was a member of the liberal party Yabloko/Apple. Irina Bergset is an activist and coordinator of the movement “Russian mothers.”

\(^{98}\) Leon Trotsky was a Marxist revolutionary and theorist. Initially a supporter of the Menshevik Internationalists faction, he joined the Bolsheviks prior to the 1917 October Revolution, and eventually became a leader within the party. He was deported from the Soviet Union in 1929 and assassinated in Mexico in 1940.

\(^{99}\) The two counterparts – politicians and journalists – met on the TV show “Poedinok”/The Duel, broadcasted on the national channel Rossiya 1 (Poedinok 2013).
of methods, and that the attempts of the authorities to change the ethical limits threaten freedom of speech.

This case serves as an illustration of the role of gendering in the power-play between journalists and politicians. The dimension of power distance, according to Hanitzsch, “refers to the journalist’s position toward loci of power in society” (p. 373). Do journalists view gendering as a tool for challenging, controlling, or even manipulating politicians and their decisions? And does gendering, in their view, become a similar tool in the hands of power-holders?

**Russia: essentialist gendering as a tool of critique and manipulation**

The Russian journalists view politics as a very restrained, closed sphere, which has limited access for reporters, as politics takes place behind the curtains (see also Chapter 4). The journalists suggest that in Russia “the political process is very reserved,” and the “information field is getting even narrower” (D, political reporter, female). This corresponds with the more general findings stating that almost half of all Russian journalists believe that the level of press freedom in the country has decreased in the last 5-10 years (Anikina and Johansson 2013), as well as with scholarly evaluations of the tendencies in political communication in the country (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007; Voltmer 2013; Zassoursky 2004).

The journalists describe their relations with politicians as an everyday confrontation, which most often leads to the symbolic victory of politicians. It is the official political actors, those who are defined by the journalists as “bureaucrats” (see Chapter 4), who decide when and how the political communication will take place: “Bureaucrats give interviews not when we need it, but when it is beneficial for them” (F, political editor, male). As one of the interviewees formulated it, the relations between journalists and politicians are characterized by a competition for what becomes public:

> Our main aim is to attain information and cover it, so all our activities are aimed at getting to know as much as possible. And all the politics [in the meaning of the “policy of the political actors”] is aimed at us and the society getting to know as little as possible about what they do, why they do it, and what their decisions are based on. Naturally, this is wrong (O, political reporter, female).

According to the journalists, while the Russian media act as a democratic force in the process of political communication (Voltmer 2013), aim to make political decisions public, and thus, open up for a democratic discussion of politics, the political sphere in the country tends to distance itself
from the public, and tries to step out of the “mutual interweaving” with the media (Edin and Widestedt 2010) at least with those that are more difficult to control (cf. Vartanova 2013; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007). The journalists articulate a hope that this situation will change. Yet they do not believe that they themselves can introduce any changes to the current situation when the tone of political communication is set by politicians. Thus, once again, they expect the political actors to take the first step in the direction of democratizing political communication: “The relation of the politicians to the media should change” (F, political editor, male).

Essentialist gendering: journalists’ tool of critique

In this context of confrontational interrelations, the journalists, however, do not give up. Despite the fact that they perceive their main role as being a “mirror” of the political and societal tendencies, and although they expect the authorities to take the first step in order to change the tone of political communication, they actively search for applicable tools for critiquing the political sphere. This can seem somewhat paradoxical, yet we should not forget the ambiguous character of the Eurasian media model Russia represents. More specifically, it unites the features of the “European” and “Asian” media systems, traditional and progressive tendencies (Vartanova 2013). As Koltsova (2001) notes (though referring to the first decade of the post-Soviet journalism), the Russian journalists are simultaneously more controlled than their Western colleagues, and less dominated. While the media in Russia are an “obedient child” of the authorities (Vartanova 2013), and function within a tight matrix pre-determined by the state (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007), the journalists are simultaneously expected to fulfill the roles suggested by the Western models, watchdog being one of them (Hannitzsch 2011). The watchdog role is viewed as particularly important by the quality press journalists, who feel their mission is opposite to that of the “propagandist” journalists100 (Pasti 2005), who are loyal to the authorities and who uncritically reproduce the dominant discourse.

Gender spotlighting and stereotyping in this context often become critical instruments in the hands of the political journalists. Even though the journalists believe that quality journalism is supposed to be gender-neutral and

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100 TV journalists are often blamed for being “propagandists,” as in the television sector especially the journalistic practices are subject to strict top-down government control (see Vartanova 2013).
include facts rather than being person-orientated, they confess that they often use essentialist gendering as a conscious strategy in order to critique certain politicians. According to the interviewees, different means of gendering are applied to portray women and men politicians in a negative light:

If you want a woman to get a bad press, you show her as a fright; if you want a man to get a bad press, you show him as an idiot (N, head of international group, male).

The Russian journalists admit that women politicians are more often subject to gendered critique in the media discourses than men (cf. Braden 1996; Falk 2008; Norris 1997; Ross 2002; Sreberny-Mohammadi and van Zoonen 2000). For example, one of the interviewees told me about a situation that she observed, where her colleague from another Russian outlet criticized a foreign politician “between the lines” by applying gender stereotyping, which the interviewee considered to be a dishonest method:

[M]y colleague from another big media – when Clinton\textsuperscript{101} was presenting in Vilnius about the OSCE, and she strictly said that our elections are unfair and unjust – wrote something like “Hillary Clinton with her thin pony tail.” Announcing the quotation this way he, clearly, disavows everything she said. ‘Cause it already doesn’t matter what she said, does it? Even if she would say the very truth, this “thin pony tail” is an image, which crosses out all the rest (L, international reporter, female).

The interviewee emphasized that she would never describe any politician in such a way; neither the editorial board of her outlet, nor her personal ethical limits would allow her to apply such gender stereotypes. It should be noted, however, that international journalists seem to have more freedom in the critique of political actors, as their stories seldom reach the targets of the critique and, thus, their choice of critiquing tools is not limited to essentialist gendering. When it comes to covering domestic politics, essentialist gendering is at hand when political journalists want to express their disenchantment with the political sphere and particular politicians:

There is a row of women politicians, well, so-called politicians, to whom the attention is more as to women [than politicians]. It is, again, Kabayeva and

\footnote{\textsuperscript{101} Hillary Clinton was the United States Secretary of State, 2009-2013, Senator from New York, 2001-2009, and First Lady of the U.S., 1993-2001. In the 2008 election, she was a leading candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination.}
Khorkina.102 Because they in principle do nothing but sit in the Duma. And as there is nothing else to say, they are discussed in terms of how they express themselves as women (O, political reporter, female).

When actress Mariya Kozhevnikova103 is elected to the Duma, then it raises a question: What is she doing there? And, of course, immediately her pictures from Playboy are laid out. But that is not an attitude of “There should be no women.” This is a reaction to very particular, strange people (H, editor of political department, male).

Although the journalists emphasize that this gendered critique is not aimed at women as a category, but rather at particular political actors, previous research has shown that such gendered representations have an influence on the voters’ recognition of women as political actors in general (Ross 2002, 2014a). However, men politicians in the Russian political journalism also become targets of strategic essentialist gendering. Yet the higher the position a male leader has, the more difficult it becomes to apply this instrument. For example, the oppositional magazine The New Times suggested an alternative representation of the Russian president Vladimir Putin (at the moment of the interview still a candidate for the presidential position) by portraying him as the opposite to what the government-controlled media constructed. The magazine questioned the “macho” image of the politician that was promoted by other media, and focused on what can be considered to be untypical masculine behavior:

We made a big investigation of what kind of plastic surgeries he [Vladimir Putin] had, because it tells about him as a public politician […] Besides us, no other media dared to write about Putin’s botox (journalist, The New Times).

Thus, the Russian political journalists consciously apply essentialist gendering in order to criticize particular politicians, despite the ideal of gender-neutral quality journalism. Application of this tool on men politicians is difficult, as it, first, requires more elaborate investigation (one has to prove that the politician is not living up to an alleged ideal of masculinity, which is more difficult than proving that a woman is not living up to an alleged ideal of femininity), and, second, when it targets domestic politicians on the

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102 Svetlana Khorkina, like Alina Kabayeva, is a famous Russian gymnast, Olympic Games' star. She was a State Duma representative, 2007-2011.

103 Mariya Kozhevnikova is an actress and a member of the State Duma (since 2011).
top of the political pyramid, it requires courage. Essentialist gendering is, then, commonly applied on women politicians active on the domestic stage, while applying it on foreign women politicians is limited by organizational and individual ethical considerations.

Essentialist gendering: politicians’ manipulative strategy

The tango of journalists and politicians is a dance where the partners inevitably react to each other’s steps (Ross 2010a), so, according to the journalists, on the politicians’ side they apply certain strategies that allow them to benefit from communication with the media (cf. Bystrom et al. 2004; Grinberg 2005; Kroon Lundell 2010; Markstedt 2007; Nedyak 2002; Pavlikova and Yakova 2012; Strömbäck and Kiousis 2011). According to the Russian journalists, politicians’ strategies for remaining in control over the communication with the media, and the media portrayal of them, are not gender-neutral. Politicians generally apply two main instruments: strategic gendering of their public image (thus, adjusting to mediatization of politics in order to achieve benefits), and attempts to restrict gendering initiated by journalists (as in the case with Moskovskij Komsomolets).

One of the key strategies of politicians is self-styling, or strategic image-making, where politicians adjust their image to increase media visibility (Edin and Widestedt 2010). The political journalists in Russia recognize that politicians know how to exploit the media visibility for their own purposes. According to the journalists, in order to reach their goals both female and male politicians often do gender (Löfgren Nilsson 2010) strategically when creating their public images. The journalists then, even if they subscribe to the ideal of gender-neutral political journalism, have to pay attention to such strategically chosen public images of politicians, as they consider these gendered images to be a “political fact” worth mentioning:

[Some] politicians actively exploit their female or male characteristics, so there is some kind of machismo, or, on the contrary, a certain femininity. Yuliya Timoshenko105 and Vladimir Putin are characteristic examples. Like, Yulya with her plait, her dresses, her way of interacting, and Putin crossing the river with a naked torso, hunting – this is some kind of machismo (U, co-editor of international department, male).

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104 Note the Press Freedom rank, as well as instances of censorship, and professional risks statistics presented in Table 3 (Appendix 4).
105 Yuliya Timoshenko was the Prime Minister of Ukraine in 2005 and 2007-2010.
Despite the fact that women politicians’ gender often becomes an object of journalists’ critique, and that women politicians seem to be more “exposed” to media (see subchapter 6.1), according to the journalists, women can also use their femininity strategically in order to draw media attention to themselves. As the interviewees claim, women politicians have to a certain extent become trend-setters in the media sphere:

Women in the government, by the way, set a trend: journalists started to write about, pay attention to fashion. Because the same Golikova\(^{106}\) – she is all of a lady in Chanel, in diamonds, in lurex tops. So since she appeared, I would say, in government journalism there appeared a sort of a new genre – “woman minister” (R, political and economic reporter, female).

Politicians can manifest their control over their media representations not only through adjusting to the rules set by media (Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014b), but also by trying to limit the media power through public discussions of the journalistic production. In Russia, politicians often raise discussions about norms, standards, and ethics of the media “intervening” into politicians’ personal lives and otherwise creating images that they do not benefit from. The Russian journalists believe that politicians want to use the rhetoric of “defending women” as a shield, while in fact they are just aiming to restrict the freedom of expression:

If there were a set of rules for making things like in Sweden, then, of course, the next day all the governmental [government-controlled] media would talk about the topic “women in politics,” and there would be a bunch of people whom they would call “politicians,” and so on, but all this would be handed down (N, head of international group, male).

The journalists suggest that regulation of gendering in the media content can become one of the ways of limiting the media freedom (see also Chapter 5), and that any policies or guidelines that would restrict essentialist gendering of politicians in the media discourse, or directives to introduce reflexive gendering, will have a negative effect on political journalism.

Russia: discussion

In the journalist-politician interactions, which the Russian journalists describe as confrontational, essentialist gendering occurs to be a tool applied by both journalists and politicians in order to control and manipulate the political communication partner. From the journalists’ side gender-

\(^{106}\) Tatiana Golikova was Minister of Health and Social Development, 2007-2012.
spotlighting and stereotyping are used to criticize individual politicians. The journalists focus on gender as a personal characteristic (which is more common than a focus on gender as a societal issue – see Chapter 4), in an attempt to show that a politician is not a reliable political actor. In the case of women, they tend to emphasize the politicians’ femininity (cf. Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008 on media visualizations of women politicians in the political scandals), and in the case of men politicians, they downplay or question their conventional masculinity. Thus, the ideal of gender-neutral journalism is sometimes sacrificed for the sake of critique of politicians.

Politicians, according to the journalists, themselves do gender strategically and play the gender card when creating their public images (cf. Bystrom et al. 2004; Falk 2013; Wagner 2014). As the journalists note, in the Russian context both women and men politicians adopt traditional gender stereotypes, relying on them when building their communication strategies. Politicians also attempt to intervene in media regulations in order to control gendering initiated by the journalists. However, instead of introducing gender equality into the political agenda, politicians base their critique on traditional gender stereotypes, blaming the media for humiliation of the “weak sex” (as in the case of MK). Thus, in a situation of confrontation, essentialist gendering is accepted by both sides of political communication, and is applied strategically by both journalists and politicians for manipulating each other.

**Sweden: reflexive gendering as a mutual critique**

The Swedish political journalists suggest that in Sweden, media play a leading role in political communication, setting its tone (cf. Strömbäck 2009). This to a large extent influences the journalists, who have a positive view on what the journalist-politician interactions are like:

> Sweden is a dream country to work as a journalist! I mean, because it [the political sphere] is so open (M, political reporter, male).

The interviewees claim that in a historical perspective, the media have gained a notch in power over the political elite by suggesting its own way of handling political events (especially when it comes to the frequency of interactions with politicians) (cf. Dahlgren 2000; Strömbäck 2009). According to the journalists, “society is less respectful to politicians or authorities in that way” compared with society in the 1960-70s (V, editor of news department, male). However, the journalists do not see political communication as completely unproblematic. According to them, politicians in the country are well aware of the strategies of political PR (Grinberg 2005; Strömbäck and Kiousis
“Communication is much more a strategic thing now” (M, political reporter, male). This forces the journalists to be more active watchdogs of the government (Nygren and Appelberg 2013; Wiik 2014).

The politicians have learned to adjust to this media logic (cf. Corner and Pels 2003; Strömbäck 2002; Strömbäck and Esser 2009) by creating “shields” and public images in order to hide their “real” personalities and agendas and keep in control of interactions with journalists. One of the main aims of the political journalists is to try to break these shields, and find out what is behind them, i.e., what the “true” agenda of politicians is, or what the politicians themselves are “really” like:

We don't cover their personalities, I would say. We cover their public image, which, of course, is constructed by themselves, and by us, and by many other actors in the society. I mean, who knows who Fredrik Reinfeldt is? Perhaps, his wife, maybe not. All we know is his public image (V, editor of news department, male).

What bothers the journalists in Sweden the most are the politicians' press services, changing the power balance between media and politics, where, with the help of the spin doctors, politicians can choose where to perform, what to visit, and where they will be photographed. Politicians can even choose to dispense with the journalists at all. One of the interviewees suggested an example of such an “odd body” – the webpage of the Swedish government,107 which he labeled “kind of a propaganda channel” (M, political reporter, male), which seems to be out of place in a democratic society. Thus, the Swedish journalists suggest that the “tug-of-war” in setting the rules of political communication in the country goes on.

Gender-aware stories as critique of power

Although the Swedish journalists defined their interactions with politicians as dialogic and cooperative (cf. Dahlgren 2000), mediated political scandals are quite common for Sweden (Allern and Pollack 2012; Bromander 2012). The interviewees often referred to the situations of mediedrev – a series of critical articles aimed at political actors – which they had observed or even been a part of. However, as they recognize their power to influence the image of reality, the journalists tend to limit their application of essentialist gendering for critiquing individual politicians. As one of the interviewees

stated, as “media are tougher” on women politicians, “it could be a problem if that would prevent female politicians from doing their job” (S, political reporter, female). As another journalist commented:

I personally try to be a bit more careful [with women politicians] because I know that they can get into trouble if I write something. But if they in their role have done something that I need to criticize, then I don’t have any concern about them being women. I write as critical as the situation is, because my main responsibility is to the readers always (R, gender columnist, political and economic observer, female).

The journalists realize that personalization of politicians (Driessens et al. 2010; Karvonen 2011; Strömbäck 2011) is becoming a more and more common storytelling technique even in the Swedish political journalism, where in the past it was more unusual due to a collective-oriented political culture (Karvonen 2011; Strömbäck 2002). A common topic for newsroom discussions is about the potential consequences of personalization of politics for women politicians. As one of the interviewees explained it, in the process of a big media hunt, “it tends to get very personal with women” (K, political reporter, female), and, as another journalist suggested, “it’s such an obvious way […] to diminish a woman who is a very important politician: make her personal!” (T, political editor, male). Thus, the Swedish journalists are aware of the consequences of personalization of women politicians.

This careful approach to representing politicians, however, does not imply that the Swedish journalists lose control over political communication. “Enhanced” personalization of men politicians, i.e., “writing about their appearance or looks, writing about the color they have on their tie, or calling them by their first name” (C, political reporter, male), helps the journalists to manifest the media power through getting closer to the male politicians’ personalities. By personalizing men politicians, the journalists reach a certain “gender balance” in the content of political journalism, and also, by exposing men politicians to the audiences, they counteract the politicians’ strategies to set the rules in political communication:

I’d like to make any politician personal […] The real thing to do is to get even closer to male personality… That’s the only way, I think, to crush these shields. I wanna crush these shields and every one of them! (T, political editor, male)

Another tool for keeping control over political communication, according to the Swedish journalists, is producing gender-aware stories, where the gender perspective becomes a critical prism through which political parties’
agendas are questioned and judged. The journalists accuse the parties of not living up to the ideal of gender parity proposed in their agenda:

More parties have said they are feminist parties […] But if you see how the power is really conducted in these parties… Power in Moderaterna [the Moderate Party] is really three men.108 Though they have picked a female vice-chairman, and party secretary,109 when the hard politics are made, it’s still the question of men […] And the second example is Vänsterpartiet [the Left Party], which is a party that has talked a lot about feminism. They chose a man for the party leader now, they chose a man for the party secretary, and they chose a man for the leader in the Parliament!110 (M, political reporter, male)

Against this backdrop, the gender perspective appears to be a convenient tool for criticizing the political parties for not living up to their self-proclaimed feminist model. Such a critique, according to the journalists, doesn’t require in-depth investigations, and, thus, is an efficient tool for controlling politicians:

It’s also, well, an easy way to pinpoint politicians, cause they say that they want gender equality, and then you can easily make [a story], if you can find the statistics, or something that shows that they are not living up to their [ideal] (L, political observer, female).

Thus, the Swedish journalists’ control over the political communication is exercised not through essentialist gendering (which is limited due to the recognition of the consequences of gender stereotyping and personalization of women politicians), but through gender critique of political parties, as well as by trying to achieve gender balance by personalizing men politicians.

108 The journalist referred to Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, Minister for Finance Anders Borg, and the then chief-strategist of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party and State Secretary for Communications Per Schlingmann.

109 Gunilla Carlsson has been Deputy Chairwoman of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party since 2003. Sofia Arkelsten was the party secretary, 2010-2012 (succeeded by a man, Kent Persson).

110 Jonas Sjöstedt has been the leader of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party since 2012. Aron Etzler has been the secretary of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party since 2012 (preceded by a woman, Anki Ahlsten). Hans Linde has been the leader of the parliamentary group of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party since 2010.
Politicians revealing the journalists’ gender-blindness

One of the key strategies of Swedish politicians is self-styling, or strategic image-making, where politicians adjust their image for increased media visibility (Corner and Pels 2003; Edin and Widestedt 2010; Strömbäck 2002). According to the journalists, essentialist gendering is applied by Swedish politicians in order to draw media attention only in exceptional situations. One of the interviewees talked about how surprised he was when Minister of Finance Anders Borg before the 2010 parliamentary elections made an emphasis on what is assumed to be typically masculine behavior. In the opinion of the journalist, it was very unusual for the Swedish context and for the way men politicians are usually expected to behave within it:

He [Anders Borg] found it very important to tell people that he was hunting and that he was really a man living in countryside. And, you know, [he was] taking the prime minister with him, shooting animals and stuff, so that was a bit of a macho thing in Sweden! [...] Maybe it was a tactic: he wanted to build a “man in the countryside” [image]. It was a very male signal, not a very modern signal! I was surprised! (M, political reporter, male)

According to the Swedish journalists, such strategies of referring to traditional interpretations of masculinity and femininity in the Swedish context are not just no-win for politicians, they can even be ridiculed by journalists. At least foreign politicians who act in such a way are often perceived by the Swedish media as a target for critique and sarcasms:

I call [Vladimir Putin] a “macho man.” In my view, he likes to show himself as a strong man. He wants to be fishing in the river without a shirt; he wants to go diving... This you could do in Russia! But if Fredrik Reinfeldt did the same, we would be laughing! And that is what I say: there is a difference in the society. In Russia you can do it, because it might appeal to more people, in Sweden we would just be laughing! (J, international reporter, male)

As playing on gender stereotypes appears to be an insufficient tool for Swedish politicians to construct their public image (as the journalists see it), they search for other ways to acquire power over political communication. The most common alternative that politicians choose is a reverse critique of journalists’ gender-blindness. As such, according to the journalists, Swedish women politicians often raise discussions about the gendered mediation of politics, making the problem of gendered mediation negatively influencing the perception of women politicians heard not only by scholars – to whom women politicians complain (Ross 2002, 2010a; Kroon Lundell 2010) – but also by journalists themselves. The interviewees several times mentioned a
book by Mona Sahlin (1996), a former leader of the Left Party, and a current leader of the Feminist Initiative party, where she described her attitude to the interactions she had with the media. One of the interviewees referred to an op-ed article by Annie Lööf, the current Center Party leader and Minister for Enterprise, in the Swedish national tabloid *Expressen*. In the article the politician was making a point that gender is still an important factor in the way the media portray political actors. The journalist suggested that such a critique from the politicians’ side is useful.

The journalists also pointed to the importance of individual interactions with women politicians. These moments reveal how easily essentialist gendering enters the content of political journalism, and how it actually affects female political leaders. One of the interviewees talked about a discussion she had with Maud Olofsson, the former leader of the Center Party (2001-2011), where the politician revealed that essentialist gendering in the media coverage had direct consequences for the party’s economics:

> I asked her about why […] she should get more [money] than the other party leaders. And she said, “Have you ever thought about what happens if I have the same dress twice?” And I said: “No, I probably wouldn’t even notice if you had the same dress twice!” She said: “You would, you would! People do! Because I had the same dress twice on some occasions, at parties and so on, and then it gets in the evening papers, they write about it: ‘She has the same dress that she had the other time!’ I have to have new clothes for every single occasion” (E, political reporter, female).

Thus, according to the Swedish journalists, the instrument that Swedish politicians apply to control their media portrayal, is raising the public awareness about the consequences of gendered media representations. According to the journalists, Swedish politicians seldom rely on gender stereotypes in order to build their political strategies, as they risk being ridiculed by the media.

**Sweden: discussion**

According to the Swedish journalists, their interrelations with politicians are characterized by dialogue and cooperation, which corresponds to the scholarly evaluations (Dahlgren 2000). The journalists believe that they exercise power over the political sphere in that they choose the time to communicate with politicians, and that their words can cause the politicians’ exclusion

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from the political sphere. In this situation, rather than using essentialist gendering, journalists prefer to criticize politicians by applying reflexive gendering, i.e., criticizing political parties for not living up to the established gender equality ideals. Journalists also apply counter-stereotyping in order to balance the personalization of women and men politicians, as they consider such a storytelling technique to be appealing to the readers.

Politicians, in turn, according to the journalists, seldom rely on gender stereotypes when constructing their public images, as such a strategy may be ridiculed by the media. In order to control essentialist gendering in the journalistic content, politicians critique journalists’ gender-blindness by discussing the culture of political journalism on the debate pages of the media, in their personal blogs, and in books.

Despite the consensus-oriented character of political communication, the Swedish journalists problematize the way politicians adjust to the media logic (through PR and establishment of own media). This might explain why the journalists take upon themselves an active watchdog role (Dahlgren 2000; Nygren and Appelberg 2013; Wiik 2014), turning into attack dogs (Ross 2010a, p. 280) when the politicians’ claims for promoting gender equality in their programs are, according to the press, not legitimized by the politicians’ actions.

Thus, the Swedish journalists see no contradiction between the ideal of gender-balanced journalism they set, and the need to be a critic of the power-holders. The attempts of both journalists and politicians to apply essentialist gendering are mutually controlled by the ability of both sides to mediate critique of gender-blindness of the political communication partner.

**Comparative discussion**

Journalists and politicians are constantly participating in a “tug-of-war,” where they apply different strategies in order to control how political communication will be played out, covered, and understood (Ross 2010a; Strömbäck and Esser 2009, 2014b). Gendering in these interactions becomes a power, which can be applied by either side in order to control and lead in this interaction. However, its application is strictly contextual.

The Russian journalists apply essentialist gendering to criticize politicians, and politicians reply in a similar manner. Both lean on traditional gender stereotypes, which appear to be the most efficient tool not only in communicating with each other, but also in showing the audiences who is
leading in these interrelations. Even when politicians try to counteract essentialist gendering in the media discourses, they do it by criticizing the “almighty” media attacking vulnerable women politicians. The journalists see these attempts as going against the freedom of press.

The Swedish journalists and politicians avoid essentialist gendering as a tool of control over political communication. The strategy in this context from both sides is critique of gender-blindness of the political communication partner, and accusations of not living up to society’s set ideal of gender equality. Thus, while there still is a struggle for power between politicians and journalists in Sweden, both partners of political communication agree upon the necessity of promoting gender equality.

The politician-journalist's tango (Ross 2010), thus, is gendered, but it is gendered differently in different contexts. Where the interrelations between the two partners rather have a character of confrontation, as in Russia, essentialist gendering is accepted as a strategic tool, aimed at control of the other side. Such gendered interrelations lead to yet more confrontation between the two sides. However, this tendency in the Russian context paradoxically should not be considered to be a negative sign. As Maurer and Pfetsch (2014) point, “The frequency of conflict between the political and journalistic elite in their daily professional interaction is a second indicator for the extent to which the political elite has adopted media logic in a given national context” (p. 342). Thus, the confrontational character of political communication can point to the fact that influence of the Russian quality press is still strong.

In more cooperative interactions between politicians and journalists, the sides can have similar ideals (such as gender equality) that prevent them from applying essentialist gendering. In the Swedish case, politicians and journalists criticize each other for not living up to the gender equality ideal. This consensus-orientation, on the one hand, points to a yet higher, than in Russia, level of mediatization of politics (Maurer and Pfetsch 2014), and, on the other, indicates that both journalists and politicians contribute to gender mainstreaming, as it occurs to be beneficial for winning the power-play of political communication.
6.3. Gendering and market orientation

If any newspaper now starts to write something like “How important it is that women would come into politics,” this newspaper would just look strange, because people are not interested in this problem! […] We depend on the reader: what people read, what they are interested in.

E, political reporter, female (Russia)

Our readers are the ones […] who decide more or less what we write about, because they buy the paper, they pay our wages in a way. We have to reflect our readers’ views, I think, on [gender] issues. It’s important because we need women readers. We can get more women readers if we have more women talking about important issues in the paper. So, it is a commercial reason too. I mean, we are a commercial product, which is easy to forget.

N, editor of international department, male (Sweden)

Mediatization of politics is often associated with simplification, visualization, and stereotyping as ways of framing the news and storytelling techniques applied by journalists when covering politics (Corner and Pels 2003; Moy, Mazzoleni and Rojas 2012; Strömbäck 2002; van Zoonen 2003); it is also associated with market logic (Landerer 2013). In the formulation of Hjarvard (2013), today media institutions “are to a great extent driven by a commercial impetus to accommodate to the interests of their audiences and users, and their market demands and purchasing power” (p. 25).

What is at play as long as market orientation of the media is concerned, is the thin line running between the media’s focus on the audiences as citizens and as consumers (Hanitzsch 2007, 2011; also discussed as antagonistic publicistic versus commercial logics of the media – see Strömbäck and Jönsson 2005). The quality and the yellow press are often contrasted in relation to this aspect. While tabloids chase the economic benefits and are driven by commercial logic first and foremost, the quality press (ideally) treats the audience as citizens rather than consumers, serving the readers by providing them with a platform for public dialogue (Hanitzsch 2011; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007). However, scholars claim that in the process of commercialization and tabloidization of the news media, ethical requirements of the quality press are reformulated, in addition to its goals and aims. As commercial logic increases, so does gendering in its essentialist forms (irrelevant spotlighting, stereotyping), blurring the quality-yellow divide (Ross 2002). This vision is shared by the representatives of the journalistic community. For example, Aidan White, the IFJ Secretary General, attributes the persistence of
gender stereotypes in media to “economic interests and age-old customs at work” (White in GMMP 2010, p. 57).

In this subchapter, I address the third dimension of the journalists’ perception of their institutional roles – market orientation, which “is reflective of the primary social focus that guides news production” (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 374). The purpose is to analyze whether the production of gendering is influenced by the market orientation of the media. I explore whether gendering is perceived by political journalists as an instrument of gaining economic benefits or as a tool for providing readers citizens with a platform for the public dialogue. How do political journalists address the potential conflict between the need to survive in the media market and to fulfill the high goals of the quality press?

Russia: between readers, market and sponsors

Gender-neutral journalism (see Chapter 5) at first sight appears to the journalists as exactly the type of content that appeals to the needs of the quality press readers, i.e., those who “don’t want to be entertained by reading about what Michelle Obama wears, or about Barack Obama’s daughter, or Angela Merkel’s husband; what is interesting [to them] are the decisions that these politicians make” (U, co-editor of international department, male). Thus, gendering (whether essentialist or reflexive) appears to the Russian journalists as inappropriate for interactions with demanding readers/citizens:

In general I don’t see much sense in emphasizing such themes as “woman, man,” covering women, or men politicians in some special way… The readers do not show much interest to such (G, editor of international department, male).

The competition between the quality and the yellow press on the media market defines the brand identity of the quality outlets (Anderson, Ogola and Williams 2013), which – ideally – goes along the same lines as what the ethical ideology suggests. As such, one of the interviewees discussed the experience of working in an outlet, which, after rebranding, lost its quality identity and acquired some features of a “yellow” newspaper. This shift was one of the key reasons the journalist changed work places. According to the interviewee, tabloidization and commercial orientation of the newspaper he used to work for defined the practices of political journalism, especially when it came to the choice of news subjects:

There was this approach, more “folk,” as they thought, how do we attract readers? A reader can be attracted by a non-standard persona in the Russian context – woman politician, woman chancellor, woman prime minister. So in
[the outlet] when we were choosing a topic, this was a trump card. When our department was suggesting themes, the president of Latvia, or the president of Estonia would not generate such an interest as the president of Lithuania, a woman.\textsuperscript{112} The fact that she was a woman already gave this theme a possibility to claim a place in the newspaper (M, international observer, male).

Although the journalists generally have nothing against attention to women politicians, and some of them even see it as a strategy of gender mainstreaming in the Russian context (see Chapters 4 and 6.1), the journalists consider personalization of politics to be harmful and somewhat foreign to the quality political journalism, not due to personalization being associated with feminization (van Zoonen 2003), but rather because of the readers’ choice of their – quality – outlets for a different type of content:

For a reader, well, at least, for the quality media reader, what matters is action, not actor. So I don’t think that there should be any difference – neither favors, nor specific spotlighting, considering that, let’s say, it is good that this is a man, or this is good that this is a woman (L, international reporter, female).

Thus, gender-neutrality in the perception of the Russian political journalists from the point of view of winning the audiences becomes a constituent of the quality brand. However, as we will see, there are also other issues that are at play as far as gendering and market orientation are concerned.

“Advantageous” women politicians

The political journalists suggested that the differentiation between the alleged expectations of the readers of the yellow and quality press determines their orientation regarding production of gender-neutral content. This idealized vision correlates with the scholarly definitions of quality press as oriented at citizens and their interests rather than economic benefits and media market (Hanitzsch 2011; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007). However, those interviewees who cover not only political affairs but also the economic sphere, as well as department editors, demonstrated a much more cynical and realistic view: gendered content is often more beneficial for the quality press than gender-neutral material.

Mediatization of politics is accompanied by its visualization (Corner and Pels 2003; Moy, Mazzoleni and Rojas 2012; Strömbäck 2002; van Zoonen 2003). Powerful women, according to the journalists, potentially appear as providers of attractive visuals:

\textsuperscript{112} Dalia Grybauskaite has been the president of Lithuania since 2009.
The newsroom aims to present the story in advantageous light [...Men] are always dressed in almost the same way: dark suits, austere clothes. Women in this sense are more “beneficial” particularly for the photo-service: for the visual image (X, political and economic observer, international group, male).

These visuals, as the journalists explain, are aimed at attracting the readers. However, as the experts explain, visuals representing women, especially those leaning on traditional stereotypes, can rather be explained by being oriented to advertisers, who are likely to provide ads for this type of content (interview with Nadezda Azhgikhina from April 12th, 2010). As the excerpt below shows, the journalists discuss this tendency realistically and ironically:

Int.1: If we talk about gender, then here is a classic example: a spy scandal.\footnote{The interviewees talked about the 2010 scandal with the Illegals Program, when several unlawful Russian and Peruvian agents were revealed in the United States. Ten agents became part of a spy swap deal between the U.S. and Russia. One of them, Anna Chapman, gained media attention not only in Russia, but also internationally.} When around ten spies are deported, no one is interested in illustrating this story with a 60-year old [agent].

Int.2: But a booby Anna Chapman with her bum is – yeaaah, super!

Int.1: Yes, Anna Chapman who readily poses for Maxim is a perfect illustration! Because an issue with Anna Chapman will be bought.

Int.2: Bought for the boobs! For what is interesting (F, political editor, male, and Y, political reporter, male).

This quote illustrates not only the journalists’ acceptance of the necessity of producing gendered content in the quality political journalism, but also their dissatisfaction with the audiences acting as consumers, the ones who are supposed to buy the outlet. While the ideal audiences are thought by the journalists to be citizens who are reading the quality outlets to get access to information about what is happening in the political sphere (see above), the consuming audiences are imagined by the journalists as low culture bearers searching for entertainment. This ambiguous view of the readers is discernible throughout all the interviews cited in this sub-section. Trying to satisfy both the ethical ideal of quality political journalism and the readers citizens on the one hand, and trying to attract the broader, “lowbrow” readership on the other, can be explained by the journalists’ acknowledgement of a
tendency for a decrease in circulation, and a threat of losing the support of sponsors.\textsuperscript{114}

In this situation, the media cannot take risks and have to rely on producing content that seems to be attractive for the majority of readers and advertisers. Despite the fact that quality papers all around the world tend to attract more and more female readers (Chisholm et al. 2013), and this tendency is observed also in Russia (interview with Vladimir Kasutin from December 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2011), the interviewed journalists visualize their reader as a successful businessman, or his wife, but not as a successful woman. The quotation below comes from a journalist working for the Kommersant publishing house, which identifies the percentage of its outlets’ female and male readers.\textsuperscript{115} Despite the domination of men among the readers, women still constitute a large share of the audience, yet, as the quotation demonstrates, the journalists’ vision of the readers is gendered in such a sense that while male readers are easier to imagine as quality papers’ readers, female readers are assumed to be attracted to the “light” content produced by tabloids:

\begin{quote}
We believe that Kommersant is read by successful people, accomplished businessmen, who buy our newspaper or subscribe to it not to read some gossip. If they – or their wives – decide to read gossip, they have for this matter Komsomolskaya Pravda, Moskovskij Komsomolets, and other newspapers. We don’t need to flitter away for this. We certainly orient at our vision of our reader (journalist, Kommersant).
\end{quote}

As the assumed reader is a man, the journalists tend to focus on the preferences of the male readership and prioritize them. The journalists’ fixation on visualization of powerful women, thus, is explained not as much by the

\textsuperscript{114} “Pleasing the sponsor,” according to Vladimir Kasutin, the editor-in-chief of the professional magazine Zhurnalistika i mediarynok, is a characteristic for the Russian context strategy of survival for the media (interview with Kasutin from December 28\textsuperscript{th}, 2011). However, recently, media brands, especially those producing content that is critical of the political authorities, e.g., one of the outlets in the sample of this study The New Times, and oppositional TV channel Dozhd’/Rain, had to search for other sources of financing, such as crowd-sourcing and subscriptions.

\textsuperscript{115} Kommersant’s audience consists of 55% male and 45% female readers (http://www.kommersant.ru/about/kommersant), and for Kommersant.Vlast’ the proportions are 66/34\% respectively (http://www.kommersant.ru/about/vlast).
journalists’ will to please the female readership, but rather by the imagination of what kind of content the male readers would enjoy. Even though this particular interest in women politicians makes women more visible, and potentially allows them to be viewed as powerful actors in political life, the way women politicians are covered is often rather reinforcing gender stereotypes than challenging them:

We try to tell more about her private life, her family, her habits. We always think that the reader is more interested in learning about the non-official side. In other words, [we want] to show how she came to politics and if she can, despite it, still be a woman. Have you read our portrait of Christine Lagarde? We illustrated it with her pictures with the children, her partner, told about how she came to politics (B, editor of international department, male).

While this group of the interviewees – department editors and reporters covering not only political, but also economic affairs – talked openly about their focus on increasing the number of consumers, most of them did not state that commercial logic stands behind publishing material about women politicians. There was, however, one exception. The Forbes’ journalists talked explicitly about how coverage of powerful women actually helps their outlet make money. One of the interviewees stated that the key idea behind launching the supplement Forbes.Woman was making profit by attracting a “vacant” audience – successful women – to particular advertisements. However, another interviewee emphasized that the profit logic in this case does not go against the societal function of the supplement:

I think that if you check the goals of it [Forbes.Woman], there will definitely be something like “popularization of the women’s business, of the image of successful woman in the media” (journalist, Forbes)

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116 According to the statistics of the outlets in the sample, the majority of the quality press’ readers have higher education and high social status, thus, both male and female readers can identify themselves with the successful news subjects. As we will see in the next sub-section, this is exactly the reason why many of the Swedish quality outlets publish materials about women in politics.

117 Christine Lagarde has been Managing Director (MD) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since 2011. In France, she was Minister of Economic Affairs, Finance and Employment, 2007-2011, Minister of Agriculture and Fishing, 2007, and Minister of Commerce and Industry, 2005-2007. She was the first woman to become finance minister of a G8 economy, and is the first woman to head the IMF.
Interestingly, in this outlet, writing about powerful and successful women is profitable not only for the media outlet, but even for the individual employees. As the interviewees discussed, the *Forbes. Woman* supplement does not have a separate newsroom. This means that any journalist working for *Forbes* who suggests or is invited to write about a successful woman (not necessarily a politician) for the supplement, receives a separate honorarium. Thus, the outlet’s idea of popularization of the image of a successful woman brings economic benefits to the outlet, and is promoted within the united newsroom through material compensation to the employees.

To summarize, the Russian journalists tend to orientate toward male readers and prioritize their assumed preferences when producing content. The focus on women politicians is often driven by attracting more (male) readers and advertisers. However, the tendency to write about powerful and successful women in a long run can be recognized as economically beneficial, as it already is in outlets owned by Western publishing houses (as in *Forbes* belonging to the German holding Axel Springer), which can be understood as a positive sign of turning to gender mainstreaming.

“Gender-aware stories are not catchy”: deciding for the readers

While stories about women politicians can, according to the journalists, bring advantages both of economic and circulation character, stories focusing specifically on gender inequality in the political sphere are not considered by the journalists to be newsworthy, interesting, or profitable. Apart from referring to the general context as the main reason for ignoring the problem of gender inequality, the journalists also point to the readers’ inability to accept female political leaders, leading to a lack of interest in the theme in general. However, they emphasize that they themselves do not belong to the majority – they explicitly sympathize with either particular female political leaders or women politicians in general, as well as with the ideal of gender equality in politics. As one of the interviewees stated,

> When I asked a political expert about Oksana Dmitrieva, he said that they will not vote for a woman here [in Russia]. It is we [journalists], and you [gender media scholars] who would vote, but the vast majority will not just because she is a woman. They will not look at how qualified she is, just “woman cannot rule” (N, political reporter, female).

The journalists, thus, suggest that they provide the public with what they want, which correlates with the previous theoretical explanations of the gen-
dered mediation of politics and politicians (see Ross 2014a). Moreover, re-
garding the decrease in circulation, the risk of losing the readers is becoming
too high to consider alternative (to stereotypical) ways of covering politics.
Counter-stereotypes and gender-aware stories, thus, are considered to be un-
wise ways of covering politics, as the public in general, in the journalists’ view,
is conservative, and tends to consider those who “precede” it as “crazy”:

The majority of media, which work for the mass audiences [including quality
press], have to maintain the established images. Like, “a man is masculine”
[…]. Media, in principle, have to go on about the stereotypes, and if we break
them, then we should break them very, very carefully, on the basis of what
already exists. Otherwise, we risk losing the audience. Because the audience,
it can misunderstand, it can decide, well, that it is not the audience that is
amiss, but the journalists (K, editor of news department, male).

In these relations, the audiences are perceived and described by the jour-
nalists as the steerer of the journalistic processes. Thus, it is the preferences of
the audiences that dictate what the journalists write about and how they write
it. However, this becomes a strange justification for the production of stereo-
typical content for two reasons. First, the readers of the quality press are vis-
ualized by the journalists as successful and highly educated people who have
a high level of expectations about the content (and this is proved by the sta-
tistics that the outlets have). Second, the journalists suggest that even if there
are readers who hold the most conservative views, the journalists themselves
are very different from them – being avant-guard, educated, informed in the
political field, and gender-aware. This constructs a very complex relation to
the readers, who are perceived as highly two-faced – demanding citizens sat-
isfied with the gender-neutral content and lowbrow consumers requiring es-
sentialist gendering. This, together with a simultaneous need to orientate at
advertisers and sponsors, puts the political journalists working for the quality
press in a difficult situation of choosing sides and tools.

Gendered humor as a way of interacting with readers

A powerful tool helping to establish better relations with the readers, ac-
cording to the journalists, is humor and irony. Indeed, the codes of humor
are efficient if they are shared by the one who makes a joke and the one
who receives it, and conceiving humor as a discourse leads to recognition
of it as depending greatly on its immediate social context (Crawford 2003).
Only the male interviewees talked about gendered humor as a good means
of establishing relations with the audience. This correlates with the observed
tendency that in the Russian context male media producers hold the power to make jokes (Kalinina and Voronova 2011). Moreover, these jokes in the Russian media content tend to draw on and feed into traditional gender stereotypes, ridiculing those who are considered “other” in comparison to the heterosexual masculine norm: women (especially active), and homosexual and elderly men (Kalinina and Voronova 2011).

This holds true also for the production of political journalism. The male journalists, even though, or even especially, if they consider themselves to be gender-aware and “not too sexist,” still suggest that they have a “right to tell anecdotes about blonde women” (N, head of international group, male), as they believe that gendered humor will help them establish connection with the (male) readers. The objects of the political journalists’ humor are not only (blonde) women. Politicians of both sexes, or, rather, their alleged inability to fulfill the public expectations of femininity and masculinity, becomes a focus of the journalists’ irony. The humoristic approach to politicians is driven by the journalists’ wish to create an original content and look at politics from a different angle. As one of the interviewees commented on the article he wrote himself (in co-authorship),

There had been a lot written about elections already, so we needed to write something else. We decided to access it from another side: […] the role of sexual scandals in the forming of the public image, the role of sexual aspects in political image building and advertising […] This is funny, I read here: “While men in politics run a risk of impotence and homosexuality, the few women lose their femininity…” (K, editor of news department, male).

As far as quality political journalism is concerned, gendered humor, according to the journalists, has its own specifics, as it should balance “on the verge of, on the one hand, investigation, and, on the other, mockery, so that it will be fun to read” (K, editor of news department, male). This balance occurs to be difficult to achieve. The high level of disenchantment with the political authorities can easily turn the critical media into an “evil jester,” who gives the readers a sarcastic interpretation of political affairs, fulfilling the function of critique of the power-holders, but forgets about the gender-neutral ethical ideal:

Int.1: If the tandem118 was mix-sexed, we would discuss it a lot, I think!

Int.2: Who, where, whom, and how in the atmosphere of political intimacy!

118 The interviewees are referring to the tandem of President and Prime Minister of the RF.
Int.1: This would give a broad space for sarcasm! (F, political editor, male, and Y, political reporter, male).

Despite the journalists’ claim that gendered humor does not contradict their own gender-awareness and the ethical ideal of gender-neutral political journalism, the journalists seem to underestimate the possible effect of jokes reinforcing gender stereotypes. As the guide book for journalists prepared by the Council of Europe states, while jokes that play on gender “may be acceptable under some circumstances, in public news fora they will reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes rather than change them” (Hermes 2013, p. 25).

Russia: discussion

When analyzing the Russian journalists’ perception of gendering in relation to their interactions with the audiences, it is easy to notice a certain ambiguity. On the one hand, the journalists demonstrate a great respect for the audiences, suggesting that they “depend on the reader: what people will read, what they are interested in” (E, political reporter, female). The journalists talk about their readership being much more demanding than the audiences of the tabloids. Gender-neutral content is also perceived by the journalists as a part of the branding of the quality outlets, which compete with tabloids for the readers’ attention (see also Chapter 5).

On the other hand, the journalists suggest that the audiences are on average less aware, progressive and informed than the journalists themselves. The appearance of stereotypical coverage of politicians and gendered humor are explained by the journalists by referring to the needs of a “lowbrow” reader, who is not capable of understanding counter-stereotypes and gender-aware stories. Instead of “raising” the audiences to their level, the journalists suggest that it is the readers who “dictate” the pace: gender-aware stories will appear only when there is a request from the audiences. Over time, the journalists maintain gender stereotypes.

This contradiction can be explained by a broader tendency, where the Russian journalists name information consumers among the main factors influencing the production of the content (Anikina and Johansson 2013). As Anikina and Johansson (2013) rightly observe, it is yet unclear whether this trend should be considered as a formation of more audience-oriented journalism, or as a need to attract a wider audience in order to gain a financial profit. Moreover, the results of a national survey show that the economic interests of the media company most often become an obstacle for journalistic practices (Anikina and Johansson 2013, p. 99), which serves as an explanation
for the paradoxical combination of the gender-neutral ideal of political journalism on the one hand, and essentialist gendering in the forms of gender-spotlighting, stereotyping, and gendered humor on the other.

When it comes to gendering, these tendencies result in the quality and the yellow press moving closer to each other in terms of the content produced, as economic interests feed into persistence of gender-stereotyping in the media content (cf. White in GMMP 2010, p. 57). Paradoxically, tabloids in Russia today might even be more advanced than their quality counterparts when it comes to production of reflexive gendering. The reason for this, as explained by the journalists, is that the tabloids have been quicker in adjusting to the feminization of the readership, and have learned to create content that appeals to women rather than attracts men:

The stories about women, maybe written by women, about “Look, how great, we could achieve this and that!” are more likely to appear [in tabloids]. I would say that in the “non-quality” papers there are more stories about women, and maybe they are more positive than in the quality ones, because quality newspapers are some kind of a “membership” club, where women were not let in for one hundred years (N, head of international group, male).

General interest media in Russia, and especially the quality press, thus, appear to be the least prepared for orienting in the current conditions of the media market, if compared to tabloids and especially to the niche press, such as women’s magazines (interview with Vladimir Kasutin from December 28th, 2011). However, it should be taken into account that all the Russian media and especially the quality segment have found themselves in a situation where, as coined by Kasutin, “The business model of the media is failing.” Thus, in the case of the Russian culture of political journalism, one should talk not about gendering in the dimension of market orientation, but rather about gendering in the framework of survival strategies.

The gender-neutral ideal of quality political journalism in Russia is sporadically committed to benefits. However, there is no clear and common strategy within the Russian culture of political journalism suggesting how the practicing journalists should adjust the content to the needs of the audiences, advertisers’ requirements, and sponsors’ whims. In this situation, reflexive gendering from all sides appears to be the least beneficial tool to use.
Sweden: a paradox of harmony

As mentioned in Chapter 5, audiences critically reading political news stories is one of the motivating factors for the Swedish journalists to apply counter-stereotyping and publish gender-aware stories. As such, the audiences are perceived and addressed by the journalists as critical and demanding readers. Reflexive gendering helps the journalists working for the quality press to play the role of public opinion moderators. Yet, as we will see in this section, fulfillment of this role does not contradict the commercial interests of the media institution: gender-balanced content happens to also be economically beneficial.

Reflexive gendering as the audiences’ demand

The inhabitants of the Swedish culture of political journalism draw a line between the type of journalistic content the quality and the yellow papers produce, and this line follows the assumed readers’ expectations. While evening papers “sometimes make reviews on how politicians are dressed” (V, editor of news department, male), this is considered to be “not our style of journalism” by the journalists working for the quality press. Moreover, the journalists expect that such an approach would raise a discussion among the readers, who immediately respond with the critical questions: “Would you write that about a man, or [would you] comment about his tie, for example, that he has a dull tie?” (V, editor of news department, male). The readers are perceived as referees and judges who actively react to any content that seems to them to be “foreign” for the quality press:

We are more on guard that we don't do that sort of things: don't refer to people's clothes, their way of behaving... mmm, unless it's a part of the story or something [...] The one who reads the paper is the referee or the judge...
If we write a story like this, people would eat us for breakfast, ha-ha! We would get mail-bombed (N, editor of international department, male).

These active audiences’ way of thinking, according to the Swedish journalists, is very similar to their own. The journalists – despite their high, as one of the interviewees defined it, “elite” status in society – do not see themselves as superior to their readers when it comes to gender-awareness and sensitivity. Regarding these topics, unlike other issues, e.g., EU integration,
the journalists believe there are not many differences between the media producers and their public:\(^{119}\)

The ones who work here, and the ones who are the readers – we approach more or less the same (N, editor of international department, male).

While the profile of the Swedish quality press’ readers, according to the outlets’ statistics, is not different from the Russian quality press’ audiences when it comes to level of education and societal status (see Chapter 3), it appears that the Swedish journalists trust their audience more and do not expect conservative views on gender issues to be shared by the majority. The possibility of such views among some of the readers is not denied, but the journalists emphasize that the press is not catering to this part of the audience, even if it could potentially be economically beneficial. When it comes to the readers propagating extreme views, such as sexism or racism, the journalists’ reaction is categorical:

We do not boost their thoughts, though it might be good for sales – I don’t know. We have to bear in mind that we should first of all reflect the values of the paper, one of them being to boost women’s rights, women’s voices, and it’s also a commercial thing (N, editor of international department, male).

I will come back to the commercial logic behind “boosting women’s voices” below. What is important to note here is that the Swedish journalists believe that it is not the newspaper or magazine that should follow the readers, but that the quality outlet “has a responsibility to be educating, to be more enlightening” (H, international reporter, male). According to the journalists, the non- or anti-feminist minority of the readers should be addressed with gender-aware stories as well. These readers may even be interested in reading about gender issues even if they have a negative attitude to such discussions. This corresponds well with the previous findings, which show that 88% of all Swedish journalists believe that they should provide the audiences not only with what they want, but also with what they don’t know they want (Andersson 2012):

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\(^{119}\) However, the Swedish experts suggest that journalists are more feminist in their way of thinking than their readers. According to Axel Andén, the editor-in-chief of the professional journal Medievärlden, “People working in the media sector, are much more feminist than the average people, because of who they are, where they come from, where they live, and what gives status in their context. They want to see themselves as modern people, maybe not feminists, but – how do you say? – ‘equalists’ or something like that” (interview with Andén from November 11\(^{th}\), 2011).
I know [that] readers are very interested in these topics. Nobody has told me that I write too often about gender issues! I mean, 50% or more of our readers are possibly women. And, let’s say, a large percentage of our male readers are also interested in gender issues. Some – because they are in favor of gender balance, others – because they dislike it (Z, international reporter, female).

Thus, the pedagogic role (Melin-Higgins 1996) to a large extent is a driving force behind reflexive gendering in political journalism. Interestingly enough, the journalists suspect mainly male readers to be the possible holders of sexist views, while female readers are viewed as an entity sharing gender-aware views of the journalists. This visualization of the readership influences the ways the journalists perceive gendering both as an instrument of connecting to the audiences, and as an economic tool.

Gender-aware stories “for sale”

Reflexive gendering, according to the Swedish journalists, not only addresses the interests of the majority of the quality press’ readers, but also brings tangible economic benefits. The explicitly pragmatic repertoire mainly belonged to the editors of departments and chief editors, although the political and international reporters also showed awareness of what is considered to be profitable at higher levels of the media hierarchy (cf. Andersson 2012; Andersson and Wiik 2012; Nygren and Appelberg 2013). As such, the journalist who initiated the so-called “Diversity-group” at her previous place of work (see Chapter 5.4) stated that it was crucial that the editor-in-chief supported the initiative, and his reasoning behind it was not entirely altruistic:

[The editor-in-chief] thought that this was important, both for the newspaper as a quality issue, and also how to make money in the future, and how to get different people to read the newspaper (S, political reporter, female).

The reason for viewing reflexive gendering as economically beneficial is, according to the journalists, first and foremost the increase in female readership in the quality press. The Swedish journalists are well aware that approximately 50% of their readers are women (this correlates with the outlets’ statistics – see Chapter 3). The increasing orientation toward the audiences is common for the Swedish culture of journalism in general (Ghersetti 2012; Nygren and Appelberg 2013), and in the case of the Swedish quality press, the recognition of female readers’ preferences in the content as a priority, is a driving force behind reflexive gendering:
We really depend on female readers. Not just because we want to continue to grow as a magazine, but also because we depend on money. It is like car brands. I mean, if we have less than 40% female readers, we won’t be able to come out with a paper, ’cause we don’t want to be associated with being a very male journal (Y, editor-in-chief, male).

Thus, the economic logic of the media institution in the Swedish case becomes – paradoxically, if we take into account the views of scholars (Cerquiera et al. 2014; Ross 2002) and representatives of the journalistic community (White in GMMP 2010, p. 57) – the great supporter of gender mainstreaming on the pages of quality press. It is not only the ethical ideal but also the market orientation that dictates the Swedish journalists to avoid essentialist gendering and instead produce reflexive gendering.

Gender mainstreaming in the content can, moreover, become a part of the outlet’s branding. As one of the interviewees from the weekly business magazine *Veckans Affärer* explained, in the beginning of the 2000s, the magazine needed new advertisements due to a minor economic recession. The magazine’s management realized that they produced a magazine for and about middle-aged male decision-makers, and there were rarely any women covered in the magazine, which did not make the magazine attractive for female readers. The magazine decided to change the pattern and try to do interviews with female experts. As the interviewee commented,

> We started with creating a list of 125 women working in different companies, those whom we could interview. And when we did it, we realized that we could publish it to show: here are the women! Over the years we have tried to do it more consciously, to focus on what we want this debate to be about […] It has become a big part of our brand. If you say *Veckans Affärer* and ask people to say five things about it, gender will come up (journalist, *Veckans Affärer*).

Thus, gender balance has become a part of the market orientation of the Swedish quality media. The economic strategy goes along the same line as the steps towards creating quality and responsible content. According to the Swedish journalists, there is no contradiction between addressing the readers of the quality press as citizens and as consumers, as there is no contradiction between viewing the quality press as a commercial product and a democratic forum. As one of the interviewees suggested, if they only write about men, “after a while you will lose half of the readers. So, it’s not good from the business view, or from the democratic point of view” (C, political reporter, male).
Gender issues are no fun

Gender-awareness is perceived by the Swedish journalists as something they share with the majority of their readers, so the journalists apply the corresponding tools for interacting with them. While the male journalists did not discuss gendered humor as an instrument for connecting to the audiences (except for mentioning that gender strategies of foreign politicians may appear as ridiculous for the Swedish public – see section 6.2), the female journalists were very strict about covering gender issues or playing on gender characteristics of politicians in a humorous way. As one of the interviewees stated, “I wouldn’t joke about gender issues” (G, political reporter, female).

Some of the journalists do not apply gendered humor because of what they have learned from their own previous “mistakes,” when gendering as a “funny twist” became grounds for reader critique (see Chapter 5.4). Others believe that a mockery of a political persona via gender stereotyping signifies the absence of deep journalistic analysis, and, thus, demonstrates the lack of journalistic quality. As such, one of the interviewees remembered a news story published in another outlet, where a Saudi Arabian princess articulated her disappointment with the fact that she had not been allowed to drive a car. In the view of the journalist, the princess was described in the news story as a “fictional, Disney character”:

I thought that was very disrespectful. In a country like that, if any woman raised her voice, she would be killed. So, if anyone could, it would be a princess! [...] And to treat this as something funny – I think it’s a sign of ignorance, that you don’t know the real problem, your analysis is very light (R, gender columnist, political and economic observer, female).

The common view among the Swedish female journalists I interviewed was, thus, that “the problems that women have all around the world should be taken very seriously and not as something funny” (R, gender columnist, political and economic observer, female). However, there was an alternative perspective. One of the journalists suggested that while there is no question about the need to mainstream gender, there are different ways to do it in quality political journalism. As such, the journalist appreciated a piece from a Russian newspaper (see Appendix 2, example 1), finding the implied humor in the article to be a good strategy of gender mainstreaming.120

120 The authors of the article somewhat ironically commented on the fact that Tarja Halonen, President of Finland from 2000 to 2012, had to marry her partner officially, so that the press could avoid problems with how to address him.
Sweden: discussion

The interviews demonstrated that the tendency of commercialization of media (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Ekecrantz 2005) is a reality experienced by the Swedish quality outlets’ employees, who have found ways to place the quality press ideals and the economic benefits along the same line when it comes to gendering. It occurs that in the situation where at least half of the quality press readers are women, the content and accompanying advertisements are catered to this niche, as well as to the large numbers of male readers sharing the value of gender equality with the quality content producers. These readers in a way are perceived as the dictators of the sources journalists contact (balance of women and men), and of the choice of reflexive rather than essentialist gendering. This corresponds with the findings in previous research showing that the audience interest is one of the main factors influencing the choice of the news subjects among Swedish journalists (Nygren and Appelberg 2013).

The quality press readers are relied on as active and interactive “reviewers” of the journalistic content, who often give feedback to the gendered content—whether they agree or disagree with it. According to the journalists and the experts, the chauvinist opinions among the readers “do exist, but this is just a small minority that holds them” (interview with Helena Giertta, the chief editor of the professional magazine Journalisten, from May 29th, 2012). However, while the interviewees suggested that a holder of such opinions is more likely to be a man, the media experts claim that such opinions can also exist among female readers. According to Helena Giertta, “now [some] women also are thinking that feminism is a bad thing” (interview from May 29th, 2012). The journalists believe that these “anti-feminist” readers are also interested in reading gender-aware stories, even if they question the journalists’ perspectives. Their views cannot be reflected by the political journalists in the quality outlets, and remain visible only in the web discussion, or on the readers’ pages. The journalists state that they do not consider the economic benefits the content pleasing these readers would bring to the paper—the democratic values, e.g., the value of gender equality, and the ideal of gender-balanced political journalism, in this case are “priceless” for the quality press.

Within the Swedish culture of political journalism there seems to be no contradiction between the ideal of gender-balanced content and the market orientation of the Swedish media. Quite paradoxically, the economic logic
of the media institution becomes one of the main supporters of gender mainstreaming in the content, which is oriented at (gender-aware) female readers. The quality of the content, which this sector of the press promises to the readers, the ideal of gender balance, and economic benefits, thus, according to the inhabitants of the Swedish culture of political journalism, do not contradict each other, but go hand in hand.

**Comparative discussion**

In this subchapter I observed whether and how political journalists situate gendering in the framework of market orientation, the third dimension of their perception of institutional roles (Hanitzsch 2007). In the Russian culture of political journalism there is a clear contradiction between the content considered to be economically beneficial and the ethical ideal of gender-neutral journalism described in Chapter 5. Moreover, the political journalists in the quality press constantly face a problem of identifying their audience, who appears mysteriously two-faced, where a highly educated and successful reader/citizen demands gender-neutral content, and a conservative reader/consumer is attracted to the gender stereotypical content. In any case, this reader is visualized as a man, and only a few quality outlets recognize the preferences of female readers, yet still choose to create special supplements for them (such as *Forbes.Woman*).

In the Russian context, gender-neutral content appears to fulfill the requirements of the ideal readership, while the consuming audience is imagined to be satisfied with essentialist gendering in political journalism. Essentialist gendering also seems to be beneficial economically, which is discussed with implied irony by the journalists. Thus, while the gender-neutral political journalism content is still perceived as an ideal to strive for, the journalists admit that exceptions can be made – to please (male) readers, advertisers, and sponsors. This contradiction between the journalistic ideals and practices is common for different times and geographical contexts (Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996), however, it can be linked to a more current tendency of mediatization of journalism, when the ideals often have to be sacrificed for the sake of public visibility and profitability (Kammer 2013).

In the Swedish culture of political journalism, there is no such contradiction, and reflexive gendering is considered to facilitate both the democratic and pedagogic functions of the quality press and the economic goals of the media. Counter-stereotypes and gender-aware stories are perceived to be as
economically beneficial content, as it attracts female readers, whose preferences are recognized and currently prioritized. This correlates with a broader European tendency, whereas the traditional news organizations struggle to appeal to women, who constitute the majority of the population of any European country (Fortunati, Deuze and de Luca 2014).

The Swedish culture of political journalism demonstrates a somewhat paradoxical harmony between what is considered to be an ideal product for the citizens and a commercial product competing on the media market. In other words, while often the commercial logic is reportedly a driving force behind essentialist gendering (Cerquiera et al. 2014; Ross 2002; White in GMMP 2010, p. 57), this logic in the Swedish case becomes a driving force behind reflexive gendering.

6.4. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to analyze the journalists’ conceptualizations of gendering in the framework of three aspects of their institutional roles: interventionism, power distance, and market orientation (Hanitzsch 2007). Both in Russia and in Sweden the political journalists consider reflecting the political “reality” to be the key role of political journalists. However, there is a difference in the journalists’ conceptualization of gendering in relation to this. The Russian journalists do not see themselves as responsible for gendering in the political news content, and they shift the responsibility for potential changes concerning gender inequality and imbalance to the political actors and audiences. The Swedish journalists relate gendering in the content with the journalists’ responsibility for the societal processes, and suggest that the media can influence politics and society. Thus, the acknowledgement of journalism’s constructive power influences the journalists’ will to produce reflexive gendering in the political news content.

Regarding the power distance dimension, the journalist-politician “tango” (Ross 2010a) is gendered in both contexts, as both journalists and politicians apply gendering as a tool of challenging, control and manipulation in the interactions with each other. In a situation of a confrontational character of political communication (as in Russia), essentialist gendering is accepted by both journalists and politicians as a strategic tool aimed at controlling the other side, and applying it leads to yet more confrontation between the communication partners. In the interactions described as dialogue-oriented (as in Sweden), reflexive gendering in the form of critique for not living up to the ideal of gender balance is applied by both journalists and politicians, and feeds into gender mainstreaming.
The journalists in Russia and Sweden also discuss gendering in relation to market orientation. In Russia, journalists find themselves in the complicated situation of having to please an ambiguous audience (citizens and consumers), advertisers, and sponsors. They do not find reflexive gendering useful when it comes to economic benefits, and the fulfillment of the ideal of gender-balanced journalism is challenged by multiple obstacles. In the Swedish context, reflexive gendering both promotes gender equality as a democratic value and is economically beneficial.
7. Epistemological beliefs and gendering

A male news-maker would flirt with a pretty female journalist, would show her how clever he is. He will try to make her like him, to tell her more news. This is something many beautiful journalists play on, and the clever ones try to not to get carried away with that. Interviews and interaction with a newsmaker have this form of a light coquetry, and are somewhat pleasant for both sides. With women [politicians] it can be different: if it is a very pretty journalist and a female politician, then there can be an outright hostility.

U, co-editor of international department, male (Russia)

I am very neutral, it’s not like that I myself burn for these [gender] issues! No, I don’t do it. I try to hold myself kind of neutral, as much as I can!

L, political observer, female (Sweden)

Chapter 5 discussed that the journalists in both countries see objectivity, neutrality and deliberateness of approach towards all the political actors among the main ideals of the quality political journalism. It appears that objectivity is a traveling notion (Mancini 2000; Schudson 2001), which is conceptualized differently in the two cultures of political journalism. According to the Russian political journalists, objectivity implies a neutral reflection of “objective facts,” something happening “out there” in the world. The Swedish journalists rather view objectivity as impartiality, a fair and balanced representation of the world, where different sides are allowed to talk (which corresponds better with the scholarly interpretation of objectivity – see Asp 2014). While in Chapter 5 objectivity was discussed as a component of the ethical ideology of political journalism in the quality press, as a normative category, an unquestionable value, this chapter explores objectivity in the framework of the journalists’ epistemological beliefs – “philosophical underpinnings of journalism that are instrumental in doing news work” (Hanitzsch 2007, p. 375).121

The objective and value-free account of the truth in journalism has always been associated with professionalism: a professional journalist cannot allow being subjective, letting personal ideas, motivations, and values influence the way the “truth” is mediated. As Schudson and Anderson (2009) formulate it, objectivity is viewed as both a norm, and an object of struggle “within the larger struggle over professional jurisdiction” (p. 96):

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121 For a possibility of such a double reading of objectivity see Hanitzsch (2013).
The link between professionalism, objectivity, and truth seeking, would come to be accepted, not only by the journalists themselves in the form of occupational ideology but by media researchers and journalism scholars as a related series of problems susceptible to historical and sociological investigation (p. 92).

If objectivity as an ethical value is not questioned by the journalists, then in the everyday practices individual journalist’s subjective values and practical convenience often challenge the fulfillment of this ideal. In other words, there is a gap between the journalists ideals and practices (Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996). Moreover, objectivity is no longer considered to be the only norm in journalism (Schudson and Anderson 2009); it tends to become more and more subjective (Coward 2013).

The influence of the journalists’ individual characteristics and subjective perceptions of the “social reality” they cover is broadly discussed, especially within the gender media research (Braden 1996; Byerly and Ross 2006; de Bruin 2000; de Bruin and Ross 2004; Djerf-Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Djerf-Pierre 2007, 2011; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Melin 2008). Gender media scholars generally focus on two aspects when analyzing individual characteristics of journalists: 1) whether journalists themselves perceive their practices in terms of fulfilling the ideal of objectivity and 2) whether their individuality influences the way they perform journalism (their choice of sources, interaction with the sources, handling the routines, and style of writing). Moreover, the ritualized practices of objective news reporting as such are discussed as gendered, thus, making objectivity as a value an (en)gendered construction (Allan 1998).

This chapter turns to the Russian and Swedish political journalists’ beliefs on whether and how their ability to fulfill the ideal of objectivity influences the production of gendering in the content of political journalism. It further addresses the journalists’ estimations of whether and how their individual characteristics, and particularly, their gender (as a social practice – Löfgren Nilsson 2010) influence the process of interactions with political actors. In the concluding discussion, the journalists’ conceptualizations of the role of subjective perceptions and individual features links to the broader discussion on the individual journalists’ place within the culture of political journalism and their role in gendering.
7.1. Russia: strive for objectivity versus gendered interaction

The Russian culture of quality political journalism, as we have learned from the previous chapters, is idealized by the Russian journalists as promoting the ideal of gender-neutral journalism. However, this ideal is difficult to fulfill due to economic and political factors. According to the journalists, their subjective perceptions of the political actors as well as their own gender at the stage of the interaction with these actors contribute to production of gendering in the political journalism content.

Sympathy and antipathy versus objectivity

As we learned from Chapter 5, striving for objectivity becomes somewhat of a mantra for the Russian journalists. As long as objectivity is concerned in normative terms – as a tool for truth seeking (Schudson and Andersson 2009) – the journalists see no contradiction between this ideal and their own subjective views, at least when it comes to gendering, as “there are no women-haters” in newsrooms of the quality outlets’ (V, political reporter, male).

I am trying to imagine political views of a correspondent that could influence this aspect [gendering in political journalism], and, honestly saying, nothing comes up. Only if that was a hardened religious fundamentalist, but they don’t work in serious media (G, editor of international department, male).

The same formula as for the ethical ideal (quality = gender equality), thus, applies to the challenge of subjectivity: quality political journalism, as its producers believe, “by definition” excludes people who might have chauvinist views. However, the assumption that the views of a religious fundamentalist could be an obstacle to the production of quality gender-neutral content, already points to the possibility of the existing gap between objectivity as an ideal on the one hand, and practicing of objective political reporting on the other. Is it really so that the journalists’ views have no influence on the type of the content they produce?

While objectivity is viewed as an ethical requirement of the profession, the journalists do have subjective reactions to political actors. As such, the political journalists express their disenchantment with the political sphere in general, stating that they generally “equally dislike women and men [politicians]” (D, political reporter, female). The journalists emphasize, however, that this antipathy does not carry over to corresponding statements in the produced content. Subjective perceptions, thus, are allowed, but only outside of the content. What the journalists think and may discuss in the newsroom as “common people” and what they write in the articles crucially
differ. While the journalists allow themselves to think in gendering terms, their professional standards restrict gendering:

We discuss it in between us, like human beings... When Komarova was appointed a governor of Yamal [in fact, of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous okrug], we discussed how she looks! But it didn’t influence our work, no, no way (D, political reporter, female).

This striving for being neutral in writing concerns not only the situations where gendering in the form of spotlighting or stereotyping might appear, but also the situations where journalists have a wish to write counter-stereotypical or gender-aware stories. Reflexive gendering opens up for a new understanding of objectivity as an (en)gendered construction (Allan 1998). Female and male journalists have different interpretations of what it means to struggle with subjective perceptions in order to remain objective. As such, the female reporters try to keep a distance and withdraw from their positive emotions in relation to female politicians. The strive for gender equality and a feeling of a certain “gender unity” with women politicians creates, according to them, a challenge for the ideal of objectivity:

I always thought: I need to keep to a certain objectivity, because I am a woman! But it wasn’t so easy to keep to it: I also have this bias ‘Women can! Women rule!’ as I share this view (E, political reporter, female).

Thus, for the female journalists the feeling of solidarity with women politicians appears to be a challenge to objectivity. In the male journalists’ case, as they reveal, it is their personal sympathies toward, and even their attraction to, powerful women that become a challenge to fulfillment of the professional ideal. The journalists emphasize that personal sympathies should be downplayed, and find it crucial not to break the rules of the “game” between them and politicians, which may become unfair if they get “carried away” in their interactions with women politicians:

There are, probably, some individual preferences. Let’s say, Liudmila Vorobieva and Nadezda Sinikova are much more beautiful than Anatoliy Serdyukov! But it will hardly influence in some crucial way the way it will be

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122 Natalya Komarova – the governor of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous okrug since 2010.
123 Liudmila Vorobieva (now deceased) was the director of the Federal Service for Defense Contracts of the Russian Federation (“Rosoboronzakaz”), 2011-2012. Nadezda Sinikova has been the head of the Federal Agency for the supply of arms, military, special equipment, and material tools (“Rosoboronpostavka”) since 2010. Anatolij Serdyukov was Minister of Defense, 2007-2012.
written about them! [...] I know that women are much better, ha-ha, than men, but we should always keep to objectivity! That’s probably the most important, ’cause it is forbidden to let personal partiality or personal sympathies overcome objectivity. Because that will be an unfair game, and the unfair game does not lead to good! (V, political reporter, male)

Interestingly, despite the common disenchantment within the culture of political journalism in Russia with politicians of both sexes, the male journalists’ perception of women as “better,” even if it is based on personal attraction, leads to a slightly different type of coverage, where objectivity is sacrificed for promotion of these female political leaders. In the articles about women politicians the “objective approach is often sacrificed, because they are a weaker sex, because there is a need to be more considered” (B, editor of international department, male). “Compassion and mercy,” as well as personal sympathies to and informal relations with women politicians, thus, lead to a penetration of subjectivity into the otherwise neutral political journalism. Gender spotlighting and personalization of a woman politician appear in articles as a consequence of a male journalist’s sympathy:

When I wrote about Zhenya Chirikova, what amazed me was that she is doing her very important deal, and at the same time she has two kids at home, they crawl on her! So she didn’t lose herself as a woman (Z, political and economic reporter, male).

This leads to two interesting observations. First, as we could see in Chapters 4 and 6.2, essentialist gendering is often applied to women politicians when journalists have an aim to criticize them. This means that this instrument is a double-edged sword, as it is as likely to express the journalists’ antipathy as sympathy as far as women politicians are concerned. Contrary to that, men politicians are either perceived as completely “gender-less” creatures (cf. Easthope 1990) and covered accordingly, or criticized with the help of essentialist gendering (see section 6.2). Note that essentialist gendering is not applied when the journalists sympathize with men politicians.

Second, while both male and female journalists claim that professional standards are the main determinant of how they approach politicians of both sexes (something that was observed in other cultures of journalism – see Hanitzsch and Hanusch 2012), the male journalists tend to be more considerate and subjective than their female colleagues when it comes to

124 Note that the journalist refers to the activist in a friendly way – with her short name (Zhenya instead of Evgeniya).
covering women politicians. This goes against the theoretical assumptions of the “masculine” logic of the media, i.e., addressing male sources, taking an objective stance, and holding to professionally defined criteria for ethics and quality, while the “feminine” logic of the media implies a focus on the audiences’ interests, soft news, and addressing female sources (Djerf-Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Ghersetti 2012; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Meeks 2013). The male journalists in Russia surprisingly contribute to the promotion of gender equality, although the tools they use can still be labelled essentialist gendering, and they promote women politicians unconsciously, while not necessarily being aware of the need to seek gender balance in stories, which would be a gender-aware and gender-sensitive position (Djerf-Pierre 2007; Edström 2011).

Still, several of the male journalists I interviewed suggested that they find gender-awareness to be an important feature of any journalist working for the quality press, and that they are proud to be the holders of gender-aware views. Although the male journalists didn’t feel comfortable talking about their ways of achieving gender-awareness, suggesting that the reasons for it are private and cannot be revealed, they still shared some self-reflexive observations. As such, one journalist said that he always asks himself whether he writes about women in the same way as he would about men, which prevents him from making “mistakes” in covering them. Another one even chose to switch from his previous newsroom to another outlet, as he felt uncomfortable working at a place where he – as a department editor – had to please the chief editor and the newspaper’s owners by producing “light” stories, where essentialist gendering was very common. Although even there he was trying “to establish a certain course: to strive for more serious topics, and I myself wrote, of course, only on serious topics” (M, international observer, male), the final solution was to join a newsroom, where a more “serious approach” is encouraged.

The male interviewees also demonstrated a high level of self-reflexivity concerning how they think their gender influences their professional practices (cf. Löfgren Nilsson 2010). One of the journalists suggested that the fact that he is a man has probably been an obstacle for him to notice certain societal problems, and thus, he had not considered these problems to be crucial and worth a story. As the quotation below demonstrates, acknowledgement of these problems can suddenly change a journalist’s entire approach to professional routines, and make the journalist question what to consider newsworthy, whom to choose as sources, how trustful the sources are, and – especially – how objective the journalistic perspective can actually be:
I have recently read that this gap between the salaries of women and men is even growing, and I don’t understand how it can be. If one person works like the other one, then what are the grounds for this [gap]? Maybe I will even write a story about it: about how fellows explain why they pay their women less than [what they pay] other fellows! That would be interesting, but I am afraid that no one will tell [the truth]. They will say: “She earns less, as she goes home earlier.” But if she is finished, why wouldn’t she go home? I don’t know… I know that the inequality exists, but I have never faced it. Maybe I don’t notice it, ‘cause I am a man? (N, head of international group, male).

At the same time, the female journalists in Russia – although not necessarily “resorting to even more macho reporting styles than their male colleagues” (Ross 2002, p. 108) – are not attempting to promote gender equality in the political journalism content, as they find it unprofessional and a threat to its quality. This perception can be connected to the dominance of men in political and international departments, and the fact that most of the editors in these departments are men (at least this was the situation at the moment of the field work). Thus, the fact that the newsrooms are gendered both horizontally and vertically (Djerf Pierre 2007; Gallagher 2005; Löfgren Nilsson 2010) may influence the female journalists’ eagerness to dare to sympathize with women politicians and show their opinion about gender issues.

Thus, both female and male journalists’ motivations to address certain topics, and their attitudes to the heroes and heroines of their materials, are linked to their subjective perceptions of actors and facts, even though they attempt to withdraw from their emotions and subjective affections in order to achieve the ideal of objectivity. While the sex of the journalists indeed does not directly determine their value set (Ross 2014b), the male journalists in Russia are more likely to write more and in a more positive tone than their female colleagues about women politicians, due to the fact that men allow their sympathies to influence the coverage of the political sphere to a larger extent than what the female journalists can afford.

**Benefiting from the gendered interaction**

Despite trying to be objective and withdraw from subjective perceptions when writing about politicians and politics, the journalists reveal that when it comes to interactions with politicians, the communication partners are often viewed as gendered beings, and gender here is practiced strategically. In their interaction with political actors, the journalists identify themselves as women and men (the gender they “think” – Löfgren Nilsson 2010), and
often have clear preferences and views on which sex of politicians they find it most convenient, enjoyable, or efficient to communicate with.

The question about whether my interviewees saw any differences in interacting with female and male politicians was not something I initially intended to ask – it seemed to me as referring too much to the essentialist views on the inter- and cross-gender interaction. However, this was a topic often initiated by the interviewees themselves, and later on I asked it in the course of the interviews with the other journalists as well.

Among the journalists interviewed in Russia there were twice as many men as women. This reflects the gender representation in political and international press departments, even though the general level of representation of women in the profession reaches 80% according to the Russian sources (Azhgikhina 2006), or 64.9% among the senior professionals – reporters and editors, according to the Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media (2011). From the interviews, it became apparent that this imbalance does not influence the way politicians and politics are covered in the quality press much (despite certain differences described in the previous section). Both female and male journalists find it more convenient to interact with men politicians, and often view women in politics as “reticent and incomprehensible.”

As such, the male journalists revealed, that it seems easier for them to understand male politicians, as they speak “the same language.” The idea of a common, shared “male” language and rituals (such as drinking) lies beyond the preference of a same sex interaction in this case:

With men politicians it is just splendid – you drink vodka, and ok! Ha-ha! And with women – I don’t know [...] I have it easier with men, because a man would always understand another man, and with a woman you have to do it gracefully, you need to do your best (V, political reporter, male).

[With male politicians] it is clearer, or something... Their way of thinking, to a great extent what they will say, what they think – it is more comprehensible. Women, probably, are more tactful, reticent, it is more difficult to understand their genuine thoughts, and what they actually think (P, international reporter, male).

From the quotes above it becomes evident that for the male journalists the interaction between them and politicians is to a big extent a power game, a way of being in control of the situation, and male journalists can exercise the media power in their choice of sources (strategically choosing male and female sources depending on personal comfort), or methods of
communication (drinking vodka together). This demonstrates that the male political journalists have rather essentialist views, i.e., they believe that biological sex defines the behavior and practices of communication. However, there were exceptions to this pattern. For example, one of the journalists confessed that he prefers to communicate with women politicians because of the culturally constructed mutual expectations of how men and women in the Russian culture are supposed to perform their masculinity and femininity, which he does not feel comfortable with and readily avoids:

I don't like hunting, fishing, vodka, and don't really like the sauna and so on. Probably the majority of other men dislike it in the same way. However, there is a certain strand of all these “tough 'uns,” “normal guys,” and I am always afraid – when I start to talk to a male politician – that he will start to tell me something like this, or suggest, and then I will not know how to react. To accept? It is impossible, because I am not interested. To reject? It is impossible, because then I will lose control. And as women are usually not fond of hunting, hockey, sauna, and things like that, I can continue to communicate with them comfortably (N, head of international group, male).

Some male journalists were reluctant to talk about whether their practices of interaction with the politicians were gendered, and emphasized the fact that they try to view politicians as professionals, and thus, their gender does not matter to them (or other male reporters) at all: “I don't know male correspondents who would however try to exploit this [gender] in their relations with the newsmakers” (U, co-editor of international department, male). Others confessed that it is rather other characteristics than gender that are decisive in how the interaction will be performed:

I think it totally doesn't depend on whether an interviewee is a man or a woman. From my side I haven't felt that I have to somehow change my attitude. I can orientate to which country the person comes from – if that is an American, French, German, or Russian. But woman or man – no, I don't care! (X, political and economic reporter, international group, male)

The female reporters in Russia tend to gender their interactions with politicians strategically, especially when it comes to the majority of the political communication partners – men. They reveal that for them interaction with male politicians appears to be easier and more efficient due to the possibility to “play on these absolutely psychological things, like, you smile, look blank, play silly girl, something else, so that they explain better” (O, political reporter, female). While some of the female journalists see the application of what they call “female tricks” in the interaction with male politicians
mainly as a way to get information, others view it as a part of their identity, and a constituent of the enjoyment of the daily routines:

Men are easier to get information from. It's easier to come up to them, start a conversation, make them talk about really sensitive topics and news. I generally like to communicate with men more – both in the newsroom and in work... I think that it is probably a feature of character. I am not sure what other female journalists said, but I love men, and I love to communicate with them. I find enjoyment using some female tricks (L, international reporter, female).

The same journalist suggests that this preference in the political communication is mutual: male politicians also enjoy interactions with female journalists more than with their male colleagues, and, thus, are more open and ready to share information with women:

While communicating men are spurred on the desire for showing themselves in all their glory. So they are more likely to tell more twists and turns, more news, to add exclusive details. Sometimes, maybe, I have a feeling that they have it easier to communicate with female journalists, because they don’t feel kind of this male contest or something (L, international reporter, female).

The Russian male reporters and editors are not only aware of their female colleagues’ methods of interacting with sources, but often make use of the female correspondents’ skills in order to benefit in acquiring more or richer information from the political sources. Thus, the interpretation of gendered newsrooms (de Bruin and Ross 2004; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Melin 2008), as long as it comes to gendering in political journalism, receives one more dimension: certain journalistic practices, such as communication with news sources, are gendered by the journalists consciously – and seemingly to both male and female media producers’ satisfaction, despite the cynicism with which gendering of the interactions is practiced. The (male) editors get information quickly, the (female) journalists receive honorariums and appreciation of their skills, and even find enjoyment from the routines (see above). As I learned from one of the male interviewees,

All the pools, by the way, mainly consist of girls – both the presidential and the prime ministerial... And, of course, editorials prefer to send pretty girls to the White House, because a he would be flipped off by Peskov125 […] But

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125 Dmitry Peskov is the current press attaché for President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. Peskov has been in charge of handling Putin’s press and media activities since 2000. At the moment of the interview, in 2011, Peskov was accordingly Press Attaché for Prime Minister.
Peskov would not reject a pretty girl, ha-ha... This is the only thing where we see something gender-related in our political-journalistic life. Just as speed and efficiency are important, it is easier to send a girl, as she has more chances to get a comment (F, political editor, male).

According to the journalists, the female-female interaction between reporters and politicians, on the contrary, can easily fail. If the female reporters’ interaction with male politicians is under the journalists’ control, their communication with women in power is often challenged by a certain barrier in communication built by politicians, which is difficult to cross. This contradicts the earlier findings in other geographical contexts, where women politicians stated that they are more eager to communicate with female journalists (Ross 2002, 2010a):

Men have it easier to work with women, and vice versa. It’s easier to establish contact. I will give an example. The president’s press secretary is a woman, Natalya Timakova.\(^{126}\) So she has much better relationship with male journalists than with female journalists in most of the cases. It is from her side, so to say, a preference, and we feel a certain barrier in communication. We understand that she will tell and show everything we need, but anyway in communication she will prefer [men]... I at least have it much easier to communicate with male news-makers. Good that there are more of them! (N, political reporter, female)

However, some of the female correspondents whose first reaction was to say that they prefer interacting with men, after a short reflection found that they simply do not recall any experience of communication with female politicians, and, thus, confessed that they lack the basis for comparison. The lack of this experience, consequently, influences the journalists’ perception of women politicians in general. They appear as mysterious, and, thus, communication with them seems to be more difficult:

For girls it is easier, ha-ha, to be friends with men […] No, I actually realized that... I recalled with whom I actually talk, and I understood that there are all in all just two or three women, out of all my [contacts]. And I wouldn’t say that they are so few because I have difficulties communicating with them. No, there are just so few in politics! (D, political reporter, female)

Thus, despite the journalists’ striving for objectivity, their subjective perceptions of the politicians constitute an influential factor in the production

\(^{126}\) Natalya Timakova was Press Attaché for President Dmitry Medvedev, 2008-2012. Since 2012, she has been Press Attaché for Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev.
of gendering. The individual preferences that influence the way the journalists perceive political actors, appear to be dependent on the gender (as a social practice – Löfgren Nilsson 2010) of the journalists and politicians.

**Russia: discussion**

The journalists reflect upon the ways their subjective perceptions of the political actors influence the type of content they produce, as well as upon how their gender influences interactions with politicians. The journalists emphasize that they value objectivity (understood as a fair reflection of the “facts”) the most, and try to withdraw from subjective perceptions – whether positive or negative – in order to live up to the ideals of neutrality and deliberateness of views, and this is something they keep under control in the process of writing.

Despite these efforts, however, in the process of the interaction with politicians they find it often impossible or unnecessary to keep to neutrality as far as gender as a social practice (Löfgren Nilsson 2010) is concerned. The individual features, and especially gender, appear to be an influential factor in the communication with politicians, and can be consciously directed to achieve information in a more efficient way.

Thus, objectivity as an epistemological category (Hanitzsch 2013), unlike the normative interpretation, seems to indeed be a highly (en)gendered construction (Allan 1998) in the Russian culture of political journalism in that the gendered journalistic practices (especially communication with the news sources) invite subjective perceptions, sympathies and antipathies of the journalists.

### 7.2. Sweden: feminist non-partisanship and gender neutrality

As we have learned from the previous chapters, for the Swedish journalists as well objectivity (understood as impartiality) is one of the main values of the quality journalism. When it comes to the practices, the Swedish journalists point to the challenges of the subjective perceptions (determined by their close relations with the politicians, and feminism as a certain “partisanship”), and to the influence their individual features (such as gender and age) have on their interactions with politicians.

**Feminism is not a bias? Challenges to objectivity**

The Swedish journalists confess that their strive for objectivity in writing is sometimes challenged by their subjective perceptions of the political actors. In the Swedish case the main challenge to the professional standards that
journalists aim for is that “politicians and reporters sometimes get too close” (K, political reporter, female):

The people that we interview – we meet them all the time [...] You have to be observant that it doesn’t occur that you start to have more friendly relations [...] Sometimes there can be a more floating barrier because you start joking with each other. And then you have to remind yourself that this is a professional thing! (E, political reporter, female)

Certain media formats, for example, the weekly magazine, allow the reporters to spend more informal time with politicians, which in turn often becomes a challenge to journalists who begin seeing themselves as somewhat “in-between” the political and journalism cultures. As such, the more the journalists are involved in “background conversations” with politicians – which take place not at the press conferences or interviews but at cafés, restaurants, bars, or by phone – the more the journalists feel like “part of the system” (T, political editor, male), of which they are supposed to be detached observers. Still, despite the difficulty of balancing between personal attachments and the requirement to be objective, the journalists attempt to remain non-partisan, objective, and non-biased. Their strategy in this context of collegial relations with politicians is to “have integrity” and to try not to be “too personal with them”:

You can have personal small-talk before the interview, but during the interview you have to be very correct. And that’s with female or male politicians (A, political reporter, female).

The Swedish journalists suggest that they manage to distinguish between subjective emotions and the professional objective standpoint, which requires remaining neutral and withdrawing from evaluative utterances in the texts. This does not mean, however, that the journalists cannot have “common sense” evaluations affordable for the “human beings.” They can, for example, say something about how exotic it is that women hold two main positions in the country (as was the case in Finland 2010-2011, when Tarja Halonen was President and Mari Kiviniemi was Prime Minister) in a private talk, but they should not write an article with such a focus and angle:

To treat people equally – is the main message. And to be – because we all have prejudices, I also have that – to be aware of that [...] To be aware of the old tradition that women are considered to be something odd in politics! (P, editor of international department, female)
The Swedish journalists believe that their own and their colleagues’ level of gender-awareness increases the chances of producing more quality journalism. In addition, gender-awareness is perceived as a common value within the newsroom, something that any newcomer to the media organization is expected to share with the other employees. While journalists within the newsroom can have different political views, gender equality for the journalists is “something we can agree on – that it’s important to treat women and men the same, to give them equal [coverage]” (C, political reporter, male). Gender-awareness in most of the newsrooms becomes “a natural part of what you do” (M, political reporter, male) for professionals working for the quality press, irrespective of the level of politics they cover:

Even if you work as a local reporter at Stockholm, I mean, I am sure that they also think about this all the time: that they should not only have men on the pages (M, political reporter, male).

However, some of the interviewees specified that they believe that their newsroom is better than others when it comes to the journalists’ appreciation of gender-awareness as a common ground. According to them, age is an important factor when it comes to attitudes to gender issues. Thus, they expect that in the outlets where the average age of the staff is under 35, the level of gender-awareness will be higher:

We think kind of the same about this type of questions [gender issues]. Not actually the same, but [we have] a similar view. It can be explained by... We are quite young here. Well, nowadays we are kind of a little bit old, but 33, perhaps, or something like that, 30-35 (T, political editor, male).

Another aspect that, according to the Swedish journalists, influences both the journalists’ attitudes to gender issues and the level of gender-awareness in the newsroom is diversity. It has been argued in previous research that journalists’ gender does not have a direct influence on the content they produce (Braden 1996; Djerf Pierre 2007; Edström 2011; Hanitzsch and Hanusch 2012; Ross 2002). This view is, moreover, supported by representatives of the journalistic community. Helena Giertta, the chief editor of the professional magazine Journalisten, believes that as political journalism is “a very developed part of journalism” with defined standards of professionalism, the journalists’ gender does not influence the way they cover politics in this genre (interview with Giertta from May 29th, 2012). The Swedish political journalists themselves, however, are sure that diversity (not only in gender, but also ethnic, cultural, etc.) in the newsroom is the most direct way to overcome gender-blindness. The journalists believe that the mix in
the newsroom becomes a basis for discussions, which in turn promote gender-awareness along with more sensitivity for other inequalities as well (age, disabilities, ethnicity, etc.):

I am working in the department with only male colleagues. And it’s been the case for years. We have had a male boss for years [...] Don’t you think, that they could add some value if it was a more gender mixed newsroom, and a better ethnic and gender mix? I would love to have a young woman with an oriental background, a young smart woman in the newsroom. It would be good for the discussion, and the sources of information, and angles! It’s always negative for media to have a newsroom that is too homogeneous (Z, international reporter, female).

The Swedish journalists believe that the increase in the number of female journalists in the profession since the 1990s has influenced the culture of political journalism, and the Swedish journalism culture more generally. Indeed, today the Swedish newsroom on average, according to the statistics (Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media 2011), has an almost equal (49/51%) representation of women and men on the level of senior professionals (reporters and editors), although male reporters overwhelm in the news stories covering politics and government (63%) (GMMP 2010). As one of the journalists suggested,

If you have 50% female journalists, and also managers within the media, of course, that changes slowly the climate... And, I think, it’s very good to have sort of a 50/50 with men and women (M, political reporter, male).

Interestingly, the female journalists themselves share a view that they tend to be more gender-aware on average than their male colleagues. Among the female interviewees a border between “gender-aware me” and “gender-blind others” was common. What the female journalists pointed to was that the experience of “being a woman” allows them to understand women politicians better (“I know what it's like to be in the meeting with all men” – K, political reporter, female), and also to notice imbalance in the media coverage (“I'm a woman, I'm young, I'm not really well represented in the media” – S, political reporter, female). In this sense, while the journalists’ sex is – as mentioned above – not determinant of the value set (Ross 2014b), their way of thinking about their own gendered experiences tends to define the way they act (Löfgren Nilsson 2010). Although the female journalists shared doubt that “female reporters think more about how they portray women” (S, political reporter, female), they emphasized the role of individual experiences and subjective perceptions in the production of gendering:
There is probably more focus on the private when it comes to female politicians. Though I don’t feel a part of that myself (A, political reporter, female).

I think, you should actually ask the others who don’t have the same gender awareness: Why is it absent? You should challenge those instead! [...] I wouldn’t say that I set the agenda, but I come up with my own suggestions. “Shouldn’t we do this, shouldn’t we do that?” [...] Maybe a male colleague would also do it. But I think I raise these issues more (Z, international reporter, female).

While female journalists form gender awareness based on their own life experiences, their male colleagues find other ways to achieve this necessary professional requirement. The male journalists believe that gender-awareness helps them to socialize in the newsroom and produce more quality content. Thus, they find it important to learn about the gendered experiences of the others by communicating with female friends and colleagues, in order to get to know about other perspectives on gender equality, which influences the male journalist’s “own conviction that it is a problem” (T, political editor, male). The male journalists ask themselves when covering women politicians, “Would I write this if that was a man?” (M, political reporter, male). Another source of inspiration for gender-sensitivity development is feminist literature:

I’ve been reading a lot of Simone de Beauvoir and other feminist writers, [such as] Judith Butler, during my course in political science. So for me it was not a new way of thinking. It was quite natural (C, political reporter, male).

Gender-awareness, thus, is viewed as a necessary requirement for the journalists as professionals by both the female and male political journalists. They accept, however, that even in the Swedish culture of political journalism the “gender-blind others” remain. The latter, however, are excused by the journalists who consider themselves gender-aware, i.e., they believe that essentialist gendering is not produced consciously, thus holding with Braden (1996), who suggests that it is the journalists’ unawareness of their own cultural assumptions that influences the way journalists cover politics. As one of the interviewees formulated it,

I don’t think it’s an evil agenda to diminish women. I think it’s just a lack of knowledge. To write about what a woman looks like, how she enters the room, how she giggles – all these diminishing [practices] – I don’t think they realize that it’s diminishing. I think they are trying to experiment, trying to make the reader feel and see her [...] They may try to draw a picture that they never are allowed to do otherwise. And while you do that, you portray
her [woman politician] differently – and you don’t realize it (R, gender columnist, economic and political observer, female).

Despite the common appreciation of gender-awareness as a necessary feature, the Swedish journalists articulate very clearly that as political journalists they have to be very careful with all kinds of biases, and that the feminist perspective should not turn them into crusaders who fight against “men setting the standards for everything.” The feminist perspective, according to them, does not become a political bias as such, and thus does not challenge the objectivity ideal. However, it needs to be critically reflected upon:

If it was my main crusade to give female politicians a more fair voice, I would probably be very depressed! I try to avoid crusades altogether as a political journalist. I really try to see things from another angle irrespective of whether I am covering the Moderate or the Left Party (K, political reporter, female).

I was working as a journalist in the early 1990s, and in 1994 when the Stödstrumporna\textsuperscript{127} were very active. And I was also myself working with \textit{Bang} magazine. In that you can say that I was “biased” because I had feminist views. But I was never politically [biased]... Can you see the difference? (G, political reporter, female).

Thus, interest in gender issues seems to be the only “partisanship” political journalist can actually allow oneself: journalists try to avoid all kinds of “crusades,” including the feminist one. However, gender-awareness is considered to be one of the requirements of the profession along with neutrality and objectivity. The Swedish journalists also suggest that the gender of the reporters affects the type of the content produced. Thus, diversity in the newsroom ensures diversity in the content.

**Neutralizing gendered interaction with politicians**

Despite the Swedish journalists’ attempts to remain objective in the process of producing the news, the actual interaction with politicians challenges the fulfillment of the objectivity ideal. The journalists recognize that political communication is gendered, as they feel certain expectations of how they are supposed to behave in interactions with women and men politicians. As

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{Stödstrumporna} is the name of a feminist network that was active in the 1990s. It is famous for its campaign before the parliamentary elections in 1994, when the group, promoting the motto “The whole salary, half of the power” (in Swedish: “Hela lönen, halva makten”) motivated the political parties to pay attention to gender imbalance in their candidate lists, as well as to the lack of attention to the gender issues.
such, the female reporters reveal that they are more challenged by the gendered nature of communication with politicians than their male colleagues, as politicians sometimes expect them to practice gender in a way dictated by traditional stereotypes:

Sometimes you get the feeling that it's a males' game [...] You know, you can be aggressive, you can be smart, you can be anything, but the easygoing guy is always a guy. And if you are, actually, someone who likes to make jokes, you can feel, you know, [that] you are not supposed to do that, you are supposed to be very strong (K, political reporter, female).

The Swedish female reporters find that male politicians tend to show their paternalistic attitude, especially to young female reporters whom they treat as “these little girls.” In this sense, interaction with male politicians turns to a struggle for the female political journalists – “who's got authority, who's got credibility” (K, political reporter, female), a gendered tango (Ross 2010a), where male politicians expect to have a leading role. It is only with experience that the journalists learn to ignore such attitudes and feel more comfortable in the process of political communication:

[There were] politicians calling me “Hello, little [name of the reporter],” and I'm like “hm.” I have colleagues who would react to that and, you know, they would have a breakdown or freak out. I don't care that much. But, of course, I can see that, you know, things would have been taken more for granted if I'd been a man of a certain age. I think I'm beyond that age now. So it's more the younger girls in that respect (K, political reporter, female).

Thus, interactions with politicians, according to the Swedish journalists, are determined by power relations. In a situation where there is a risk of losing control over political communication, as some of the female interviewees pointed out, it is important to learn how to turn alleged “disadvantages” into benefits, as in comforting the political actors by a stereotypically feminine behavior in order to achieve more information:

It's not always a disadvantage that people think less of you than what you actually are when you are doing an interview, you know? If you seem like a friendly-listener, and not so knowledgeable woman, with not a lot of pontus, you are not very scary. And if you're not very scary, people relax [...] So in that respect, yeah, sometimes there is an advantage of being a woman (K, political reporter, female).

The journalists, however, point out that this strategy can mainly be applied by young female reporters, as age tends to have, in their opinion, a
more significant influence than gender when it comes to the impact the journalists’ individual features have on the interaction with political actors:

Sometimes I felt that being a bit young and inexperienced can be good, because people tend to tell you more as they don’t see you as a threat. But I never felt that was because I’m a woman... More of when I was a bit younger, or when I just started, and sometimes I used that: I tried to make myself a little bit more silly, a little bit more dumb than I am, ‘cause it would get people to talk to me more. But never as a woman, no (S, political reporter, female).

This strategy of playing on the politicians’ essentialist views of how women are expected to behave, however, is not beneficial in all cases. The journalists practice gender (Löfgren Nilsson 2010) differently depending on the situation. For example, for international correspondents, the cultural context appears to be the key determinant for the way they build a connection to their news sources. As such, one of the interviewees covering the Middle East suggested that the fact that she is a woman matters when it comes to access to sources, yet it does not matter when it comes to interaction with politicians. More specifically, as a woman she is allowed to talk to women and come to people’s homes even in the most conservative environments of the region – something that her male colleagues have no possibility of doing. In this sense, according to her, “being a female reporter from Europe is usually an advantage in the Middle East, contrary to what many believe” (Z, international reporter, female). At the same time, the reporter has the same access to power circles as her male colleagues, and the culture of the region she covers influences her way of constructing her strategy of interaction with male politicians (who dominate when it comes to the established political positions in this part of the world):

When I get into the power circles, I know that there is a responsibility on me – not to play on any gender tricks. But having this feeling of being more gender neutral on certain occasions can make things easier. It’s something you can use. It’s also important to show men in power: “Don’t use these tricks on me. It’s not going to work! Don’t try to womanize me! Shame on you if you do!” (Z, international reporter, female)

Not only international correspondents, though, have to adjust to the context. Also political reporters covering domestic politics in Sweden find it important to strictly define the limits of how gender can be practiced in interactions with politicians. As one of the interviewees pointed out, “It would feel very wrong to try to use my femininity, to me that is just a ‘no-no,’ I cannot do that! And I think that it’s definitely the wrong way to go”
Playing on the essentialist understanding of femininity, thus, is rather inappropriate in the Swedish context:

We [in Sweden] have this idea [that] the right thing to do is to act as if we are equal, and then it's not a proper way for me as a female reporter to flirt with these men in power (A, political reporter, female).

Despite the female journalists’ attempts to make their interactions with politicians gender-neutral, they find that political communication as such to a large extent continues to be gendered, which often hinders them from fulfilling their professional obligations as efficiently as their male colleagues do. As one of the female journalists complained, “It would be hard for a young female reporter to go into a sauna with old male politicians definitely! I don’t know how often you need to do that, but, of course, that could be an issue” (D, political reporter, female). The methods that male journalists use in their interaction with politicians, thus, often remain inaccessible for the female reporters:

I was thinking about the difference in the approach that I have to politicians, and that my male colleagues could have. Because they say: “Oh, I go and take a beer with him, you know, just to chat.” I could never do that! Because it would ruin my reputation. I cannot go out and have a beer with a politician just to chat, it’s impossible! The next question is: Well, should journalists do that at all? Should they go out and have a beer [with politicians]? That’s also an issue, but I think that as a woman reporter you have to be much more careful with what you are doing (G, political reporter, female).

This quotation shows that despite the growing number of women among political journalists, the female journalists still define this professional sector as segregated. They see the “masculine” logic of political journalism manifesting not in the specific way male journalists produce content (Löfgren Nilsson 2010), but rather in the way they build interrelations with politicians, where the masculine, homosocial culture (Bird 1996; Lipman-Blumen 1976) of political communication is created, and where the rules have been set by men and are enjoyed by them. This process resembles the one described by the researchers focusing on the gendered journalism cultures. For example, Melin (2008) suggests that the journalism culture itself can be interpreted as a struggle between sexes, where men have the power to construct doxa, and women can only use specific tactics to change their conditions (see also Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Ross 2002; Smirnova 2012). Indeed, the Swedish female political journalists still find that the culture of political journalism is driven by what Löfgren Nilsson (2010) labels gender logic, especially in what
concerns the horizontal segregation of assignments (Djerf Pierre 2007; Löfgren Nilsson 2010). The quotation below shows that the female political journalists in Sweden experience what has been found in previous research, i.e., that female journalists are still expected to cover “soft” topics, while male journalists get the most exciting “hard” pieces (Djerf Pierre 2007; Gallagher 2005; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; van Zoonen 1998):

I see that all the time, you know: “Young men want to cover politics, and so they do,” whereas for female reporters it’s a long way, and “Why don’t they do this first, and then that first, and then that, and maybe something softer?” (K, political reporter, female).

Interestingly, while this distinction between the “masculine” and the “feminine” assignments in political journalism is not different from what is observed in other journalistic genres (Djerf Pierre 2007; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Melin 2008), what makes political journalism special is that its gendered practices are supported also externally – by politicians. The female journalists complain that they often feel excluded from the largely homosocial political communication, where rules are established by male politicians and male journalists, and where nothing seems to be changing despite the introduction of new technologies and new ways of practicing interactions with news sources:

Male politicians are twittering with male reporters [...] I sometimes find that Twitter and Facebook and all that sort of things almost enhance the gentlemen’s club within politics somehow. But the good thing is, it all is open, and it’s for you to read and see, and to make the result for yourself. And it’s not like there are no great female reporters on Twitter or female politicians either. But sometimes you find that you have this “club.” And that’s interesting. I don’t know really how to deal with it (K, political reporter, female).

The female journalists, thus, reveal that they constantly need to question their own methods of interacting with politicians within this gendered culture of political communication, thus being engaged in a constant self-reflexive practice of evaluating own methods and comparing them with those applied by their male colleagues. One of the interviewees told me about her “discovery,” where she learned from one of her male colleagues that they have a completely different agenda and purpose when they come to an interview with a news source. She found out that in homosocial political communication there are different rules, which might even undermine the professional requirements. While she has always found the readers’ interest to be most important when choosing the questions for an interview
with a politician, she learned from her male colleague that for him, when he gets to an interview, “It’s like a game of tennis, it’s like a competition of who knows the most figures in the last annual report”:

I was like: “What?” That is putting yourself – for the readers – into a not very interesting position, because they don’t care about how much you know, they care about the person you interview. It was really interesting for me to see that. ‘Cause it never crossed my mind that I should impress the person that I’m interviewing of how much I know of the annual report! (R, gender columnist, political and economic observer, female)

This quotation can be interpreted as a manifestation of two different logics of the media – one “feminine” (caring for the audiences’ interests) and one “masculine” (here mainly addressing the traditional understanding of male-male interaction as competitive) (Djerf Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Ghersetti 2012; Meeks 2013). However, I rather suggest paying attention to the way the journalists’ will and necessity to maintain control over political communication is manifested here. While, as we learned above, the female journalists use their femininity or gender neutrality in order to achieve information, the male journalists use a stereotypically masculine style of competitive behavior in their relations with male politicians.

The male journalists I interviewed, however, had a self-reflexive stance on the way they practice political communication. As such, one of them touched upon the tendency to address only male sources in political journalism (which can be read as a “masculine” logic of the media, or as a dominance of homosociality in political communication). According to him, for male journalists it is especially important to notice the male homosociality in political communication (despite the overwhelming amounts of men in the political sphere), and to try to counteract it, introducing other patterns first and foremost into own practices of interacting with the sources:

Do I bond better with men? Yeah, I probably do. In my life, I have more female friends, than male, but I always bond better with men, so that’s the problem when I do this kind of background text... I have to make contacts with female politicians, or bureaucrats, or just staff members, just to balance it! And you can also claim and have it right, that it’s also because of the work: there are more male politicians, there are more male staff members. So it’s a broader group, ha-ha, to pick persons from (T, political editor, male).

The Swedish female journalists try to find alternatives to this male-male homosocial culture of interactions with politicians. They suggest that there are mutual advantages of their interacting with women in politics. The
“gender solidarity” appearing in the female-female interactions between journalists and politicians is never talked about, though it is implied. As discussed earlier, the female reporters point to the influence of their gendered life experiences, making it easier for them to “try the boots” of their heroines. However, this interaction seems to imply more responsibilities for the female correspondents, who are expected to sympathize with the subjects of their stories, and to live up to the gender-awareness requirement:

Sometimes there is an understanding between female politicians and female journalists, because we both know what the other one is [going through]... It’s a sign of understanding [...] It’s never outspoken, but I do think it’s there sometimes! With some, not with all. And maybe they are more disappointed if they feel that you sort of describe them as women, or not so “statesmanish” (K, political reporter, female).

Sometimes, however, the “gender solidarity,” according to the journalists, appears not as an alternative to traditional political communication, but rather as an obstacle to fulfilling their professional obligations. As such, according to the interviewees, some women politicians play a gender card in their interactions with female journalists, trying to create an atmosphere of a “women’s circle” in order to influence the way they are covered in the media. The journalists find such an approach to be unacceptable, and they counteract the establishment of gendered communication by emphasizing the professional character of it:

There was one female politician that I interviewed recently together with a colleague. We were two female reporters, and when we walked into her office, and she approached us, she said to my colleague – she touched her jacket – and said: “Oh! This is a very nice jacket!” And we both [...] got this strange feeling that this woman wanted to disarm the whole situation, to personalize the whole situation, as if we were [...] in her office for a nice coffee break at Christmas time. But it was her making this – we didn’t. I am sure she would not have done this if we would have been two male reporters [...] Me and my colleague – we were there as professionals, we were not there to chit-chat around the table with lighted candles (A, political reporter, female).

Thus, the Swedish journalists do not deny that gender is a significant factor in their interaction with politicians, and in the way they perceive the political actors and processes. They suggest that there exist both male homosociality and female solidarity in the relations between journalists and politicians. However, gendering is seldom used as a conscious tool by the female journalists in their relations with politicians i.e., gender-neutrality.
appears to be a safer mode of interaction. The male journalists, though they try to be self-reflexive about their practices of interacting with news sources, to a large extent rely on the existing methods of political communication, with homosociality and a traditional understanding of competency as a basis for journalist-politician interactions.

**Sweden: discussion**

The Swedish culture of political journalism, when it comes to gendering in the framework of epistemological beliefs of journalists, appears to be somewhat contradictory. On the one hand, gender-awareness seems to be an important constituent of the journalists’ pursuit of objectivity. While too close relations with politicians and “common sense” evaluations might create an obstacle for the journalists’ objective stance, gender-sensitivity and a general interest in gender issues appear to be the only “bias” that political journalists can allow themselves. In this sense, objectivity in practice (unlike the normative category – Hanitzsch 2013; Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996) is re-interpreted by the Swedish journalists in a unique contextual way. It continues to be an unquestionable ideal, yet the journalists (both male and female) are not hindered by epistemological considerations in their wish to promote gender equality when covering politics.

On the other hand, despite the conscious aim for diversity in the newsroom and the increasing number of female political journalists, the culture of political journalism in Sweden remains a highly gendered terrain. This holds both when it comes to the horizontal segregation of the assignments (Löfgren Nilsson 2010), and especially when it comes to the practices of interacting with political actors. The political communication seems to be established by men on both sides and, despite the introduction of new ways of journalist-politician interactions (including through social media), the female journalists find it very difficult to adjust to the rules and methods of this communication (which confirms the previous findings concerning the Swedish journalism culture in general – see Melin 2008).

Political communication in Sweden, despite what was discussed in the previous chapters, still creates a row of challenges for the journalists’ exercise of gender mainstreaming in the content, as it requires that the journalists hold to the traditional interpretation of how inter- and cross-gender communication should be practiced. As such, the female journalists still feel a patronizing attitude from male politicians, and the male journalists often have to engage in competitive interactions with men in politics. This male
homosociality (Bird 1996; Lipman-Blumen 1976) creates difficulties for both the female and male journalists. Female-female political communication appears to be an alternative, yet even an establishment of gender solidarity has to sometimes be rejected by the female journalists when they feel that this can threaten their objective stance.

7.3. Comparative discussion and conclusions
This chapter analyzed the journalists’ assumptions about the way their subjective perceptions of the political actors and processes, as well as their individual characteristics, influence the production of gendering. It is not only subjectivity and individual characteristics that play a role in journalists’ practices of gendering but also their sympathies and antipathies, personal experiences, and level of gender awareness.

For example, in the Russian case, most of the journalists clearly prefer men politicians in their interactions, and think that women politicians are reticent and not open to dialogue. The rare sympathies towards women politicians are usually suppressed, as most of the journalists try to withdraw from personal emotions in order not to harm the image of the objective quality political journalism. However, the male journalists tend to be more eager to express their sympathies towards women politicians in the content, thus, more open to the current tendency of subjective journalism (Coward 2013). In the Swedish case, the journalists doubt whether a feminist standpoint should be considered as partisanship, and suggest that in the form of the moderate critical and gender-aware perspective such a standpoint makes political journalism more balanced.

Despite the Swedish female journalists’ point that women due to their life experiences tend to be more gender-aware than their male colleagues, generally the journalists in both Russia and Sweden confirm that sex is not a determinant of value set (Ross 2014b), and that the reporters’ sex has no direct influence on the type of content produced (Hanitzsch and Hanusch 2012). However, it appears that in the interactions with politicians, the gender of the correspondent (as a social practice – Löfgren Nilsson 2010) is often an important factor in communication.

Interactions with politicians can be gendered strategically, as in the Russian case, where the female reporters practice their gender according to the traditional vision of femininity, when communicating with male politicians (dominating quantitatively in the political sphere), so that they can achieve information in a more efficient way. This capacity of the female journalists is actively used by their male colleagues (who, in most of the cases, prefer
to communicate with “comprehensible” men politicians) and editors, who consciously send female correspondents to “missions.” Thus, while a mere fact that a journalist happens to be a man or a woman does not necessarily affect his or her attitude to a politician of a certain sex, the gendered personal experiences of male and female correspondents (e.g., failed communication with female politicians) may lead the journalists to generalizations about how all politicians of a certain sex tend to be and behave (e.g., all women politicians appear as “reticent and incomprehensible”).

In the Swedish context, gender neutrality in interactions with politicians is perceived by the journalists as a more efficient way of communicating. Despite this, the female correspondents complain that political communication remains a “male” zone, as male reporters have an advantage of direct communication with politicians “behind the curtains” – in a less official environment, such as in a pub or on social media, and in a certain style (“tennis partners”) – without the risk of harming their reputation. The Russian female reporters might have a professional advantage when it comes to the interactions with politicians, even though this advantage is based on the stereotypical vision of how women and men should act.

Women’s presence in the culture of political journalism, thus, does not automatically lead to the production of more gender-balanced content, as has previously been pointed out by the scholars (Braden 1996; Djerf-Pierre 2007; Edström 2011; Ross 2002). In Russia, female journalists, although not necessarily resorting to macho reporting style, do not allow themselves to be in solidarity with women politicians even if they feel sympathy towards them, considering the promotion of female political leaders for the sake of gender equality to be impermissible partisanship. In Sweden, female journalists, despite trying not to create any affectional ties, allow themselves to express a certain solidarity with women politicians (as long as feminism doesn’t become a crusade).

One can, thus, claim that gendering starts already during the process of the journalists’ interactions with politicians. Political communication appears to be gendered, as it is determined by expectations of how women and men (both journalists and politicians) are supposed to behave in inter- or cross-gender interactions in a particular context. Journalists work out their approaches in order to either fulfill these expectations, or confront them, but all with one aim – to gain and maintain control over the interactions with politicians (in order to lead the political communication tango, as it is metaphorically expressed by Ross 2010a).
As proved by the journalists, objectivity (as a normative category) is “self-reflexively posited as an ideal never to be entirely realized in practice” (Allan 1998, p. 131). This leads to the acknowledgement of the significance of individual responsibility among inhabitants of journalism cultures (Edström 2011). Sensitivity to gender stereotypes, and an awareness of the need to seek gender balance in stories and promote gender equality through the content of political journalism, are defined by the scholars as the key constituents of the possibility for change in the political journalism content, where essentialist gendering will give place to reflexive gendering (Djerf Pierre 2007; Edström 2011). The self-reflexivity of the female and male journalists in the quality press of Russia and Sweden, demonstrated in their concerns about the challenges of subjective perceptions, can, thus, be interpreted as a sign of this change.
8. Gendering in political journalism: a process in progress?

The aim of this dissertation was to examine the processes and modes of origin of gendering as they are perceived and experienced by political journalists in Russia and Sweden. This concluding chapter answers the research questions of this study, summarizing the results and comparing them to the previous research findings. It then points out the significance of the results in a wider context by indicating the problems essentialist gendering in political journalism may cause to the democratic development of society and the position of the quality press in it, and, conversely, the potential reflexive gendering offers for gender mainstreaming.

8.1 Gendering through a prism of political journalism culture

Placing gendering in the framework of the culture of political journalism allowed for the journalists to disclose their views, and revealed whether the journalists working for the quality press acknowledge the problem of gendered mediation of politics and politicians and whether gendering is produced consciously. It also revealed what factors – both within and outside the culture of political journalism – are considered by the journalists to be influential for the production of different types of gendering. This study answered the questions: How is gendering conceptualized, experienced and contextualized by political journalists in the two countries? What are the modes of origin of gendering as defined by the journalists? And which modes of origin of gendering in political journalism can be considered to be common for the different contexts, and which ones are context-specific?

- How is gendering conceptualized, experienced and contextualized by political journalists in the two countries?

This study assumed that gendering does not necessarily lead to gender stereotypes and spotlighting in the content (what I label essentialist gendering). Gendered representations of politicians and politics can be a positive pattern in political journalism if the gender perspective allows journalists to view the political sphere critically (reflexive gendering), which results in counter-stereotypes and gender-aware stories. The present study showed that the type of gendering used – essentialist or reflexive – largely depends on the journalists’ conceptualizations of what gendering constitutes. When journalists share the essentialist assumptions, suggesting that femininity and
masculinity are stable and naturally defined, they are more likely to reproduce gender stereotypes and focus on gender as a determining personal characteristic of politicians, thus producing essentialist gendering. When journalists view gender as a social construction, and acknowledge the gender stereotypes and hierarchies existing in the society, they are more likely to question and criticize them, and engage in reflexive gendering. These conceptualizations are in turn influenced by the journalists’ experiences at individual, organizational, and national levels (Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012). At the individual level, the journalists – irrespective of the context they work within – continually face the challenges of subjective perceptions and practical convenience as they strive to hold to the universal requirement of objectivity. The gendered personal experiences of male and female correspondents (failed communication with female politicians, or convenience of homosocial political communication) influence the production of gendering in the content (justifying gender stereotypes). The journalists’ epistemological beliefs can suppress manifestations of sympathy to women politicians or a commitment to the gender equality ideal, as in Russia, where female journalists deny any “gender solidarity” with women politicians due to the requirement of objectivity, while their male colleagues often sympathize with female “agents of change.” The epistemological beliefs can also allow journalists to be openly feminist, as in Sweden, where both the male and female journalists consider feminism to be the only “partisanship” they can afford.

On the organizational level, the journalists’ experiences of gendering are framed by the newsroom routines and the demands of the media they work for. The journalists working for the quality press in both countries recognize the problem of gendered mediation of politics and try to fulfill the ideal of political journalism free of gender inequality, whether it be gender-neutral (in the Russian case) or gender-balanced (in the Swedish case) journalism. However, in Russia the journalists do not take any “extra” steps to achieve gender-neutrality in journalism. The lack of gender-sensitivity makes the Russian culture of political journalism vulnerable: if it lacks self-control measures, this opens up a possibility for handed-down control in the form of both new regulations and interventions from the political actors, which limits the power of the media (Voltmer 2013). In the Swedish newsrooms, the journalists follow articulated standards of achieving gender balance, counting the number of female and male sources, monitoring the expressions used in their coverage,
and engaging in newsroom discussions about gendered mediation. This allows the journalists to defend themselves from any potential critique from their colleagues and audiences (Ekström and Nohrstedt 1996).

Moreover, the journalists’ perceptions of their institutional roles frame their experiences of gendering. In Russia, the political journalists are often engaged in essentialist gendering, despite the ideal of gender-neutral journalism they subscribe to, for three reasons. First, they believe that the key role of political journalism is to reflect the political “reality,” and – not seeing themselves as agents of change (cf. Ross 2002, 2014a) – they passively wait for this “reality” to change before they change the way they cover it. Second, the Russian journalists in the quality press engage in critiquing the authorities, and essentialist gendering seems to be a useful tool for it. Third, the quality press employees (especially department and chief editors) have to search for survival strategies – they must consider advertisers, sponsors, and authorities at the same time, as they are pressured by the brutal rules of the media market on the one hand, and a high level of political intervention on the other (Anikina and Johansson 2013; Pasti and Nordenstreng 2013; Vartanova 2013). The audiences of the quality press, moreover, appear to the journalists simultaneously as critical citizens demanding gender-neutral content and lowbrow consumers expecting gender stereotypes. In this situation, reflexive gendering does not appear to be an alternative to essentialist gendering.

The Swedish journalists’ experiences of gendering on the organizational level are not as challenging. Reflexive gendering corresponds with the journalists’ belief that the media can influence politics and society (cf. Asp 2012a), if not fully constructing the “social reality,” then at least deconstructing the stereotypical beliefs. Reflexive gendering is also used as a critical tool that allows for questioning the political parties’ and individual politicians’ devotion to the ideal of gender equality. Counter-stereotypical representations of politicians, and gender-aware stories in political journalism, quite unexpectedly are also economically beneficial (cf. Kammer 2013; McManus 2009; Ross 2002; Örnebring 2009a), as they fulfill the readers’ expectations of the quality press. Thus, the journalists’ experiences of gendering on the organizational level are defined not only by the practices and rules of the outlet, but also by the broader national context.

Hence, gendering becomes a prism that allows for viewing differences between the national cultures of political journalism. The values of objectivity, neutrality, and accuracy of information – which journalists hold in high regard – appear to be universal (cf. Mancini 2000; Schudson 2001) and are
what make the different cultures of political journalism in the quality press similar, which is in agreement with Couldry and Hepp (2012) in that during the process of globalization the borders between the cultures of journalism are getting blurred. Interestingly, though, this study showed that the journalists themselves continue to construct the borders between the national cultures of political journalism. Thus, however tempting it would be to speak about the universal, or at least common for the Baltic Sea region, culture of political journalism in the quality press, societal influences and political systems continue to define the variance between the cultures of political journalism, which once again confirms the relevance of comparing national cultures of journalism (cf. Berkowitz et al. 2004; Hanitzsch and Donsbach 2012; Heikkilä and Kunelius 2008; Weaver 1998; Örnebring 2009b).

Gendering is contextual and culture-specific. The Russian journalists articulate the Eurasian in-betweenness of their culture of political journalism (cf. Vartanova 2013), where a gender-sensitive approach seems to be “too European” and at the same time there is a pity for the lack of women in politics and in the media content referred to as “Asian” and non-progressive. The Swedish journalists suggest that the Swedish culture of political journalism is “mature” enough to provide the readers with gender-aware stories and counter-stereotypes, unlike the essentialist gendering of the “last century” Russian culture of political journalism. Thus, the conceptualizations, experiences, and contextualizations of gendering certainly matter not only for the journalists themselves, but also for the image of the culture of political journalism on the international arena.

- **What are the modes of origin of gendering as defined by the journalists? And which modes of origin of gendering in political journalism can be considered to be common for the different contexts, and which ones are context-specific?**

This study showed that all of the reasons suggested by the previous research to a certain extent explain why gendered mediation of politics and politicians appears in political journalism. However, none of these reasons alone can explain the patterns of gendering. Moreover, these reasons are not universal for all contexts. As the present study demonstrated, the culture of political journalism and its elements – ethical ideologies, institutional roles, and epistemological beliefs (Hanitzsch 2007) – are of crucial importance for the production of gendering. The culture of political journalism appears to be a helpful analytical concept that allows for understanding the modes of origin of
gendering in their unity, thus giving scholars a broader perspective than that suggested in the previous research focusing separately on media logic, media organization, journalists’ individual characteristics, and societal context.

1) Gendering and media logic
The previous research pointed to values of newsworthiness and (en)gendered objectivity, personalization of politics, a “male-oriented” agenda of political journalism, and a commercial orientation of press as possible reasons for the gendered content of political journalism (Bromander 2012; Cerqueira et al 2014; Falk 2008; GMMP 2010; Nordberg and Edström 2007; Ross 2002; van Zoonen 2003). These factors are indeed significant when it comes to the production of gendering in political journalism, as demonstrated in the present study. However, the study showed that media logic should not be equated with the journalists’ logic. Indeed, political journalism is subject to mediatization, and is often subordinated by media logic (Hjarvard 2013; Kammer 2013; Vartanova 2013). The interviewed political journalists in both countries had a high level of self-reflexivity and critique concerning certain manifestations of what scholars label media logic (e.g. orientation towards economic benefits).

Moreover, the components of the media logic do not necessarily lead to essentialist gendering. As such, the Russian journalists refer to newsworthiness as one of the principles for choosing women politicians as news subjects, yet this approach is often explained as well by the need to consciously promote women as political leaders in the context where the political sphere is gender misbalanced. Thus, gender-spotlighting for the sake of newsworthiness may become a tool of gender mainstreaming. Commercialization of the media, which is often perceived by the scholars as a negative tendency as far as the quality of the content is concerned (McManus 2009; Kammer 2013; Ross 2002), in the Swedish context paradoxically becomes a driving force for reflexive gendering.

Hence, the components of the media logic, as well as the media logic as such (see Hjarvard 2013), should not be understood as universal. For example, the Russian journalists tend to perceive personalization as a negative tendency, which, however, does not prevent them from focusing on gender as a politician’s personal characteristic, especially if it becomes a critical tool. The Swedish political journalists find personalization to be an appealing storytelling technique, but they do recognize the possible dangers of it for the public image of women politicians. Thus, the media logic does help to interpret gendering in political journalism, albeit with certain reservations.
2) Gendering and media organization

The scholars have pointed to the gender imbalance in the newsroom, in addition to a lack of specific ethical standards and norms, as factors that can explain gendered representations of politics and politicians in journalism (GMMP 2010; Macharia and Moriniere 2012; Ross 2002; Voronina 1998). The fact that most of the interviewees in the Russian case were men can indirectly prove the previous research suggestions that male domination in the media organizations (which was especially obvious from the positions the interviewees undertake) feeds into essentialist gendering. However, the results of this study do not open up for generalized conclusions about a certain “masculine” logic (Djerf Pierre and Löfgren Nilsson 2004; Ghersetti 2012; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Meeks 2013) of political journalism.

The female and male interviewees in both countries demonstrated a certain unity in the way they perceive gendering as a process, as well as what they think of its origins and outcomes. The few differences between the answers that could be distinguished were that in Russia men tended to speak about gendering more categorically than their female colleagues, denying the priority of this problem for the Russian political journalism, and pointing to other challenges they face. In addition, they tended to be more flexible when it comes to fulfilment of the requirement of objectivity than their female colleagues. In Sweden, the observed difference was that the male journalists tended to be more optimistic than their female colleagues about the success of gender mainstreaming both in the Swedish society in general, and in the media (and quality press) in particular. Otherwise, the differences mainly concerned the journalists’ own considerations of the influence of their gendered life experiences on the interaction between them and politicians.

When it comes to the ethical standards and norms, in Sweden and Russia there exist similar ethical codes and self-regulation bodies, which provide the media with the basis for self-control. However, neither the Russian, nor the Swedish political journalists generally referred to the legislative and normative restrictions when they talked about gendering in political journalism. What matters to the journalists are rather traditions and routines that are common for their own newsroom, and for the quality press in general. Moreover, the journalists in both countries were very skeptical and resistant to the introduction of any extra policies regulating the production of news. Thus, from the journalists’ point of view, it is not as much the lack of ethical standards and norms, but rather the contextual possibilities to fulfil the ethical ideal, that matter for production of gendering in political journalism.
3) Gendering and individual characteristics of journalists
The scholars also state that individual characteristics of journalists – their unawareness of their own cultural assumptions and unpreparedness to perceive new tendencies – is another reason for gender stereotyping and spotlighting in political journalism (Azhgikhina 2006; Braden 1996; Falk 2008; Smirnova 2010). Although even the journalists themselves tend to explain in a similar way the appearance of essentialist gendering in political journalism (i.e., gender stereotypes are unconsciously produced by gender-blind other journalists), it should be noted that political journalists working for the quality press across contexts appear to be self-reflexive, critical, and gender-aware people. Many of the journalists in both contexts viewed gender equality as a key democratic value and, perceiving the quality press as a democratic forum (cf. Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007), are very positive about gender mainstreaming in political journalism. This is not to say that all of the political journalists in the quality press are making efforts to promote gender equality. Indeed, some of the journalists in both Russia and Sweden are satisfied with the current state of affairs in both the political sphere and the media content, and some do hope for changes, but feel incapable of introducing them.

Another observation is related to individuality as a factor of the professional performance of political journalists (Djerf-Pierre 2011). The journalists themselves talked a lot about the significance of gender as a social practice (Löfgren Nilsson 2010) in the process of interactions with politicians. As such, political communication across contexts appears to the journalists as a homosocial male-male practice, to which female journalists have to adjust (cf. Melin 2008; Löfgren Nilsson 2010; Smirnova 2012). The female journalists do so by either trying to fit into the roles ascribed to them by traditional gender stereotypes (in Russia and some in Sweden), or (in the Swedish case) by trying to “neutralize” the gendered nature of political communication by not relying on their femininity. We can, thus, speak not only about the media logic competing with the political logic (Esser 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014), and not only about the gender logic of journalism (Löfgren Nilsson 2010), but also about the gender logic of political communication, where the rules are set by male journalists and male politicians together and are enjoyed by them. Moreover, while previous research in other contexts demonstrated that women politicians are eager to communicate with female journalists (Ross 2002, 2010a), both the Russian and the Swedish female journalists questioned the female politicians’ eagerness to communicate with women,
and the purity of purpose of their “gender solidarity” when it is set as a tone of political communication by women politicians.

4) Gendering and gender inequality in society
Yet another reason for gendered mediation in political news is, according to the previous research, the general problem of associating leadership with men and masculinity, where masculinity appears as a norm and women are perceived as exotic actors in the political sphere (Azhgikhina 2006; Easthope 1990; Falk 2008; Kroon Lundell and Ekström 2008; Mbiliniy and Omari 1996; Ross 2002). Indeed, the journalists in both Russia and Sweden confirmed that they reflect the existing gender relations in society, while at the same time being critical towards the stereotypes existing in society. Still, in Russia, the journalists distanced themselves from a responsibility for producing gendered representations by referring to the political context, which, in their view, pre-determines the appearance of essentialist gendering in political journalism. Their Swedish colleagues believed that reflexive gendering corresponds with the culture of gender debates in society and saw their own role in promoting this discussion further. Thus, even the broader gender inequalities in the society are not a universal explanation for gendered mediation of politics, as journalists can choose to fight the stereotypes and produce gender mainstreming, if they see possibilities for it.

To summarize, from the perspective of journalists, the universal modes of origin of essentialist gendering are uncritical standpoints and gender-unawareness of their colleagues; the gender imbalance existing in the political sphere, which they cannot directly influence; and gendered political communication, where rules are established by male politicians and journalists. The origins of reflexive gendering across contexts are the journalists’ self-reflexivity and gender-awareness. Newsworthiness, commercialization, and personalization of politics, as well as a domination of men in the news media organization do not serve as direct reasons for gendered mediation of politics and politicians. Certain global processes lead to the production of different types of gendering in different contexts, e.g., commercialization of the quality press is a driving force behind essentialist gendering in Russia and reflexive gendering in Sweden.

8.2. Critical reflections
In this study, in order to highlight the importance of the journalists’ perspective, I chose to apply the analytical model of the journalism culture (Hannitzsch 2007). It was not clear from the very beginning, despite the obvious
differences between the media models and the political and cultural contexts in Russia and Sweden, whether the Russian and Swedish journalists’ perceptions of gendering are so different that we should discuss two different national cultures of political journalism, or whether we could talk about one common culture of political journalism in the quality press in the Baltic Sea region. Comparing national cultures of political journalism appeared to make the most sense. However, this assumption can be questioned. A comparative study of a larger scope (which would include, for example, the case of Portugal, where a similar project on the journalists’ perceptions of gendered mediation is currently going on – Baptista 2014) would allow working out a common model for analysis of the political journalists’ perceptions of gendering, which does not necessarily have to be based on the perspectives of comparative journalism culture studies, but could instead build on theoretical perspectives of professionalization of journalism, discourse analysis, sociology of news production etc.

The findings of this study only relate to the quality press, so they cannot be directly applied to any journalism culture in any context. It is safe to say, however, that the political journalism in the quality press seems to be one of the strictest cultures of journalism when it comes to the formulation of what gender-ethical journalism constitutes, taking into account its subscription to the global values (such as objectivity) and its citizen-orientation (Hanitzsch 2011; Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007). It appears that the journalists working for the quality press are influenced by the context, and fulfillment of their ethical ideals is challenged by political, cultural, and economic factors. Thus, we can assume that for journalists working for other types of media, which are explicitly oriented at the mass consumer (such as tabloids), or are subject to more political pressure (such as TV channels in Russia – Vartanova 2013), holding to essentialist gendering appears as an easier alternative than the production of reflexive gendering. Research on journalism cultures in other types of media would allow for an investigation of whether the processes and modes of origin of gendering are common for different types of journalism cultures. An interesting discussion could evolve from comparison of conceptualizations of gendering by journalists working for quality press, tabloids, and public broadcasting channels.

Another consideration involves gendering as a concept. The present study suggested a broad interpretation of gendering as a process, which covers both gender-spotlighting, gender-stereotyping, counter-stereotyping, and production of gender-aware stories. However, it is important to remember the limitations of gender as a single analytical category (Davis 2008; McCall...
2005). In the present study, inequalities other than the gender one, i.e., those suggested for consideration in their mutual interaction within intersectionality perspective (e.g. Davis 2008; McCall 2005), e.g., ethnicity, race, physical capability, religious and sexual identity, were only scarcely taken into account. The interviewees themselves, however, often touched upon diversity in journalism as a democratic value (cf. Jönsson 2004). An intersectional perspective in future studies of cultures of political journalism would contribute to an understanding of the other discriminatory and promoting mechanisms in political news. Yet another perspective related to the gendering process in political journalism, which was not considered in this study but opens up a potential for future research, is sexualization (Attwood 2006) of politics and politicians in political journalism.128

8.3. Gendering and (mediatized) politics

It is important to point to the significance of gendering in political journalism in a wider context. Political journalism can be understood not just as journalism about politics, but as “gender-politics” in itself (Kitzinger 1998), a discursive practice producing “gender mainstreaming as a particular sort of event” (Bacchi and Eveline 2010), or, on the contrary, reinforcing the old stereotypes and feeding into existing gender hierarchies and dominant discourses (Kay 2007). As the present study shows, the application of gender-politics is very much dependent on whether political and media actors recognize the power of media.

The Russian journalists suggested that the political actors in the country do not recognize their power. Indeed, what is happening as far as the historical transition is concerned, is that while the journalists do not want to let go of the power they once held in the almost mythological media-ocracy of the 1990s (McNair 2000), they cannot really stop or influence the process of narrowing down what is permitted in political communication (Voinova, Resnyanskaya and Khvostunova 2007; Voltmer 2013; Zassoursky 2004). They in a way turn into an “ambivalent watchdog” (Brants and Van Kempen 2002) torn “between the normative ideals of adversarialism, on the one hand, and the constraints of news production, on the other” (Voltmer 2013, p. 33). This limits the choice of critical tools that journalists possess.

128 For example, the parliamentary elections 2011 in Russia, and the oppositional protests that followed them, were often discussed in terms attributed to sexual relations, after the white ribbons that the protesters wore were likened to condoms by then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (Putin: itogi vyborov… 2011).
The journalists’ disenchantment with the politicians and the political process manifests in the form of essentialist gendering of individual politicians, rather than in critique of the political sphere from a gender perspective.

In the words of Russian president Vladimir Putin at a meeting with foreign experts in September 2004, “The power, like a man, should attempt, and the press, like a woman, should counteract” (cited in Zassoursky 2005, p. 319, my translation). This utterance is reflected in the Russian journalists’ discussions about gendering in political journalism. Accordingly, when they view political power as a pressure, gendering is a strategy used to counteract. At the same time, the form it takes – essentialist gendering – multiplies the gender inequality in society by perpetuating the traditional perceptions of the women’s and men’s places in the society (Kay 2007). Moreover, maintenance of the traditional stereotypes aggravates the media’s position in the power hierarchy, as the press is imagined as a woman – as subordinate. In a sense, it seems that the Russian quality press accepts the role not of an “obedient child” (Vartanova 2013), but of a “subordinate woman” of the state, and tries to apply the only power left to her in this patriarchal order – the manipulative power (Zdravomyslova and Temkina 2007), where essentialist gendering appears as an almost invisible but inevitable tool of critique.

In the Swedish case, acknowledgement of the media’s power by both political journalists and society (Asp 2012a) enables the quality press to maintain gender balance in political journalism (as both the cultural and the political context, the market, and the audiences favor gender-balanced journalism). What happens here is that the media increasingly force other actors to adopt to their specific norms and demands (Strömbäck 2009), and as gender mainstreaming is among the demands of the quality press, mediatization of politics does not appear to be harmful to the voters’ recognition of women and men politicians and their idea about the openness of the political sphere.

The Swedish political journalists not only increasingly take upon themselves the role of a watchdog of the state (Dahlgren 2000; Wiik 2014), but also appear as critical change agents (see Hanitzsch 2011), who are constantly involved in a politicized activity of meaning-making (Bacchi and Eveline 2010). The journalists demonstrate a clear and quite homogeneous vision of how gender equal society should be, and aim at promoting gender equality. The problem that arises, however, is that the Swedish journalists seem to bring their cultural glasses with them when they judge any other context, and they might be reluctant to see other possible interpretations of gender equality (cf. Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008).
It appears that mediatization of politics – the expanded influence of the media on the political sphere – is not necessarily harmful for the promotion of gender equality in political journalism. When the media power is suppressed by the political power, journalists working for the quality press do not attempt to build restrictions for themselves. Thus, any tools, including essentialist gendering, become useful for critique of the authorities. When political and media actors, as well as society recognize the power of the quality press, journalists make more responsible choices, have more articulated standards, and pay more attention to the problem of gendered mediation.

8.4. Gendering and freedom of press

Gendering in political journalism should be addressed as an important issue as far as freedom of press is concerned. Freedom of press is strongly interrelated with gender equality (Hermes 2013; Recommendation Rec/CM 2013), and it is highlighted that “equality between men and women is nothing less than a litmus test for the realization of true and mature democracy” (Hermes 2013). The interviewed journalists in both countries demonstrated a high level of devotion to the democratic ideals. However, the Russian and the Swedish journalists’ vision of how the ideals of gender equality and freedom of press can coexist differs.

In the Russian case, there is a certain contradiction between the ideals of gender equality and freedom of press. In the view of the journalists, the choice of critical tools used to question the political decisions and efficiency of particular political personalities, according to this study’s respondents, should remain free and unrestricted. However, it appears that as long as journalists apply essentialist gendering as one of the tools for critiquing the political sphere, this sphere will not be promoted and shaped as a space open for women. This approach in turn contributes to “double gendering at work” (Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross 1996), where both the representational politics and the media coverage have a gendered nature, contributing to the marginalization of women as the “outsiders” to the political system. It is possible to say that by applying or even just potentially legitimizing essentialist gendering, the Russian journalists self-impose gender-based censorship (Callamard 2006) without reflecting upon the possible consequences of this for society and for themselves (see Putin’s quotation above). Thus, while censorship imposed on the media (by the political authorities) is what the Russian political journalists are afraid of most of all,
by legitimizing essentialist gendering they readily exercise *self-imposed* gender-based censorship. Unwillingly, they accomplish the politicians’ aim to delimit the public sphere.

At the same time, the Russian journalists see the Swedish strict self-regulatory rules as a potential delimitation of the freedom of press. Their Swedish colleagues, on the contrary, consider themselves to be far ahead of their Russian colleagues when it comes to “maturity” of democracy. Their perception of the current political situation as mature and progressive, however, can be considered to be problematic, as it limits the critical acknowledgment of the gaps, which seem to be noticed mainly by the female journalists and media experts. As Jenny Rönn gren, journalist and activist in the “Allt är möjligt”/Everything is possible group notes,

> Here in the Nordic countries, we like to think we’re world leading and that the mission has been accomplished. This is probably why the development has stagnated [...] There’s a notion that our journalism is pro-gender equality, while the truth is that it only serves to cement the existing norms. It is a problem that the media consider gender equality a special interest, or a political agenda. In contrast, many large organizations in the rest of the world think of gender equality as a fundamental aspect of their operations (Rönngren 2014).

Indeed, as this study showed, the Swedish journalists already today notice that gender as an issue is disappearing from the political agenda, and is also disappearing from the media agenda. Such a parallel “dramaturgy” is a worrying tendency. Silencing of the theme of gender equality as an irrelevant topic in politics increases the Swedish journalists’ individual responsibility (Edström 2011) for promotion of gender equality as one of the key democratic values.

### 8.5. Gendering and challenges of changes

An important issue that this study suggests taking into account in future research concerns the challenges that both the Russian and the Swedish cultures of political journalism face. Post-Soviet Russian and post-corporatist Swedish media models have for a long time been described as models in transition. Today, Russian media have reportedly reached a certain stability in the government-commercial Eurasian model (Vartanova 2013), where the quality press has to search for strategies of survival between the brutal rules of the media market and the high level of political intervention from the government (Anikina and Johansson 2013; Pasti and Nordenstreng 2013). Swedish media have reportedly moved away from the Democratic
Corporatist towards the Liberal Model (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Wiik 2014), and, while there is zero political influence on the content (Nygren and Appelberg 2013), media have instead become dependent on the market (Allern and Blach-Orsten 2011; Dahlgren 2000).

This stability of the media models, however, can be questioned, if we take into account the processes of mediatization of politics (Hjarvard 2013; Strömbäck and Esser 2014b), mediatization of journalism (Hjarvard 2013; Kammer 2013; Vartanova 2013), and commercialization of media (Kammer 2013; McManus 2009; McQuail 2005; Örnebring 2009a). These processes are reportedly challenging political journalism all around the world by questioning the traditional news values, journalists’ roles, ideals, orientations, and beliefs. It is, thus, important to think about the direction these processes are leading the cultures of political journalism in Russia and Sweden.

Commercial logic is not just becoming one of the main driving forces of journalism (Kammer 2013; McQuail 2005); it is, as found in this study, also becoming normalized and legitimized by the political journalists themselves (especially by department editors and editors-in-chief). Paradoxically, the universal challenge of commercialization (Couldry and Hepp 2012; McManus 2009; McQuail 2005; Örnebring 2009a) leads to a divergence of journalism cultures (van Dalen 2012), which we can observe in these two cultures of political journalism as well. In Russia, today the economic interests of the media company are considered by journalists as the main obstacle for fulfillment of their practices (Anikina and Johansson 2013). The economic logic, however, does not imply that journalists achieve more influence in the political sphere (Voltmer 2013). This leads to essentialist gendering often becoming a tool of both receiving economic benefits and of political critique. The commercial logic of the Swedish quality media, on the contrary, does not contradict the role of the promoter of gender equality, which Swedish political journalists working for the quality press keenly take on.

However, the situation can change, and there is no guarantee that if the Swedish media (and even the quality press) completely takes upon itself the “consumerist frames of reference” (Dahlgren 2000), the ideal of gender-balanced journalism promoting gender equality cannot be replaced by other, strictly consumerist ideals. Already now, around 50% of all Swedish journalists believe that the level of quality of journalism has decreased during the last 5-10 years, and the owners’ demand for profits tends to threaten the journalists’ independence, putting the journalistic ideals under pressure (Nygren and Appelberg 2013). Moreover, Bromander (2012) suggests that one of the explanations for why scandals about female politicians occur
more often in the Swedish media than scandals about men, is economic logic: “female” scandals sell better. Thus, it is not unlikely that if there is a shift in the economic situation in Sweden, the happy union of the Swedish journalists’ ideal of gender-balanced journalism and the vision of gender-balanced content as more attractive for the audiences (and, thus, bringing more advertisements) can one day fall apart. Indeed, if the professional logic is already today reported to be replaced with the market one (Nygren and Appelberg 2013), there is a risk that Swedish political journalism might sacrifice the fulfillment of the gender equality ideal if it at some point becomes non-beneficial to produce gender balanced content. And if “journalists in Sweden are taking the same path as in […] Russia, but at a much slower speed,” as noted by Nygren, Dobek-Ostrowska and Anikina (2013, p. 166), it seems very questionable that the Swedish quality political journalism will have it easy to keep the orientation at gender mainstreaming.

This leads to the conclusion that national cultures of political journalism should be viewed in and as processes. While journalists inhabiting these cultures are not fully accountable for gendering in political journalism, as they constantly have to adapt to the context and to the challenges of changes, they are not mitigated of responsibility either. It is important that political journalists recognize that their involvement in the practices of gender mainstreaming not only enhances the democratic development of society (Hermes 2013; Recommendation CM/Rec 2013), but also makes the position of the independent quality press – a democratic forum of society – stronger. It is the journalists who shape their own culture – today, tomorrow, and in the future.
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Appendix 1. Interview questions

- I would like to start by asking some questions about working in the political/international department of the media and every day dealing with covering politicians. Is there any specificity, in your view, in writing about politicians compared to writing about “ordinary” people or other actors? Do you find it problematic to cover politicians? What is problematic about it?
- Is there generally a difference in approach to covering women and men politicians? If yes, how is it manifested? Why? Do you think that this difference exists in journalism globally, or is it rather a specificity of the Swedish/Russian context/your media/your department?
- Do you find media representations of female politicians in general problematic? If yes, could you give an example? If no, why is it not problematic? What would make it problematic? (Again, for you personally as a journalist? And for the society?)
- Do you feel that there is any difference for you when you interact with women and men politicians?
- In your media are there any norms, rules, or policies concerning representations of men and women in the content? Do you discuss these issues in the newsroom? Are there any conflicts related to it?
- Here is an article written by you.129 Can you tell me about how you wrote this story? How did you decide that it was newsworthy? What kind of material did you use? Did you discuss your decision to write about this with your editor and colleagues? Did you face any difficulties argumenting the choice of this topic?
- How was the angle of the article chosen? (Why was it important/not important to pay attention to the fact that this is a female politician(s)?) Was it problematic and, if yes, in what way? What did these problems mainly have to do with?
- In this article, you have chosen this approach to coverage of female/male politician(s)/a gender issue. Do you think that it is a

129 In the “article-elicitation” experiment, department and chief editors were asked to comment on materials published by their department/outlet’s employees.
typical way to portray women/men politicians/write about politics? Why/why not?

• I will now show you a short paragraph from an article written by another journalist. Could you, please, read it and tell me what you think about this piece? Could it be something you would have written? Could it be published in your media? Why/why not? How would you edit it?

• In fact, this piece was published in a quality outlet in Russia/Sweden. Now that you know this, what could you say about this text? What, in your opinion, determinates the differences and similarities between the approaches to gender representation of politics and politicians in the Russian and Swedish media?

• Do you think that changes in the representation of women and men politicians and politics in general are desirable? What kinds of changes? Who could implement them? If changes are not desirable, what should be done to retain what is there now?

• Imagine that you are giving recommendations to a journalist beginner, who is supposed to cover women and men politicians. What kind of advice would you give him/her?
Appendix 2. Stimulus materials

“Stimulus materials” shown to the Russian journalists:

Example 1.
Russian translation:

Власть носит галстук

Согласно исследованиям, партии превыше всего ценят те качества, которые исследователи маскулинности оценивают как мужские. Политикам нравится быть мужественными.

Мужчина должен быть крепким орешком! Не сплетничать о своих товарищах по партии! Жертвовать собой на благо партии! Не реветь в случае развода, а показать, на что мужчина способен, в суде! И знать свое место в иерархии!

Именно это иерархическое мышление, пожалуй, больше всего роднит политику и мужественность. Исследователи маскулинности говорят о том, что когда мужчины общаются друг с другом, прежде всего, они должны решить вопрос о том, кто из них вожак стан. Когда с этим покончено, остальные должны соблюдать заведенный порядок, поскольку нарушение его наказывается исключением из группы. Именно так и работают политические партии.

Другое сходство мужественности и политики — это интерес к насилию. Американский политконсультант Джеймс Карвилль так трактует политическую стратегию:

- Другим будет сложно побороть тебя, если твой кулак будет у их лица.

Иногда страшно подумать о том, как отношения политиков с гражданами похожи на насилие. Сначала пряник, потом кнут. Утешить плачущего избирателя, а потом пнуть его в живот...

Swedish original:
Example 2.
Russian translation:
Вопреки ожидаемому
Следующего премьер-министра Дании зовут Хелле Торнинг-Шмидт. Это идет вразрез с привычными представлениями датчан, и не только потому, что прервет многолетнее правление правого крыла.
44-летняя Торнинг-Шмидт – первая женщина во главе партии датских социал-демократов. Она унаследовала этот пост за Могенсом Люккетофтом, когда Социал-демократическая партия с разгромом проиграла на выборах 2005 года. Тогда в послужном списке Торнинг-Шмидт был лишь долгий период работы в Европарламенте.
Тем не менее, ей удалось возглавить партию и стать ее бесспорным лидером. Все ядовитые комментарии, которые слышались в ее адрес, в основном происходили из недр ее собственной партии. Например, Торнинг-Шмидт называли «Gucci-Хелле» за элегантный стиль в одежде. Причем прозвище это было придумано не менее элегантной и гораздо более скандально-известной партийной гранд-дамой Ритт Бьеррегаард.

Swedish original:

“Stimulus materials” shown to the Swedish journalists:
Example 1.
Swedish translation
Makt är ingen sauna: Varför både statsministern och presidenten i Finland är kvinnor, och hur detta "tandem" fungerar
Efter att journalister och politiska forskare hade kastat en blick över finska staketet och upptäckt att förutom damen-presidenten finns där också en färsk kvinnlig premiärminister, började de sjunga allsång om det kvinnliga tandemet.
Tandem eller inte, men situationen är icke-typisk. Ända sedan Sri Lankas premiärminister Sirimavo Bandaranaike öppnade vägen till maktens toppen för kvinnor i 1960, har nästan femtiocin kvinnor i olika länder nått högsta politiska poster. Menbara vid några tillfällen i historien har det ömma könet beklätt båda de ledande posterna i samma land.


Russian original:
Derkatch, O. and Bykov, V. (2010), ‘Vlast’ - ne sauna: Pochemu v Finlyandii i prem’er i president – zhenschiny, i kak rabotaet etot ”tandem”’ [Power is Not a Sauna: Why in Finland Both the President and the Prime Minister are Women, and How This “Tandem” Functions], Novaya gazeta, November 12th.

Example 2.
Swedish translation:
Varför det amerikanska presidentvalet har urartat till en välgörenhetsgala Positiv diskriminering triumferar i västerländsk politik och försöker skingra tristessen av välnärda, som även krisen misslyckades att vinna. Slutligen förstod det även det republikanska partiet, och är på väg att föda en verklig icke-traditionell kandidat inför presidentvalet 2012. I tre månader innan primärvahlen har den äldre svarte affärsmannen Herman Cain blivit den mest populäraste republikanen...

Naturligtvis kan ett landmärke uppnås efter valet – genom vettiga jobb på posten. Men det är mycket lättare att garantera sig en plats i historien redan före valet med hjälp av någon slags icke-traditionella natur, som kan uttryckas på många olika sätt: från kön till funktionshinder... Även de borgerliga partierna behöver anpassa sig: erfarenheterna från USA och Västeuropa har visat att det verkar meningslöst att nominera vit heterosexuell man utan slående drag i biografin till ledare... Under inga omständigheter vill jag säga att kvinnor, böger, turkar eller svarta inte är lämpliga för presidentposten. Några av dem kanske till och med är mycket lämpliga. Men president är ett viktigt och krävande jobb. Och det är inte den bästa lösningen att välja människor till den på principen av positiv diskriminering...

Presidentvalskampanjen där båda kandidaterna är svarta skulle redan göra Cain en av mest betydande politiker i amerikansk historia. Men hur detta rekord i positiv diskriminering kommer påverka amerikanska administrationskvalitet – det bryr sig amerikanska väljarna inte än.

Russian original:
### Table 2. Background information about gender (in)equality in different spheres.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender gap index(^{130}) and gender equality rank (out of 136 countries)</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.698 (61) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td>0.813 (4) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender gap subindex: political empowerment, and rank (out of 136 countries)</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.095 (94) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td>0.498 (4) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female representatives of the parliament</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.6% in the lower chamber, 8% in the upper (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014)</td>
<td>45% (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female ministers</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Deputy Prime Minister out of 7, 1 minister out of 21 (Russian Federal Government 2014)</td>
<td>13 ministers out of 24 (Regeringen 2014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Female politicians on the regional level</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 governors out of 83 (Russian Federal subjects 2014)</td>
<td>13 county governors out of 21 (Länsstyrelserna 2014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender gap subindex: Economic Participation and Opportunity</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.720 (42) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td>0.783 (14) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender gap subindex: Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.998 (36)(^{131}) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td>0.998 (38) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender gap subindex: Health and Survival</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.979 (34) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td>0.974 (69) (Schwab et al. 2013)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{130}\) The gender gap index suggests considering 0.00 as inequality, and 1.00 as equality.

\(^{131}\) Looking at enrollment in tertiary education, Russia places first among 136 countries when it comes to women’s representation (the female to male ratio is 1.35).
### Appendix 4. Media and journalism in Russia and Sweden

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>Sweden</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General number of journalists in the country (in different types of media)</td>
<td>150,000 (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>16-17,000 (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female/male journalists</td>
<td>64.9/35.1% on the level of senior professionals (reporters and editors), 48.9/51.1% on the level of senior management (editors-in-chief), and 58.5/41.5% on the level of top management (publishers, chief executive officers) (Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media 2011)</td>
<td>49/51% on the level of senior professionals (reporters and editors), 40.6/59.4% on the level of senior management (editors-in-chief), and 39.8/60.2% on the level of top management (publishers, chief executive officers) (Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists working for national (paid) newspapers and weekly magazines</td>
<td>33.6% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>27% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists producing for paper platform</td>
<td>69.2% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>75% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists with permanent employment in the media company</td>
<td>72.8% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>72% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists covering universal topics (no specialization)</td>
<td>54.6% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>50-60% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journalists specifically covering the political subject</td>
<td>9.7% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>11% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female/male journalists covering politics</td>
<td>No available data</td>
<td>37/63% (GMMP 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of education among journalists</td>
<td>95.6% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>90% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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132 For a detailed discussion of the representation of women in the newsrooms in Russia see Nastasia and Bondarenko (2013).

133 For a detailed discussion of the representation of women in the newsrooms in Sweden see Edström (2013).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Possessing specialized academic education in journalism</strong></th>
<th>74.6% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</th>
<th>56% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average income</strong></td>
<td>Can cover all necessary personal expenses – 40% (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>Can do well and cover all necessary personal expenses plus more – 79% (Nygren and Appelberg 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Press freedom index</strong> (rank out of 179 countries)</td>
<td>43.42 (148) (Press Freedom Index 2013)</td>
<td>9.23 (10) (Press Freedom Index 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Political preferences</strong></td>
<td>26.2% – Center, 16.6% – A bit to the right, 13.4% – A bit to the left, 28.8% – No answer (Anikina and Johansson 2013)</td>
<td>37% – A bit to the left, 25% – Left, 21% – Center, 13% – A bit to the right (Nygren and Appelberg 2013, see also Asp 2012b)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Numerical information about the media and journalism in Russia and Sweden.
Appendix 5. List of political actors mentioned in the interviews

Russian political actors:

Batalina, Olga – Deputy Secretary of the General Council of the United Russia party, Deputy head of the State Duma Committee for family, women and children issues, has been a member of the State Duma since 2011.

Chirikova, Evgeniya – political activist, a member of the oppositional Coordination Council. Became known for participation in the protests of the eco-movements defending the Khimki forest in the Moscow region.

Dmitrieva, Oksana – Deputy head of the social-democratic party Spravedlivaya Rossiya/Just Russia, has been a member of the State Duma since 2007. A possibility that she would run in the presidential elections 2012 was discussed in the media, but the party was represented by its leader Sergey Mironov in these elections.


Gryzlov, Boris – former Chairman of the State Duma (until December 2011); one of the leaders of the United Russia party.

Kabayeva, Alina – a famous Russian sportswoman, champion of the Olympic Games; has been a member of the State Duma since 2007.

Khakamada, Irina – was a member of the State Duma, 1993 – 2003, and one of the leaders of the Union of Rightist Forces. In 2004 ran in the presidential elections where she received 3.9% of the votes.

Khorkina, Svetlana – a famous Russian gymnast, the Olympic Games' star. Was a member of the State Duma, 2007-2011.

Komarova, Natalya – the governor of Khanty-Mansi Autonomous okrug since 2010.

Kozhevnikova, Mariya – an actress, has been a member of the State Duma since 2011.


Novodvorskaya, Valeriya (passed away July 12th, 2014) – was a liberal Russian politician, Soviet dissident, the founder and the chairwoman of the party “Demokratische kooyu”/“Democratic Union,” and a member of the editorial board of the magazine The New Times.

Peskov, Dmitry – Press Attaché for President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin. Peskov has been in charge of handling Putin’s press and media activities since 2000.

Putin, Vladimir – President of the Russian Federation since 2012, and from 2000 to 2008. Was Prime Minister from 1999 to 2000 and from 2008 to 2012 (at this time also was the chairman of the United Russia party).


Sinikova, Nadezda – the head of the Federal Agency for the supply of arms, military, special equipment, and material tools (“Rosobo-rontsozavka”) since 2010.

Skrynnik, Yelena – former Minister of Agriculture, 2009-2012.

Sliska, Lyubov – former Deputy Chair(wo)man of the State Duma, 2007-2011.

Timakova, Natalya – Press Attaché to Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev since 2012. From 2008 to 2012 was Press Attaché to President Dmitry Medvedev.

Torshin, Alexander – former acting Chairman of the Federation Council (in 2011). One of the leading figures in the United Russia party.

Vorobieva, Liudmila (now deceased) – was the Director of the Federal Service for Defense Contracts of the Russian Federation (“Rosobo-ronzakaz”) from 2011 to 2012.

Zhurova, Svetlana – a famous sportswoman, champion of the Olympic Games; has been a member of the State Duma since 2007, was a member of the Federation Council, 2012-2013.

Yarovaya, Irina – has been a member of the State Duma since 2007, a member of the General Council of the United Russia party, the head of
the State Duma Committee for security and combating corruption. Was a member of the liberal party Yabloko/Apple from 1997 to 2007.

**Swedish politicians:**


Ask, Beatrice – Minister for Justice since 2006. A member of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party. Has been a member of the parliament since 1988, served as Minister for Schools from 1991 to 1994.

Borg, Anders – Minister for Finance since 2006, a member of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party.


Etzler, Aron – Secretary of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party since 2012.

Fridolin, Gustav – one of the Spokespersons of Miljöpartiet de Gröna/The Green Party together with Åsa Romson since 2011, has been a member of the parliament since 2010 (also from 2002 to 2006).

Linde, Hans – the leader of the parliamentary group of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party since 2010.


Löfven, Stefan – Chairman of Socialdemokraterna/The Social Democratic Party and Leader of the Opposition since January 2012.

Lööf, Annie – Chairwoman of Centerpartiet/The Center Party and Minister for Enterprise since 2011. Has been a member of the parliament since 2006.

Reinfeldt, Fredrik – Prime Minister of Sweden since 2006. Has been Chairman of Moderaterna/The Moderate Party since 2003.

Romson, Åsa – one of the Spokespersons of Miljöpartiet de Gröna/The Green Party together with Gustav Fridolin since 2011 and a member of the parliament since 2010.

Sahlin, Mona – was the leader of Socialdemokraterna/The Social Democratic Party and Leader of the Opposition from 2007 to 2011. She was the first female leader of the party.


Sjöstedt, Jonas – the leader of Vänsterpartiet/The Left Party since 2012.

Wetterstrand, Maria – was one of the Spokespersons for Miljöpartiet de Gröna/The Green Party together with Peter Eriksson, 2002-2011.

Politicians from other countries:


Grybauskaitė, Dalia – President of Lithuania since 2009.


Lagarde, Christine – Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since 2011. In France, hold positions of Minister of Economic Affairs, Finance and Employment, 2007-2011, Minister of Agriculture and Fishing in 2007, Minister of Commerce and Industry, 2005-2007. Was the first woman to become finance minister of a G8 economy, and is the first woman to head the IMF.
Merkel, Angela – Chancellor of Germany since 2005 and the leader of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since 2000. She is the first woman to hold either office.

Otunbaeva, Roza – former President of Kyrgyzstan, 2010-2011.


Thatcher, Margaret (passed away April 8th, 2013) – was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 to 1990 and the Leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 to 1990. Was the longest-serving British Prime Minister of the 20th century and the only woman to have held the office. Often referred to as the “Iron Lady,” a nickname that became associated with her uncompromising politics and leadership style.

Timoshenko, Yuliya – Prime Minister of Ukraine in 2005 and from 2007 to 2010.
Appendix 6. List of gender related concepts

The definitions are inspired by the ones provided by the Global Media Monitoring Project (Mission Possible 2008), *Gender Sensitive Reporting* (n.d.) and *Gender-Sensitive Indicators for Media* (Grizzle 2012) by UNESCO, *Getting the Balance Right* (2009) by the IFJ, and discussions of gender policies and gender mainstreaming (Bacchi and Eveline 2010; Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius 2008; Verloo and Lombardo 2007).

Gendering – the perceived imprint of gender on the media portrayal of politics and politicians, as well as the processes whereby gendered representations materialize in the first place.

gendering, *Essentialist* – gendering based on understanding of gender as equal to sex; manifests in irrelevant spotlighting of gender and gender stereotyping.

gendering, *Reflexive* – gendering based on understanding of gender as a critical concept; manifests in counter-stereotyping and gender-aware stories. Can be understood in similar lines with gender mainstreaming – by pointing to the gender hierarchies and inequalities it aims to problematize the gendered world and transform it by promoting gender-inclusiveness and gender-sensitivity (Bacchi and Eveline 2010, p. 2).

**Gender-awareness** – a critical approach to gender imbalance and inequality.

**Gender-aware stories** – articles prompting debate on topical gender issues and critically approaching inequalities between women and men.

**Gender balance** – a numeric concept for representation and participation. In Sweden, for example, an accepted quantitative goal of the equality policy is 40/60 for the distribution of sexes (Edström 2006, p. 58). However, the notion of *gender balanced media coverage* can be understood broader, i.e., as a diverse and unbiased media output, which reflects and informs public opinion and dialogue supported by editorial policies (Mission Possible 2008).

**Gender-blindness** – unawareness of gender imbalance and inequality. A gender-blind person, unlike a gender-aware one, lacks a gender-sensitive perspective.
Gender counter-stereotype – an image challenging stereotypes and prompting debate on topical gender issues.

Gender-ethical – confronting discrimination in news and maintaining gender-aware journalism through the professional ethical standards, making journalists cognizant about and responsive to gender concerns (Macharia and Morinière 2012).

Gender equality – refers to “equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both women and men in all spheres of public life, including the media” (Recommendation CM/Rec 2013). Gender equality in the media representations refers to both the numeric representation and the diverse and unbiased media output that aims at promoting equal status, value, rights, and opportunities for women and men. For different interpretations of gender equality, see Magnusson, Rönnblom and Silius (2008) and Verloo and Lombardo (2007).

Gender-less – a common among journalists description of politicians and political sphere; refers to the lack of gender characteristics, can be understood as a certain “de-gendering” of personalities and processes.

Gender mainstreaming – a process of integrating a gender perspective in activities carried by a person or an organization with the aim to achieve gender equality.

Gender-neutral – based on the idea that media coverage should avoid distinguishing roles according to people's sex or gender, in order to avoid discrimination arising from the impression that there are social roles for which one gender is more suited than another. However, the problem that may arise with gender-neutrality when it comes to policies (or, in this case, ethical ideologies), is that such professional ethics has a lens “devoid of a gender filter” (Macharia and Morinìere 2012, p. 15).

Gender-sensitive – recognizing gender inequalities, focusing on gender as a reason to discuss them. There are both guidelines for gender-sensitive reporting (e.g. Gender Sensitive Reporting n.d.; Mission Possible 2008) and gender-sensitive indicators for media operations and content (such as Grizzle 2012).

Gender-spotlighting – focusing on gender as an issue in itself (e.g. “She is the first woman president”).
**Gender stereotype** – a socially and culturally constructed belief about women and men, which is constructed through sayings, songs, proverbs, religion, customs, education, and in the media.

**Gender-stereotyping** – the practice of implicitly (dis)qualifying groups in society by, possibly unwittingly, stereotyping them in gendered ways; a systematic misrepresentation (Hermes 2013).

**Homosociality** – the nonsexual attractions held by men or women to the people of the same sex (Bird 1996; Lipman-Blumen 1976).

**Heterosociality** – the nonsexual attractions to the people of the other sex (Bird 1996; Lipman-Blumen 1976).

**Sexism** – assertion that one sex is superior to the other.
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