

# Media, women and gender equality policies

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# Who am I?

Former journalist in Estonian papers Hommikuleht and Eesti Ekspress, editor for arts and opinion

From 2009 active in politics, member of Estonian Parliament 2015-2019

Gender and media researcher since 1990ties, 2000 M.Sc and 2011 Ph.D

Currently I work as a communication expert, also teach at Tallinn University, Baltic Film, Media and Arts School, practical journalism and media theories and supervise students research.

# Aims of this introduction

General aim: to share understanding and experiences of different gender-focussed questions concerning the media of the participating countries and universally, to learn from each other.

My aim is to offer gender equality activists an opportunity to critically reflect upon journalism cultures from the gender aspect, to share ideas

To clarify possible further collaboration possibilities and issues for training

# Schedule

1. Introduction
2. Main questions and issues concerning gender and media: what are we talking about when we raise the question about media, women and gender equality.
3. Main terms: gender, gender system, media representation (depiction) of women, gender equality in newsrooms
4. Universal tendencies and research results concerning representation of women in the media
5. Gender questions in the newsrooms, gender equality policies



# Gender - the concept

Raewyn Connell. Gender (2009) Interview with Raewyn Connell

Noticing gender, understanding gender, defining gender

Becoming gender: the idea of social construction of gender

Simone de Beauvoir “Le deuxieme sexe” 1949 Interview with Simone de Beauvoir 1975

Lecture on "Le Deuxieme Sex" ("The Second Sex")

Gender identity

Gender stereotypes

# *Traditional Gender Stereotypes.*

## *Feminine.*

*Not aggressive.*  
*Dependent.*  
*Easily influenced.*  
*Submissive.*  
*Passive.*  
*Home-oriented.*  
*Easily hurt emotionally.*  
*Indecisive.*  
*Talkative.*  
*Gentle.*  
*Sensitive to other's feelings.*  
*Very desirous of security.*  
*Cries a lot.*  
*Emotional.*  
*Verbal.*  
*Kind.*  
*Tactful.*  
*Nurturing.*

## *Masculine.*

*Aggressive.*  
*Independent.*  
*Not easily influenced.*  
*Dominant.*  
*Active.*  
*Worldly.*  
*Not easily hurt emotionally.*  
*Decisive.*  
*Not at all talkative.*  
*Tough.*  
*Less sensitive to other's feelings.*  
*Not very desirous of security.*  
*Rarely cries.*  
*Logical.*  
*Analytical.*  
*Cruel.*  
*Blunt.*  
*Not nurturing.*

# Media, knowledge, power systems

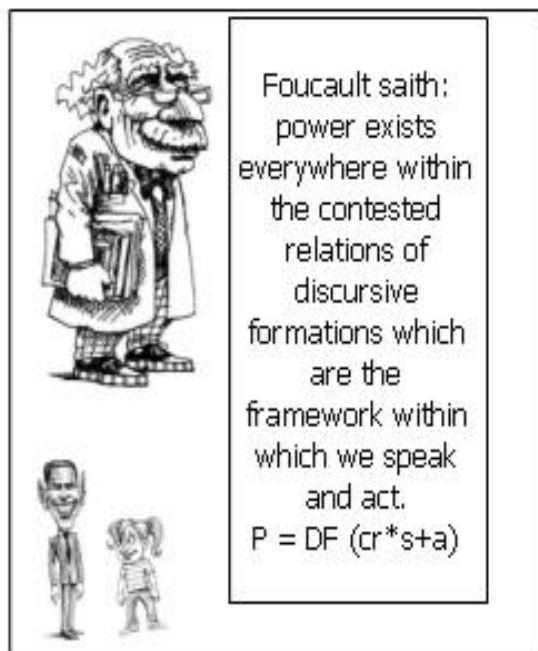
Media as a key institution in the production and reproduction, socialization, legitimation processes and social change (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 1998).

Media is the main institution besides education, justice, religion, science and medicine where the discursive definition, cultural production and reproduction of gender take place.

Based - among others on Foucauldian understanding of sexuality as a discursive result of knowledge and power systems (Foucault 1976).



## Who has power? Foucault rules. by Tania Smith



# Contradiction: the basis of womens' image in the media

Cultural representation, including media representation of women, departs from the contradiction of increasing activity of women in public sphere and the common understanding of the belonging of 'woman' to the private sphere.

Women's media representation includes those discursive contradictions between women's activity in the public sphere and 'belonging by essence' to the private sphere by constructing them in the media practice according to different choices: agenda setting, choice of depicted actors, visual material, descriptions.

# Representation (images)

<https://whv.org.au/resources/whv-publications/women-and-media-representation>

Movie classics on gender and media images [Miss Representation](#) 2011; [The Representation Project](#)

#WomensHealthWeek

## Women & media representation

Did you know?

Media and popular culture often portray women as...

- "Glamorous sex kitten"
- "Sainted mother"
- "Devious witch"
- "Hardface corporate and political climber"

Gender and advertising, how gender shapes meaning in contemporary advertising, 2004, Sage, 2014

Male speaking characters outnumber females 2.2 to 1 in top 100 films of 2015

Research in 400 feature films by the Center for Gender Equity and Research, University of California, Berkeley, 2015

Females are almost **4 times** as likely as males to be shown in sexy attire.

Research in 400 feature films by the Center for Gender Equity and Research, University of California, Berkeley, 2015

Women are often depicted as sex objects in ads

Women as sex objects and victims in print advertisements, De Pina, 2005

Women depicted in sexualised clothing are seen as less human, less intelligent and less worthy of help than their peers

Sexual objectification increases face width ratings and decreases perceived intellect, Psychology of Women Quarterly, 2015

# Womens' emancipation and representation in media

There certainly exists a connection between women's emancipation, presence among the political and economic elites of the society and representation in the media content, but the connections are not mechanical.

Hence, the growing number of depicted women in media content can refer a great deal more to journalistic choices at different levels in media organizations.

The presence or absence of representations of women and men in the media content refers to the choices of the producers of the texts, some of which come from professional practices; other conscious and subconscious choices arise from the broader cultural and ideological context, in other words the discursive order of society (Foucault).

# Global Media Monitoring Project

The proportions of women's representations in news media content follow universal patterns found globally: women form a minority in representation in media content universally at 20-30% in news media (GMMP 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010, 2015, 2020).

<https://whomakesthenews.org/>

<https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-reports/>

<https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2020-reports/>

[https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/GMMP-2020.Highlights\\_FINAL.pdf](https://whomakesthenews.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/GMMP-2020.Highlights_FINAL.pdf)

## Key Findings: 1995 – 2020

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020		%Change		ΔYRs
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	
<b>A. People in the news</b>															
<b>by Medium</b>															
<b>Newspaper, Television, Radio (NRT)</b>	17	83	18	82	21	79	24	76	24	76	25	75	+8		Δ2.5 yrs
Newspapers	16	84	17	83	21	79	24	76	26	74	26	74	+10		
Television	21	79	22	78	22	78	24	76	24	76	26	74	+5		
Radio	15	85	13	87	17	83	22	78	21	79	23	77	+8		
<b>News websites and news media tweets</b>															
News websites							23 (pilot)	77 (pilot)	26	74	27	73	+1		Δ5 yrs
News tweets								25	75	28	72	+3			
News tweets								28	72	26	74	(-2)			
<b>By Major topic. NRT</b>															
Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65	30	70	+3		Δ2.5 yrs
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72	32	68	+13		
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72	24	76	+3		
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77	25	75	+1		
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79	24	76	+14		
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84	20	80	+13		

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020		%Change		ΔYRs
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	
<b>by Function in Story. NRT</b>															
Personal Experience					31	69	36	64	38	62	42	58	+11		Δ1.5 yrs
Popular Opinion					34	66	44	56	37	63	38	62	+4		
Eye Witness					30	70	29	71	30	70	30	70	0		
Subject					23	77	23	77	26	74	24	76	+1		
Spokesperson					14	86	19	81	20	80	22	78	+8		
Expert					17	83	20	80	19	81	24	76	+7		
<b>by Occupation. NRT</b>															
Homemaker, parent (no other occupation is given)			81	19	75	25	72	28	67	33	68	32	(-7)		
Health worker, social worker, childcare worker			n/a		n/a		n/a		47	53	47	53			
Office or service worker, non-management worker			35	65	40	60	45	55	35	65	42	58	+2		
Unemployed no other occupation given			33	67	19	81	35	65	34	66	42	58	+23		

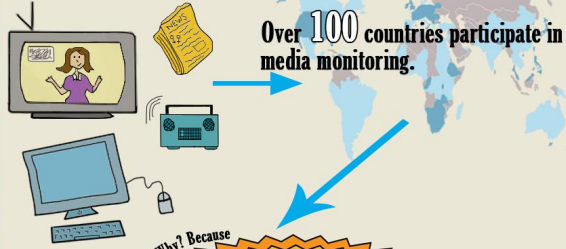
WHO  
MAKES THE  
NEWS?

## THE GLOBAL MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT

The world's most extensive and significant global research  
on gender in the news media.

Every **5** years since 1995

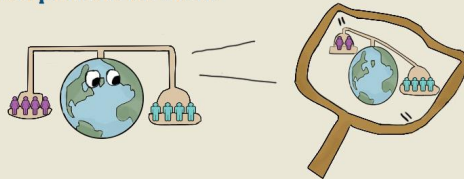
The GMMP has documented trends in the portrayal  
and representation of women and men in news media.



Over **100** countries participate in  
media monitoring.

Why? Because  
**NEWS MATTERS**

Underrepresentation of women in contrast to men results in  
an imbalanced picture of our world.



GMMP  
Global Media  
Monitoring Project  
WACC

For more information, check out:

 [www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)

 Follow @whomakesthenews

 Like our facebook page:  
[facebook.com/GlobalMediaMonitoringProject](https://facebook.com/GlobalMediaMonitoringProject)

The GMMP is coordinated by the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC).

# GMMP

Women in news stories  
1995-2015, 25% of news  
actors

# CHANGE

over the years



% of persons seen, heard or read about in news media that are women.

**WHO**  
MAKES THE  
NEWS?

## News on Economy



## News on Politics and Government



[www.whomakesthenews.org](http://www.whomakesthenews.org)



@whomakesthenews



Global.Media.Monitoring.Project



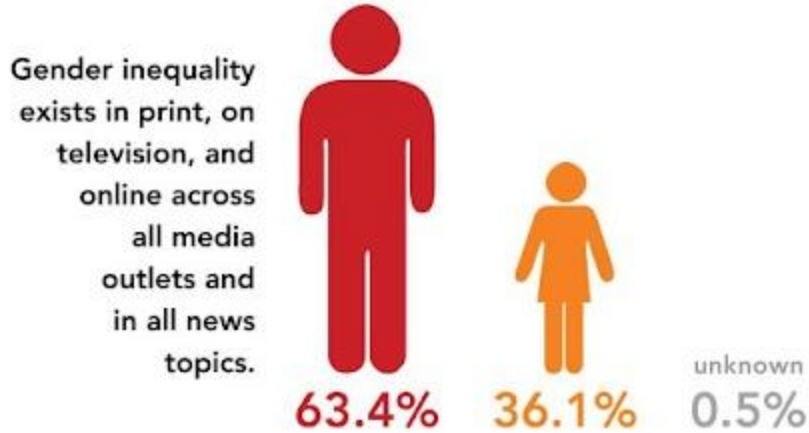
**GMMP**

Global Media  
Monitoring Project

**WACC**



## BOTTOM LINE: MEN DOMINATE MEDIA



According to Fairclough (1995) both institutional practices and social-cultural contexts have to be considered during the analysis of media texts as institutional practices only partly help to explain media representations.

The influence of the general position of women and the existing sex-gender system (Rubin 1975) has to be considered, in the framework of which biological sexuality is converted to cultural relations.

# How to explain womens' underrepresentation in the media

Women's media representation endangers in certain ways the position of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995, 2005/2007) and thereby reinforces the patriarchal supremacy in the society.

This process is occurring through discursive order (Foucault 1971), which excludes women from certain parts of the discourse and favours participation in other parts of the discourse.

The reinforcement of the discursive order is being carried out in the textual descriptions of the women appearing in the male dominated fields of the public sphere by emphasizing the extraordinariness of those women.

# Media maintaining the borders of public and private

The reinforcement of the discursive order manifests itself in media content in different journalistic choices: agenda setting, framing questions, the practices of control and sanction, which according to the ideology of male domination accentuate the quintessential belonging of women to the private sphere.

Borders of the intimate are reinforced in this ideology, as this helps to maintain the power of patriarchy.

The on-going tabloidization process in the media is changing the borders of the public and private spheres but it is in interest of patriarchal power to maintain the existing borders of the intimate.

Mainstream media helps to preserve the status quo but there is a discursive struggle over the meaning in the media.



# Media and “reflecting” reality?

Media practitioners are departing from the ‘reality’ in creating media content but they make their choices concerning sources, functions of actors and guests in programmes and in this way construct, legitimate (van Dijk 1998) and perpetuate the identities and practices, which reinforce male domination (Bourdieu 1998).

The dominant gender order and patriarchal ideology behind it in society is not negotiated to any extent in newsrooms.

Commercial pressures coincide with the choices, which in this context sustain patriarchal ideology.



Entertaining commercial programs include women in certain roles. The number of women in media content grows, but...?

# Eastern Europe: postcolonialism, corporate masculinity, nation

In Eastern Europe since the 1990s, the hegemonic masculinity with a focus on nation and state building has been generally accepted as the dominant ideology, and journalistic choices have been made in this context. Hegemonic masculinity in post-colonial, post-socialist Estonia is strongly influenced by corporate masculinity (Connell 2005/2007).

As a result, a hybrid form of national and state centred patriarchy and corporate masculinity has been accepted as the dominant ideology in Estonian society. This ideology is continuously favouring certain ways of representation of women in the media content (female bodies as decoration, women as entertainment) and excluding other forms of representation (old, ordinary women etc.).



# GENDER EQUALITY





# Editorial cultures and women in newsrooms

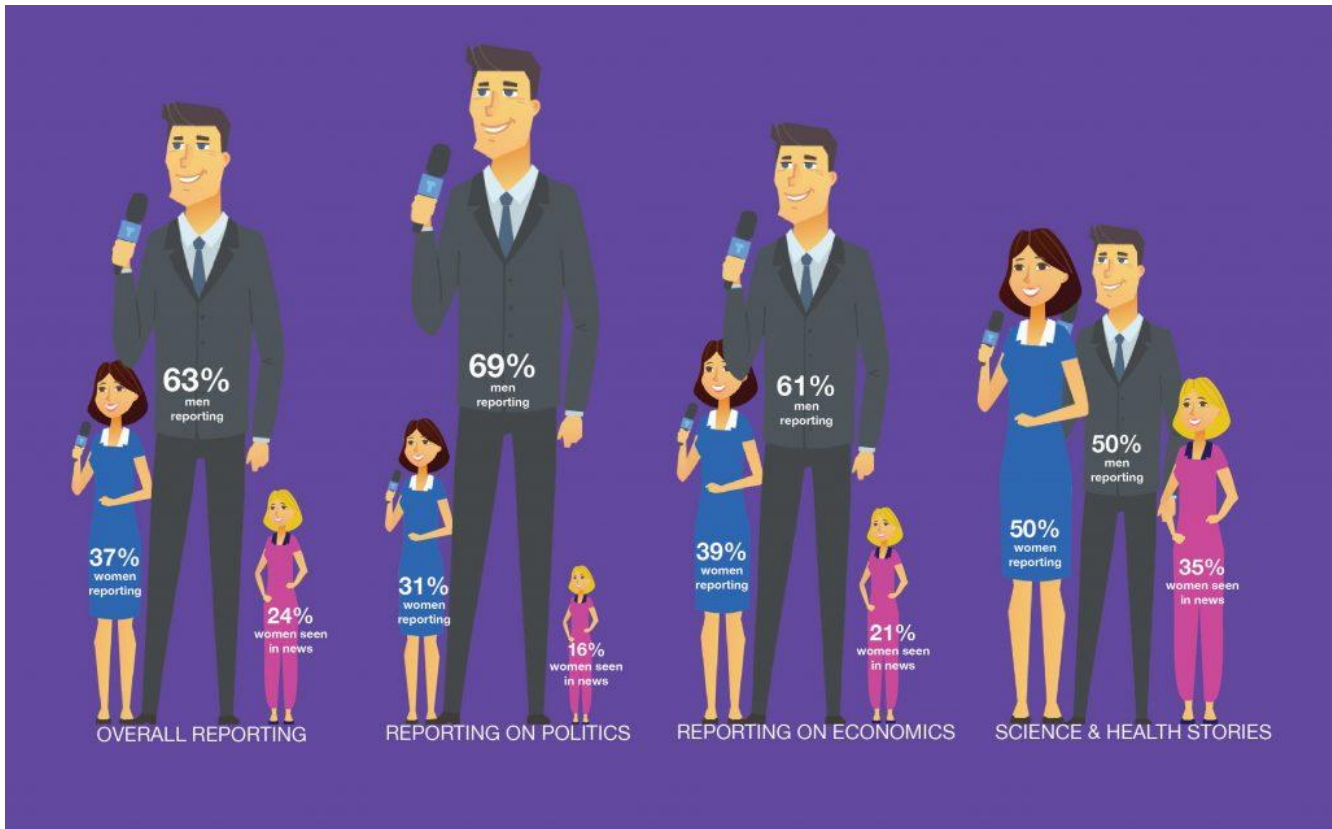
Conventions of representing women in certain ways are defined by the editorial culture of the newsrooms

Women journalists generally follow the conventions developed in a masculine journalism culture.

Research has shown that professional journalism culture equalizes differences, which stem from the different backgrounds of the journalists, including gender differences (Schudson 2005, McQuail 2000).

There are claims (by Mill 1997, for example) that the number of women journalists in the newsroom and on the editorial board clearly influences the representation of women in media content.

[Advancing Gender Equality in Media Industries](#)



<https://eideas.eui.eu/2019/07/24/women-leadership-and-the-media/> Picture data source: GMMP

# Women and the conventions of depicting women

Women characters depicted in the media and also themes that may concern women readers, are often chosen by leading male journalists.

The ways women are represented in the media content are most probably infrequently discussed in the newsroom, as they do not arouse any protest among most of the women journalists. Journalistic choices are often automatic or subconscious and not recognized by journalists as choices, but as 'the way things are'.

My experience, from working in different newsrooms, confirms that the possibilities of women, who are critical about the conventions of women's representation, to influence the priorities of the newsroom are restricted, depending on the hierarchies of the newsroom and organization culture.



CAN SHE MAKE YOU  
LOSE CONTROL?



NEW LYNX DRY  
FULL CONTROL

48HR ANTIPERSPIRANT

WATCH THE VIDEO

# Estonian newsrooms

Gender is mostly not regarded as an important issue in Estonian newsroom and not a part of professional identity. Gender is not seen as an obstacle in women's professional careers in journalism. Nevertheless, an essentialist understanding is commonly shared that women might have natural privileges in creating contacts or obtaining information.

While a gendered pay-gap is regarded as an issue and reconciliation has also been mentioned, these themes are generally not regarded as gender equality issues. Gender inequality is perceived at the societal level, but is not regarded as a problem in newsrooms.



# Eastern-European newsrooms are gender-balanced

[Global Report on the Status of Women in the News Media](#) (2011) also showed that despite none of the newsrooms in Estonia having a gender equality policy, Estonian newsrooms are the most gender balanced of all the studied newsrooms in Eastern Europe.

Many leading female journalists do not even consider gender equality in the newsroom is an apt issue in the Estonian context.

Women in journalism in Estonia have adjusted to act within the masculine culture of newsrooms and top women journalists and female managers in media companies have learned to take their patriarchal dividends (Connell 1995, 2005/2007) from their position in journalism institutions.

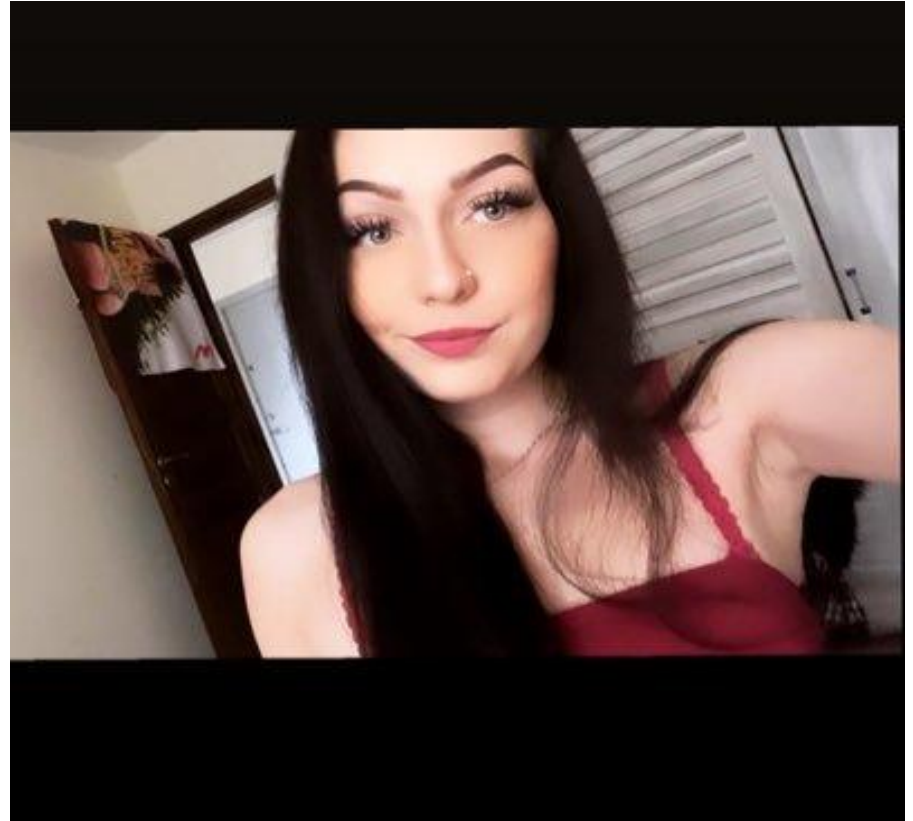
This makes the Estonian journalism culture distinctly different from Nordic newsroom cultures, but similar to journalism cultures of other countries in Eastern and Central Europe.

# New issues

Online sexual hate speech towards journalists (female)

Pornification of media-space

Self-exposure in social media (Instagram, Tik-tok, OnlyFans) has influence on mainstream media and promotes usage of certain media images of women



# Project: Screening Gender 2000-2020

Based on the methodology of the international TV monitoring project “*Screening Gender*” (2000), which enables a comparison of findings from six Nordic and European countries.

[Screening Gender | yle.fi | Arkistoitu](#)

[Sugu telepildis](#)

[Sugu telepildis 2020 TLÜ ELU projekt](#)





Who speaks in television, in which roles and what about?

# Estonian results: Who speaks in television?

The average percentage of women speaking on Estonian TV during the first decade of twenty-first century (2002-2008) was 32%, which is comparable to the average percentage of women in six European countries participating in *Screening Gender* (2000), but slightly lower than the results for Finland and Sweden.

The speaking time of women on Estonian TV was noticeably shorter than that of men on Estonian TV (20-30% of speaking time) and substantially shorter than men on Finnish and Swedish television (about 40% of speaking time).

This can be explained not only by the functions women perform in the programmes on Estonian TV but also their proportional representation.

2020 womens' speaking time has increased in commercial channels due to speaking in commercials.

[Estonian National Broadcast Company](#)

[Kanal 2](#)

[TV3](#)



Universal tendency: men speak on TV longer time, in all roles, functions and about all themes more than women.

# Roles and functions of women in TV programmes

Women are in a minority in all the main functions of TV programmes: news anchors, programme leaders, debate moderators, game leaders and interviewees.

Women make almost a half of creative personnel in ETV (Šein 2002, Rebane 2009), so we can conclude that women do much of the background work in television as editors, producers, assistants etc., managing the invisible, behind-the-scenes 'private sphere' element of TV organization, whereas men appear in the 'public sphere' element, the television screen. Anu Välba:

<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=2534609686552300>

Eeva Esse, Kanal 2, has her own programme



Thank you!