

# Gender and Leadership in Tourism and Hospitality

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**Korać, Filipa**

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# Croatia



**Gender and Leadership in Tourism and Hospitality**

Filipa Korać

Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT Croatia)

HSPT-490: Senior Capstone Project

Course instructor: Rebecca Charry

Mentor: Milena Kužnin

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## **Gender and Leadership in Tourism and Hospitality**

### **Abstract**

Tourism and hospitality industry are one of the biggest industries in the world that lack women in high managerial position. Even though women are dominating in hotel workforce (55.5%), they are still lead my men. According to Moran (1992, p.476) it is well-known that women are having difficulties making their way to high managerial position. Changes have been made throughout years, slowly, but there is still a place for improvement. Croatia is one among all those countries where the improvement is highly needed, as it makes only 6% of women in high managerial position. Interviews were conducted with seven women leaders from Dubrovnik, Croatia and with different work backgrounds. This method was used in order to find out why women are underrepresented in high managerial position. Results have shown very interesting facts about women and their way to the top. Further research needs to evaluate better leadership efficiency between genders.

*Keywords:* leadership, gender equality, female leaders, tourism and hospitality

## **Gender**

Gender is one of the things that differentiate individuals, and, as a category, it is based and defined on expectations and processes that are establishing differences between women and men (as cited in Segovia-Pérez et al., 2018, p.2). According to Risman (1998) differences that currently are recognized to exist among the genders are becoming a source for many negative outcomes, since both genders, male and female lack many opportunities (as cited in Segovia-Pérez et al., 2018, p.2). When it comes to job positions, the employer's expectations are different for both genders, which includes the way in which they behave, work or dress. It is very important to mention that in many cases males and females are mostly not given the same job positions. Most of the organizations are having specific and strict rules, standards that are taken into consideration for specific job positions or industries (Segovia-Pérez et al., 2018, p.2).

## **Hospitality**

Hospitality is one of the biggest and fastest growing industries in the world that is having more than 173 million employees in hotel and motel industry (Hotel Industry Statistics 2020-2021, 2021). Women are making 55.5% of hotel workforce and there are only a few of them that are working on a high managerial position (as cited in Marinakou, 2014, p.19). According to Moran (1992, p.476) it is well-known that women are having difficulties making their way to high managerial position. Even though, the hotel workforce is dominated by women, the difference among them and male workforce is still present. Male employees are still more paid than female employees, as their salaries differs from 60% to 85%. According to Marshall (1984), females were always beneath the males and they were like strangers who were just passing by. For most of the

organizations it is normal and appropriate that men are having influence and power over women (as cited in Marinakou, 2014, p.19).

### **Gender stereotyping**

Gender stereotyping is from the early beginning a part of the hotel industry. As Vakola & Apospori (2007) and Pettraki-Kottis (2004) argued, stereotyping is something that is surrounding us everywhere around the world. It is present in every country and in most cases, belonging to a certain region may be a part of it. According to the research, gender stereotyping is something that prevents women career development. Mihail (2006) argues that women who always worked hard and were striving for higher positions were surrounded with obstacles (as cited in Marinakou, 2014, p.19). It is well-known that women were always assigned to work in departments and at job positions in which certain traits and specific job responsibilities are needed such as: communication, administration, marketing, housekeeping and human resources (as cited in Segovia-Pérez et al., 2018, p.3). Additionally, it has been reported that women were mostly working during the seasons and for a part-time in the hospitality industry (Marinakou, 2014, p.19). Some of the positions were led by women and most of them by men, but the research shows that it has been very hard for women to advance and obtain a high managerial position in which she can show her potential and abilities (as cited in Marinakou, 2014, p.19).

Women tend to hesitate joining the hospitality industry because of long and inflexible working hours (Women in Hospitality Industry, 2018). When it comes to women employment, women who are above the age of 50 have difficulty to find a new job, regardless of their work experience or ability because they are perceived as weak. Young women also face difficulties with employment because employers fear maternity leave (Ibrahimi, 2018).

Back in the past, the possibility of women playing a role of a leader was not accepted at all. This has fortunately changed nowadays and we all witness that there are examples of women as leaders even though the percentage is very low. Nevertheless, the research shows that many people are still surprised at finding that women are at leading positions, since, according to traditional norms of leadership, the place of leader is always assigned to men (Moran, 1992, p.478).

Men are more likely to be perceived as more prone to compete, to be in command and to be aggressive, while women are perceived as lacking those characteristic traits (Moran, 1992, p.478). Hearn & Parkin (1986-87) argued that the place of leader was always limited for women and the ones who were playing that role were acting more in a masculine way than in feminine (as cited in Moran, 1992, p.478).

One of the examples of such a behavior, was Margaret Thatcher, British politician and first ex female prime minister of Great Britain. She was known and considered as the “best man” in Great Britain. According to Hoyt & Simon (2013), Margaret Thatcher was not the only woman who was a very effective and successful leader. There were many around the world such as Benazir Bhutto (Pakistan), Indira Gandhi (India), Gro Harlem Brundtland (Norway), (as cited in Northouse, 2015, p.397).

Today the number of powerful and effective women leaders around the world has increased a lot but the hospitality industry is an area in which that potential is still lacking, and, being a good and positive force, it is possible to assume that it could bring a positive change in the hospitality world. According to National Center for Education Statistics, women obtain 60% of master’s degrees, 57% of bachelor’s degrees and more than half of the doctoral degrees. Even though, numbers of

all those degrees are very inspiring the truth is that women are making 26.8% of CEO positions and pure 14.6% of the Fortune 500 executive officer positions (as cited in Northouse, 2015, p.398).

## **Leadership**

When it comes to leadership, every business or industry has shown ignorance and disrespect toward female leadership, thus demonstrating bias on gender differences (Korabik, 1990, p.283). In most cases, men were always the focus in the organization which resulted to the point that women were not “seen” and were not taken into consideration. According to Riger & Galligan (1980), women were unsuitable for leadership positions due to the factors of their biological sex and other characteristics such as being too emotional and oversensitive (as cited in Korabik, 1990, p.283). Many studies that were done to confirm if there are specific gender related differences in leadership, have confirmed that male leaders were more task oriented while female leaders were more socially and emotionally oriented. As Birdsall et al., claim that when both male and female are working on a leadership position and have a similar work to do, then their leadership style, encouragement or identity are not distinct. According to one research, while the sex differences are under the control, everything about them immediately evaporates (as cited in Korabik, 1990, p.284). Boullard and Cook (1975) reported that group environment and the productivity of the organization decrease when the leader that is participating is of the opposite sex than the majority of the group, rather than when the leader is of the same sex. Unfortunately, due to the constantly present gender differences in the workplace, both men and women consider and predict that leadership positions should be occupied by men. According to Lockheed & Hall (1976) in groups where both men and women are involved, men are more talkative than women and therefore are recognized as group leaders (as cited in Korabik, 1990, p.285).

Moreover, Aries (1977) argues that men are more open to address the group as a whole, while women are more open to talk in front of individuals. For instance, women begin to talk more in a group where women are dominating. As previously mentioned, women are deficient in task-oriented skills which, in most cases means that women are seen as being inadequate in leadership positions. In addition to this, their success is not appreciated enough either by themselves or by their male peers (as cited in Korabik, 1990, p.285). Finally, Moran (1992) states that women deficiency of power has a negative impact on their behavior and, since, the type of behavior plays an important role in leadership, thus provides a smaller amount of opportunities and possibilities for improvement.

### **Leadership styles**

When it comes to leadership styles, we can easily say that the research shows that the styles of both genders, male and female, differ. For example, males are the ones who prefer ‘competitiveness’, ‘hierarchical authority’ and ‘high control’ while females more likely prefer ‘cooperation’, ‘collaboration’ among managers and their associates and last, but not least, diminished control for leaders (Moran, 1992, p.481). Main characteristics of a leader are that they don’t leave people behind and that they solve potential problems together, having in mind different aspects and approaches to the problem (Dragušica, 2019). Another important fact that needs to be stated would be that women who progress as leaders have advanced interpersonal skills. Their engagement and collaboration may empower them to be accepted by others, but also to be more effective and more self-confident. According to Moran (1992, p.482), Statham (1987) reported that females use in leadership more a ‘task-engrossed’ and ‘person-invested’ styles, which means that they are more focused on tasks and people that are working with them, but are also precisely paying attention to things and details that are around them. Whereas, males are more utilizing ‘image-engrossed’ and



‘autonomy-invested’ styles which demonstrate us their focus on themselves and their power (as cited in Moran, 1992, p.482).

Back in the past, women leaders became successful by following male style of leadership, but the research shows that this has changed recently and we can testify that women leaders have developed their own leadership style (as cited in Moran, 1992, p.484). According to Anna Carosa, women pay more attention to details which leads them to be perfectionists (as cited in Bowling, 2014). Males are considered as ‘transactional’ leaders while women are ‘transformational’ leaders. Men in most cases will adopt their organizational power while women will attribute their power by their personal peculiarities. More clearly, women with such abilities are supporting their participants, allocating their power and creating enthusiasm in the working environment (Moran, 1992, p.484).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is a type of leadership that completely changes people (Northouse, 2015, p.161). It involves ‘emotions’, ‘values’, different ‘standards’ and ‘long-term goals’. Transformational leadership contains the determination of employee’s needs, wants, delights and respect towards them like for everyone else in the world. Why is transformational leadership so important and necessary? As Northouse (2015, p.162) stated, transformational leadership is a technique where an individual enlists with others and builds a relationship or contact that boosts the motivation and integrity in both: that individual and the others.

There are four components of transformational leadership such as: ‘Idealized Influence’, ‘Inspirational Motivation’, ‘Intellectual Stimulation’ and ‘Individualized Consideration’ (as cited in Northouse, 2015, p.163). When it comes to ‘Idealized Influence’ this model of leadership

provides a description of leaders who perform in front of their participants with high appearance, which participants easily determine and wish to imitate. Leaders with charisma are appreciated and trustworthy by their participants, one of the examples would be Nelson Mandela (as cited in Northouse, 2015, p.167). Furthermore, another component to be taken into consideration is 'Inspirational Motivation'. This is a model that leaders use in order to communicate and inspire participants by using supportive and motivating words, and delivering motivation speeches and talks. 'Intellectual Stimulation' is a model of leadership that encourages participants to be ingenious and original. In this model participants deal a lot with problem solving and new accesses. The last component to be considered is 'Individualized Consideration'. In this model of leadership leaders listen to their participants wishes and play the role of advisors who treat every participant in nice and special way (as cited in Northouse, 2015, p.169).

Transformational leadership is mostly connected with female leaders. The reason behind it is that transformational leadership traits are the ones possessed by every female leader. Those skills are including social skills, perseverance, endurance, polite and charming behavior and the ability to recognize and see the mistake but also to apologize for it (Darioly, 2019). Women as transformational leaders are 'cooperative', 'emotional' and 'supportive' (Moran, 1992, p.485). According to the research women leaders are the ones who try to make the working environment more 'accommodating' and sustainable. They pay high attention to their employees and how they feel during their work. Another important aspect to consider is that female leaders don't just pay high attention to their employees they also appreciate and respect their opinions and last but not least they engage and find the solutions for the problems that any person is facing (Darioly, 2019).

The research has shown that females leaders are scoring much higher (4.16/5) than male leaders (3.44/5) in transformational leadership, which shows us that females are more efficient leaders

when it comes to the transformational leadership. This also demonstrate to us the employees' perception of female leaders as more transformational leaders than males (Darioly, 2019). There are six categories of transformational leadership traits: **power** (determined, perfectionist, demanding, tough, direct, goal-oriented, assertive), **charismatic** (smart, incredible), **sociable** (friendly, relaxed, kind, outgoing), **professional** (good advisor, well organized, hard worker, effective, steadfast, great leader, strong communication skills, competent, pedagogue), **cooperative** (helpful, comprehensive, patient, listening, guiding, open-minded, understanding etc.), **people oriented** (human, calm, attentive, down to earth, empathic, careful, respectful etc.). Transformational leadership may be called also women leadership as women seem to be using this model of leadership more than men. In contrast, this leadership style is more than efficient and necessary in hospitality industry. Since it can improve the employee satisfaction and motivation which will further result with an increase in the overall satisfaction with the organization or business (Darioly, 2019).

### **Female Leadership in Croatia**

Common to the world Croatia is lacking women leaders in the hospitality industry. It is proven that males are dominating in the hospitality workforce and that women are still lacking those skills and traits (Galičić & Ivanović, 2006, p.81). There is a saying in Croatia, according to which people immediately misjudge female leaders, because they are 'too emotional'. According to Galičić and Ivanković (2006, p.82) the 21st century shows a certain level of improvement in the perception of female leadership. According to the research, only 48% of female population work, 25% of females who doesn't work and only 6% females working in a high managerial position (as cited in Galičić & Ivanović, 2006, p.82). Unfortunately, it has been proved that women in Croatia are very

underrepresented not only on high managerial position but also on middle and low managerial positions (Vela, 2019, p.56).

Furthermore, research has shown that only 35% of women are handling all managerial positions. Moreover, the higher the managerial positions are there is a less opportunity for women to advance. According to research, companies in Croatia that are among 'top 500' women on managerial position are representing only 17,12% (as cited in Vela, 2019, p.58). For instance, salaries differences among females and males on high managerial position are quite high. Women are paid 17% less than men in Croatia, which in average for women is 11.600 Kuna while for men are 14.000 Kuna (as cited in Vela, 2019, p.59).

The studies that have been done in 2018 have reported that women in Croatia are still underrepresented and that gender equality is still the same, that not a lot has changed in the past years. They stated that it is better than it used to be 10 years ago but that gender equality and lack of support and opportunities is still present. Some of the most powerful women in the Croatian business world are: Gordana Kovačević (president of Ericsson Nikola Tesla company), Iva Balent (marketing director of Koncerna Agrokor), Maria Anargyrou-Nikolić (general manager of Coca-Cola HBC Adria company) etc. (as cited in Vela, 2019, p.59). Hospitality industry in Croatia is unfortunately lacking a lot of women on a high managerial position. According to Mrs. Samardžija (2013, p.388 & p.398) among 100 Croatian leaders there are only two women from hospitality industry that are having managerial roles.

### **Method**

The main purpose of this research paper is to find out why women are underrepresented in high managerial position more specifically in tourism and hospitality in Dubrovnik, Croatia. According

to previous research and statistics, it indicated lack of female leaders. Data collection was qualitative in order to get true personal experience and possible difficulties that women leaders may face.

There were total of seven participants with different work backgrounds but all leaders in their professions. All of the participants were women, four out of seven were holding position of general manager in a high luxury hotel, one participant is a general manager of ACI marine, one is a restaurant owner and finally one of the participants has her own travel agency. All participants were in between 30 to 50 years of age. The recruitment process was mostly through acquaintances that knew participants personally. Process of reaching each participant was via email or social media such as Instagram. Prior to data collection, participants were informed about the confidentiality and they all agreed with usage of their position and age but decided to not share their names.

The method that was used for research is interview. According to O'Reilly and Dogra (2017), the research interview is divided into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Semi-structured interview was conducted in this research paper due to its possibility of giving interviewees more freedom to share their experiences in more detail, due to the open-ended questions. The participants were not grouped, each one answered individually. There was a total of seven questions that were based on the literature review. The language that was used in the interview was Croatian as all of the interviewees are Croatian and it made them feel more open and comfortable. Distribution of the interview was done online through Zoom application due to the Corona virus and social restrictions that Croatian government implemented. Response rate was high, as all of the interviewees that were contacted answered and participated in the interview.

Four out of seven interviews were conducted live via Zoom, while three interviews were answered in a written matter. Approximate length of the interview was 35 – 40 minutes. Each of the live interviews was recorded by Zoom web camera in order to better analyze the data. Keywords that were used for the interview are leader qualities, gender inequality, workplace discrimination, women support.

## **Results**

The interview that was conducted with seven participants contained seven open-ended questions in order to gain more detailed insight into participants work and interpersonal experience. The participants were all female and on high managerial positions. Four of the participants are hotel general managers, one is a general manager of marine, one is a general manager and owner of travel agency and finally one of the participants is PR manager and owner of a restaurant. The interviewees shared their perception of a successful leader and its qualities, underrepresentation of females in high managerial positions and thoughts of gender inequalities.

When asked about leader qualities that lead to success of an organization most of the participants emphasized importance of communication, team work and empathy. As one of the participants stated:

I believe that most important leader quality is communication. Communication needs to be accentuated both with superiors as well as with employees. Good communication with employees directly effects their performance. Satisfied employee that isn't afraid to share their thoughts and ideas will become more involved in his work and will not perceive his job as something that just needs to be done but rather, he will find his contribution of importance.

All of the participants stated that their biggest professional success is their current position as well as rewards and certificates that they obtain along the way.

According to Darioly (2019), support plays an important role within workplace. All of the participants agreed that they are all supported by their coworkers and superiors. When asked about support between women one of the participants stated:

My support are my coworkers; I share ideas with them and together with but those ideas into motion. We have enormous respect for each other. Every woman should have a right to choose what to do in life and whether to be solidary towards other women. I personally always support other women. I believe that women that don't support each other are insecure and don't have enough self-awareness and are afraid of competition. A confident woman can share her experience with others and help women gain confidence.

According to website McKinsey&Company (Women in the Workplace, 2020), service industry is underrepresented by female workers. Participants were asked how did they succeed in such environment. All of them agreed that a lot of hard work and knowledge helped them to be where they are now. Coming to a very important topic gender equality all of the participants agreed that it is going very slowly and that there is still a lot of room for progress. As one participant said:

Most leading positions are occupied by men. It is imposed in most companies that a certain percentage of employees need to be women. Some companies still believe that women are predetermined for having children, cooking and cleaning. I believe that I might be feminist. That is a strong word but I believe that women are strong and that they are more capable than any men. Women need to speak up. Reason why women keep quiet is because of

society. Great changes are happening but at a slow pace. Average women handle two jobs, one that is paid and having a household and taking care of family which is not paid.

Since gender equality is something that is still in progress of making in the 21st century the participants were asked whether they ever encountered any form of discrimination in the workplace. Five out of seven participants said that they never felt any kind of discrimination. Two participants had minor issues. Firstly, being a woman in hotel industry people associated the participant as being a worker in the housekeeping department or at the front desk. This kind of assumption let the participant believe that this was related to her gender. Another participant was asked directly to choose between having a child or working for the company. As one of the participants said:

In my seventeen years of work experience, even in my college days I never experienced any serious discrimination. Unfortunately, in my more mature working years when I had already established and build my reputation, my employer openly asked to choose between being a mother or a business woman. That was the last conversation that I had with that person.

Finally, the last part of the interviews conducted was advice for future generations and whether they would go through the same path again if possible. All of the seven participants stated that they are extremely happy with their positions and how they got there. None of them would change anything so far. When it comes to advice all of the participants agreed that hard work pays off. One of participants said:



I would advise every woman to never wait for something to come into place but rather to make things happen on her own. Hard work and believing in yourself can lead you where you want to be. Nurture your individuality and never try to fit in. (See Appendix for Tables)

### **Discussion**

This research paper aimed to discover whether there are more male or female leaders. Women are underrepresented on high managerial positions yet the support in the workplace has greatly changed. Women are more encouraged to pursue high positions and their leadership abilities are admirable. Gender discrimination was also research subject for this paper but it has not been confirmed. This research was limited to one specific geographical area; therefore, the findings may differ in another geographical area. The Covid-19 pandemic that is currently happening has limited my search results and subjects.

The most unexpected findings from this research are how supported those women are, especially by their superiors and coworkers. Workplace is usually considered to be a highly competitive surrounding, so to find out that the greatest support comes from the coworkers is fascinating. Another surprising thing that was found in this research is gender discrimination, rather absence of discrimination, more specifically towards females. According to Mihail (2006), he argues that women who always worked hard and were striving for higher positions were surrounded with obstacles (as cited in Marinakou, 2014, p.19). This stereotyping has not been proven in this research paper, but quite contrary. Women are invited to strive for high positions and are judged mainly though their hard work and capabilities. The set of skills and abilities that woman possess are well needed, especially in hotel industry. Those skills include social skills, perseverance, endurance, polite and charming behavior and the ability to recognize and see the mistake but also to apologize

for it (Darioly, 2019). Women as transformational leaders are ‘cooperative’, ‘emotional’ and ‘supportive’ (Moran, 1992, p.485).

In order to maintain gender equality and prevent any kind of discrimination, organizations should create a working environment where women can feel free to share their concerns, both personal and professional. Most common misconception that can be concluded from this research paper is that woman needs to choose between motherhood and professional career. Employers need to be more sensitive and understanding when it comes to women that are facing such decision. One should not annulate the other.

Having a working environment where there is a freedom of speech for both genders creates positive energy and surrounding. One’s personal success and advancement should be judged upon the work that is done rather than by whom it is done or by anyone’s assumption of what one is capable of. Companies should implement programs that help employees handle parenthood. Those programs should provide daycare or finance external daycares. Another possible solution that can be implemented are support groups where employees will be able to share their concerns and experiences.

Further research needs to be done on efficiency of specific gender in leadership positions. Another subject that needs to be better analyzed is organizational perspective and interest when it comes to gender equality and leadership styles. This type of information is crucial for further advancement and equalization of the genders as well as best interests of each party.

This research paper shows improvement within gender equality in the workplace. It explores support, qualities and any possible discrimination that woman might face. The qualitative nature

of this research paper limits general conclusions which may not be applicable to other cultures or regions.

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## Appendix

**Table 1.**

Leader qualities mentioned by interview participants

	Number of participants
Empathy	4/7
Communication	4/7
Team work	5/7
Comprehension	3/7

**Table 2.**

Provided support mentioned by interview participants

	Number of participants
Support	7/7

**Table 3.**

Gender equality mentioned by interview participants

	Number of participants
Very slow	6/7

**Table 4.**

Discrimination mentioned by interview participants

	Number of participants
Discrimination	2/7

**Table 5.**

Overall experience mentioned by interview participants

	Number of participants
Repetition	7/7



## Žene na vrhu

Moje ime je Filipa Korać, studentica sam na Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT Croatia) u Dubrovniku. Trenutno pišem diplomski rad na temu 'Žene kao vođe u hotelskoj industriji' uz vodstvo mentorice Milene Kužnin. Razlog zašto sam izbrala ovu temu je zbog moje opservacije manjka žena u hotelskoj industriji prilikom rada na praksi u različitim dubrovačkim luksuznim hotelima. Ta opservacija je potakla moju želju za istraživanjem te sam odlučila analizirati kako žene dolaze na visoke pozicije, koje su njihove prednosti i nedostaci naspram muškaraca, te na koje prepreke nailaze. Ovaj intervju se isključivo koristi u svrhe istraživanja za diplomski rad, stoga svi Vaši osobni podatci će biti zaštićeni odnosno anonimni.

1. Razne teorije liderstva uzimaju različite kvalitete i čimbenike uspješnih lidera u svoj fokus. Koje biste svoje liderske kvalitete istaknuli i kako doprinose uspješnosti Vaše organizacije?
2. Što smatrate Vašim najvažnijim profesionalnim uspjehom do sada?
3. Mnoge studije ukazuju na važnost postojanja podrške na radnom mjestu, bez obzira na spol. Od koga Vi dobivate podršku na radnom mjestu? Kakav je Vaš stav prema ženama koje podupiru ili ne podupiru druge žene?
4. Uslužna industrija, po mome istraživanju, nema dovoljno zastupljeno žensko rukovodstvo. Kako ste Vi kao žena uspjeli u takvom okruženju?
5. U 21.st još uvijek pričamo o jednakosti spolova, zašto je to tako? U svome istraživanju primijetila sam da mnoge žene na liderskim pozicijama nemaju pozitivno iskustvo tj. nisu pozitivno percipirane kao voditeljice/lideri, kakvo je bilo Vaše iskustvo?

6. Kao žene lideri, privatno ili poslovno, do koje mjere ste (ako uopće) doživjeli diskriminaciju radi pozicije koju obnašate?
7. Općenito gledano, biste li ponovno prošli ovaj trnovit put do cilja/ostvarivanja kao žena lider? I što biste savjetovali za mlade buduće lidere-ice?

Za kraj htjela bih Vam se zahvaliti na Vašem vremenu te Vas zamoliti samo kratko za Vaše podatke kao što su: vaše godine, radno mjesto, koliko dugo se bavite svojim poslom, i završeno obrazovanje. Podijeliti ću s Vama svoj email, pa ako ste voljni da mi pošaljete svoj životopis ili biografiju. Također, ako ste zainteresirani voljna sam podijeliti svoj rad s Vama nakon obrane.