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ARTURAS TERESKINAS

Toward a New Politics of  
Citizenship: Representation of  
Ethnic and Sexual Minorities in  
Lithuanian Mass Media

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# Toward a New Politics of Citizenship: Representations of Ethnic and Sexual Minorities in Lithuanian Mass Media

*Arturas Tereskinas*

*This chapter focuses on how ethnic and sexual minorities are portrayed by Lithuanian press and television. It analyzes the representations of four ethnic groups in 2000 and 2001: Roma, Jews, Russians and Poles. The paper also explores how the topics of ethnicity and homosexuality have been presented in the mass media as well as the regimes of representation that the Lithuanian media uses in the coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities. The chapter concludes with policy oriented recommendations aimed at promoting more objective popular media representations of minority groups.*

## 1. Introduction

The media plays a large part in the formation of positive and negative images and self-images of minorities. According to B. S. Greenberg, “[R]esearchers have found that communication about minorities is value laden and that audiences internalize these values in a number of ways” (Greenberg 1986, pp.165-188). Therefore, it is important to ask what minority and majority audiences learn about themselves and each other from the media. How are ethnic and sexual minorities portrayed in the mass media? What effects do those portrayals have on minority and majority groups?

Issues of media access and representation for sexual and ethnic minorities in Lithuania remain paramount as invisibility and marginalization work against numerous groups including gays, lesbians, ethnic minorities and women. This paper addresses ethnic and sexual representations in the Lithuanian mass media, with attention also given to references of gender, class and age.

Thus far, the production, circulation and consumption of media representations of ethnic and sexual minorities have been inadequately analyzed in Lithuania. Lithuanian sociologists Vida Beresnevičiūtė and I. Nausėdienė have begun a critical deconstruction of the representations of ethnic groups in the discourse of the Lithuanian mass media (1999, pp. 67-78). These sociologists demonstrated that the way newspapers portray national minorities reinforces

racial and ethnic stereotypes: it often describes them as criminals or socially insecure groups on the fringes of society. (1999, pp.42-45). While growing public and scholarly interest in ethnicity, citizenship and identity in Lithuania prompted a number of studies on the adaptation, assimilation and political participation of ethnic groups (Kasatkina & Leončikas 2000; Krupavičius 2000, pp.21-49; Garšva & Grumadienė 1993), the issue of the mass media and ethnic minorities still remains on the fringes of social and cultural studies.

Research on mass media representations of sexual minorities is non-existent in Lithuania. The reasons for this are twofold. First of all, the subject of sexual minorities and of sexuality in general is often considered trivial and unimportant; and secondly, mass media studies in Lithuania are at their most rudimentary stage. The chapter concludes with policy-oriented recommendations aimed at promoting more objective popular media representations of minority groups.

## 2. Background

### *2.1. Legal framework: Laws on ethnic minorities and the mass media*

On a daily basis, the citizens of Lithuania encounter a multiethnic and multicultural reality: parallel cultural traditions; various ethnic groups, religions, churches, and denominations. Ethnic minorities now account for about 20 percent of the population (around 746,000 people). People of roughly 109 different nationalities and ethnicities live in Lithuania, including Russians, Poles, Belarusians, Ukrainians, Jews, Tatars, Latvians, Roma (Gypsies), Germans, Armenians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Estonians, Karaites, Greeks and Hungarians. Data from the Statistical Yearbook of Lithuania (Vilnius 1989) shows that Russians comprise 8.2 percent of the population, Poles 6.9 percent, Belarusians 1.5 percent, Ukrainians 1.0 percent and Jews 0.1 percent (Beresnevičiūtė 1999, pp.42-45). The greatest number of non-Lithuanians live in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the country and in the cities of Vilnius, Klaipėda and Visaginas.

According to sociologists Natalija Kasatkina and Tadas Leončikas, Russians are not only the largest, but the most socially heterogeneous minority in Lithuania. Poles are the second largest minority, but less socially heterogeneous. Jews are described as a non-territorial minority – a diaspora. The Roma minority is also identified as a non-territorial one that keeps a prominent cultural distance and is characterized by limited social mobility (Kasatkina & Leončikas 2000, pp.10-20).

To design and implement national policies to support the cultures of ethnic minorities, the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania was established in 1990. The Department includes the House of National Communities and the Council of National Communities. By 2000, 19 different nationalities residing in Lithuania established their own non-governmental organizations. The most active national and ethnic minority organizations include the Russian Cultural Center, the Lithuanian Russian Community, the Union of Lithuanian Poles, the Jewish Community of Lithuania, and the Association of Lithuanian Roma. The Roma Information Bureau was opened in 1998 focusing on Roma social, cultural and educational issues (Jonikova 2000b).

It has been argued that media production is shaped by prevailing state policies and socio-political responses to ethnic minorities (Jakubowicz et al. 1994). But what laws and state initiatives shape the lives of ethnic minorities in Lithuania?

The Lithuanian Constitution (articles 37 and 45) guarantees political, social and economic rights to its citizens regardless of their ethnic background. Similarly, the Law on National Minorities ratified by the Lithuanian Parliament on November 23, 1989, guarantees “equal political, economic and social rights and freedoms to all its citizens regardless of ethnicity,” and recognizes and respects “their ethnic identity, the continuity of their culture and ... promote[s] ethnic consciousness and its self-expression.” Lithuania acknowledges the rights of national and ethnic minorities to education, native language usage, religion and culture. Minorities have the right to preserve, develop and express their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identities.

Lithuania is a member of the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the United Nations and other international organizations. In 1995, the Lithuanian Parliament ratified the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and its protocols, No. 4, 7, and 11. The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities was ratified in February 2000 and enacted in July of that year.

Important media laws were also enacted. The Convention of the European Council on Television Without Borders was ratified in 1997. A 1995 parliamentary resolution stated that journalists had to follow the main ethical principles in accordance with Resolution No. 1003 of the European Council Parliamentary Assembly. The provisions of this resolution have formed the basis for the Lithuanian Code of Ethics for Journalists and Publishers.

The Lithuanian Media Law (The Law on the Provision of Information to the Public) was ratified in 1996 and since then has undergone several revi-

sions. It provides for the freedom and independence of the print press and broadcast media. The law also outlines the commitment of the media to public service, defined in terms of non-discrimination between the different sections of the population, covering public issues and providing opportunity for the presentation of contrasting points of view. As the law states, the media “shall respect the freedom of speech, creativity, conscience and diversity of opinion” and “help develop the democracy and openness of society” (www.lrs.lt).

Government laws and regulations affect all aspects of media production. Best known are the legal regulations concerning media content. The Lithuanian media law prohibits the dissemination of pornographic materials, and the dissemination of publications with erotic or violent content is restricted by the decree of the Government. If the need arises, the Ethics Commission of Journalists and Publishers determines whether the medium in question is pornographic, erotic or propagates violence. The media law also prohibits the distribution of information that “incite[s] war, national, racial and religious enmity” (www.lrs.lt). The most important agencies of media self-regulation in Lithuania are the Ethics Commission, the Radio and Television Commission, the Council of Lithuanian National Radio and Television, and the Foundation for the Support of Press, Radio and Television. The members of these organizations are appointed by the media industry and various public, non-political organizations.

Of course the existence of these legal provisions does not guarantee compliance. There is a stark contrast between the democratic media envisioned in the normative laws and the everyday reality of the Lithuania mass media. Despite the fact that media organizations are not subject to political censorship, they are highly competitive and politicized. As Colin Sparks has insightfully noted, the mass media in post-Communist Eastern Europe remains politically motivated (1998, p. 156). It is fair to argue that in Lithuania, as in many other European (and especially Central and Eastern European) countries, although the doctrine of social responsibility assumes independent power for the mass media, newspapers and broadcasters serve the interests of the powerful far more than those of the powerless (Altschull 1995, p. 188). Mass media is a convenient battleground for powerful political and commercial interests, which often form alliances to control media outlets and intervene in the formation of public knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

1. The constant strife between the biggest Lithuanian dailies, *Lietuvos rytas* (The Morning of Lithuania) and *Respublika* (The Republic), is case in point.

## 2.2. Sexual minorities in Lithuania

Before 1989, the words “gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender” were rarely heard in Lithuania. For a long time, homosexuality was an utterly taboo subject. Homosexuality remained behind closed doors.

This situation changed after Lithuania declared its independence from the Soviet Union in 1990. With the advent of a new press and television, the issue of homosexuality, and sexuality in general, began to be discussed publicly. Due to the increased visibility of Lithuanian gay activists, from 1995 onwards coverage of sexual minorities in the mass media increased significantly. It was not until 1998, however, that sexual minorities began to be covered more intensively by the Lithuanian press (Jonikova 2000a); and sexual minorities still remain virtually invisible on television. If visible, they are usually shown in comic, stereotyped settings in sitcoms and comedy shows.

The first gay organization, the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL), was publicly registered in 1995. It remains the most important and active advocacy group for sexual minorities in Lithuania. The group publishes a newsletter entitled *LGL Žinios* (LGL News) and runs a website and telephone hotline. Currently, apart from the Lithuanian Gay League, there exist two other gay and lesbian organizations, SAPPHO (the Lithuanian Lesbian League), and KASLO (the Movement for the Sexual Equality of Kaunas County).

Independent Lithuania inherited Soviet prejudices about homosexuality. Despite the existence of constitutional guarantees for equality and privacy, the infamous penal code banning consensual sex between adult men was repealed only in 1993. Lithuania was the last of the three Baltic countries to abolish penalties for homosexual acts. It is only with the new penal code, to be approved this year by the Lithuanian Parliament, that sexual orientation may be included as a criteria for protection from discrimination (Articles 160 and 161, see Platovas 2000, p. 17).

A 1999 opinion poll revealed that 78.2 percent of Lithuanians did not tolerate homosexuality. Some 67.8 percent of respondents would tolerate living next to homosexual neighbors, but 87.5 percent would rather live near drug addicts,<sup>2</sup> reflecting one of the lowest levels of acceptance of homosexuals in Europe. The Lithuanian daily *Vakaro Žinios* (The Evening News) concluded that “Most Lithuanians Hate Gays.”<sup>3</sup>

2. “Baltijos tyrimai,” January 8, 2001. *LGL Žinios*, 2001, no. 1 (9): 7.

3. “Dauguma lietuvių neken čia gėjų” [Most Lithuanians Hate Gays] *Vakaro Žinios*, May 26, 2001.

### 3. Media, the public sphere, and citizenship

Among numerous newspapers and magazines (around 300 titles), two Lithuanian dailies – *Lietuvos rytas* (The Morning of Lithuania) and *Respublika* (The Republic) – dominate the national scene. Two tabloid dailies, *Lietuvos Žinios* (Lithuanian News) and *Vakaro Žinios* (The Evening News), also boast a wide readership (due in part to their low price). All of these newspapers are privately owned and operated.

The private commercial television channels *TV3*, *LNK* and *BTV* operate three of four national television networks in Lithuania. The country has one public broadcaster, the *Lithuanian Radio and Television Company* (LRT), financed from the state budget, license fees, and advertising. The management of *LRT* is accountable to the parliament via a board selected by public organizations and state institutions.

Lithuania is becoming an increasingly media-dependent society, and consumers of the mass media now comprise a large part of the Lithuanian population. The latest polls conducted in 2001 show that Lithuanian citizens rely on the mass media as their most significant source of information. Indeed, 61.5 percent of the Lithuanian public trusts the Lithuanian mass media, ‘the fourth estate of the realm’, more than any other institution except the Church (68.3 percent).<sup>4</sup> In this context, the mass media is particularly significant as the provider of a common stock of information and culture.

The mass media immensely influences the definition, structure and delimitation of public discourse and in forming and influencing public knowledge. The mass media helps to shape attitudes about ethnic and sexual minorities by articulating, developing and disseminating ideas of ethnicity and sexuality. As Charles Husband suggested, the power of the media “to promote and sustain ideologies of domination and subordination through their representation of ethnic [and sexual] identities, and through the construction of the definition of the situation within which ethnic [and sexual] diversity in society should be understood” is immense (1994, p. 1). It is via media representations “that members of the media audience are variously invited to construct a sense of who ‘we’ are in relation who ‘we’ are not” (Cottle 2000, p. 2).

“Most media output is,” according to Raymond Williams, a way of “talking together about the processes of our common life” (quoted in Curran 1991, p. 33).

4. From the *Vilmorus* poll conducted on November 8-12, 2001. *Lietuvos rytas*, November 17, 2001. A similar *Vilmorus* poll conducted in March, 2001, demonstrated that the mass media was the most trusted institution in Lithuania. See “‘Vilmorus’ visuomenės nuomonės tyrimas: kam palankūs šalies Žmonės?” (The *Vilmorus* Public Opinion Poll: Who and What is Favored by People of the Country?), *Lietuvos rytas*, March 17, 2001.

It can provide a means of better understanding others in a way that fosters empathetic insights between different sectors of society and strengthens bonds of social association. Conversely, the media can also do the opposite: it can foster misunderstanding and antagonism through the repetition of stereotypical representations.

The question of representation is a critical arena of competition and struggle over the power to impose a certain vision of a social world, establish meaning, and promote consensus about that meaning (Bourdieu 1991, p. 221). As Pierre Bourdieu insightfully argued: “Knowledge of the social world and, more precisely, the categories which make it possible, are the stakes par excellence of the political struggle, a struggle which is inseparably theoretical and practical, over the power of preserving or transforming the social world by preserving or transforming the categories of perception of that world” (1991, p. 236).

The social world is a representation, and to exist socially means also to be perceived and recognized as distinct (Bourdieu 1991, p. 224). Hence, non-recognition or misrepresentation of a certain group can be “a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being” (Taylor 1992, p. 25). In other words, misrepresentation or non-recognition of ethnic and sexual minorities in the mass media is a discursive form of racism, homophobia and victimization. Non-representation in the mediated ‘reality’ of our mass culture maintains the powerless status of groups that do not possess significant material or political power bases. In discursive discrimination against minority groups, media texts serve as manifestations and constituents of majority group power. As Geneva Smitherman-Donaldson and Teun A. van Dijk (1988, p. 7.) point out, it is primarily through discourse that dominant groups and institutions discriminate against minority groups. Many forms of contemporary racism, sexism and homophobia are discursive: “they are expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk” far removed from open violence. They may be just as effective as violence, however, in marginalizing and excluding minorities (van Dijk 1997, p. 34).

The issue of representation is closely related to the concept of the public sphere through which much of the study of mass media and democracy has been framed. The concept of the public sphere which owes much to Jürgen Habermas (1996) refers to the practice of open discussion about matters of common public concern in civil society. Regarding the public sphere as a political space that could help challenge and regulate public authorities, he emphasizes face-to-face communication, rational discourse, and a single public arena. Contemporary theorists, however, argue that civil society consists of multiple, interconnected and often competing public spheres focused on cultural issues as often as political ones. Maintained by communications media, these public spheres support



many different (but overlapping) communities of discourse (Calhoun 1992; Landes 1998). Society consisting of multiple public spheres, communities, and associations provides a vital venue for deliberation about contested values and norms. According to Seyla Benhabib (1992, p. 5), the public sphere comes into existence whenever people engage in practical dialogue. In this sense, “there may be as many publics as there are controversial general debates ... a plurality of public spaces ... around contested issues of general concern”. This conception of civil society privileges the openness to dialogue and inclusiveness of the public sphere and its responsiveness to inequality and difference.

Multiple public spheres allow marginalized groups to express their claims in the form of identity politics. As Nancy Fraser (1993, p. 16) suggested, “public spheres are not only arenas for the formation of discursive opinion, they are also arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities”. Identities and the public production of identities play a central role in the political process which in turn may be reconceived to include “the everyday enactment of social practices and the reiteration of cultural representations” (McClure 1992, p. 123).

Peter Dahlgren (1995) has pointed out that the dimension of representation in the public sphere “points to such basic questions as what should be selected for portrayal and how it should be presented”. In other words, what should or should not be portrayed or represented about ethnic and sexual minorities in the mass media?

The question of visibility has always been crucial for all minority groups, since visibility and inclusion ensures that their views and concerns are translated into issues of public interest. By gaining publicity in the mass media, minority groups can gain access to the venues of public policy formation and agenda-setting.

What is at stake is the struggle over the discursive arenas of the public sphere, “where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser 1993, p. 15). Thus, the mass media’s central problem of discursive representations of minorities is both an ongoing problem as well as an opportunity to strengthen democracy. The problem directly addresses the power of the public sphere in shaping citizenship in contemporary society.

Citizenship is not merely a set of legal stipulations and a manifestation of social and political circumstances. It is also “a feature of culture, operative as a dimension of individual and collective identity” (Dahlgren 1995, p. 135). Citizenship is a form of identity associated with public participation, inclusion and belonging.

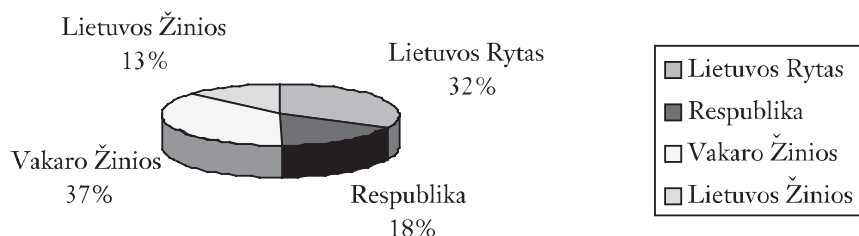
Many analysts and theorists studying the media, the public sphere and democracy, including Charles Husband, argue for a politics of citizenship that

“recognizes and empowers difference” through a variety of particular and differentiated public spheres in the plural (quoted in Morley 2000, p. 124). Such public spheres, as Iris Marion Young noted, should exclude “no persons, aspects of persons’ lives, or topics of discussion. They should also encourage aesthetic as well as discursive expression. In such a public, consensus and sharing may not always be the goal, but the recognition and appreciation of differences, in the context of confrontation with power” (1987, p. 76).

Critical evaluation of media representations, therefore, allows us to re-conceptualize the role of the media in producing counter-hegemonic discourses for ethnic and sexual minority groups and in fostering a new politics of citizenship.

#### 4. Sexual and ethnic minorities in the Lithuanian mass media

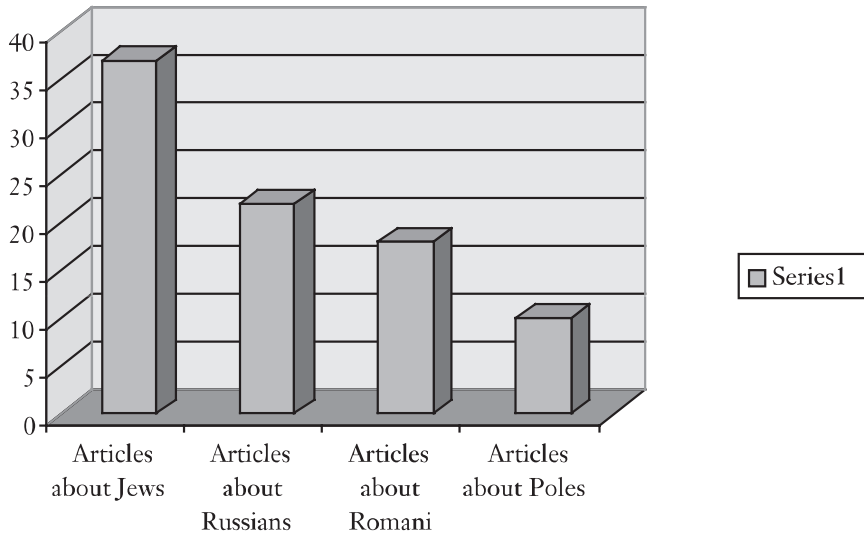
This work analyzes a large body of texts and a continuous week of television coverage. In total 119 news stories and reports about homosexuality and homosexuals in four mainstream Lithuanian dailies – *Lietuvos rytas* (the biggest mainstream daily), *Respublika* (the second biggest newspaper), *Lietuvos Žinios* (tabloid) and *Vakaro Žinios* (the most popular tabloid) – were reviewed from January, 2000–June, 2001. *Vakaro Žinios*, carried 44 stories and articles, *Lietuvos rytas* was not far behind with 38 articles, *Respublika* published 21 news report and articles, and *Lietuvos Žinios* 16.



During the sampled week of television programs (November 26–December 2, 2000), gays were featured only in an evening magazine devoted to crimes “Procesas. X sektorius” (The Process. X Sector), a talk show *Prašau žodžio* (Let’s Talk) and comedy shows “Tegyvuoja karalius!” (Long Live the King) and the “Šapro šou” (Šapro show).

The representations of four ethnic groups – Roma, Jews, Russians and Poles – by the largest Lithuanian daily *Lietuvos rytas* were examined from

November 27, 2000, to May 9, 2001.<sup>5</sup> *Lietuvos rytas* carried a total of 88 news stories and articles that mentioned Lithuanian Russians, Poles, Jews and Roma. Most stories touched upon the subject of Jews and the Holocaust in Lithuania (37); Lithuanian Russians attracted 22 reports; Poles, 10; and Roma, 18.<sup>6</sup>



During the sampled week, there was no mention of Lithuanian Russians, Poles, Jews or Roma on prime time television news reports. One story related to a Jewish criminal was broadcast in the newsmagazine “Srovės” (Trends), and the comedy show “ZbTV” featured a main character of Polish origin.

Analyzing discourses about ethnic and sexual minorities does not mean examining their literal content. It means, above all, analyzing the ways discourses are used. How is discourse involved in the reproduction of representations of minorit? What beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, norms and values underlie the media rhetoric? What major topics are associated with each particular ethnic group and sexual minority? What is omitted and what is published in the stories about ethnic and sexual groups and their relationships?

The works of Stuart Hall (1997), Teun A. van Dijk (1991; 1997) and Simon Cottle (2000), which emphasize the discursive nature of media representations,

5. *Lietuvos rytas* has a circulation of 150,000 copies daily.

6. It should be emphasized that in this study I will not discuss articles and news reports on international relations between Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Israel. The focus is ethnic minorities living in Lithuania and their coverage in the biggest Lithuanian daily.

are particularly instructive in this regard. Media rhetoric and discourse are analyzed to facilitate hypotheses about how the representations of minorities are constructed and disseminated in the press and on television and what can be learned from them.

#### 4.1. *Representing sexual minorities*

Mass media plays a critical role in the construction of representations of sexual minorities. Hence, in the words of Wolf and Kielwasser (1991, pp. 15-16), the “contribution of the mass media to daily discourse about homosexuality can either exacerbate or attenuate phobic and heterosexist definitions of human sexuality, reinforcing the necessity for more programmatic research in the area”.

Although homosexuality is no longer invisible in the Lithuanian press, it remains a topic about which journalists are reluctant to report. Since the homosexual community is considered of low status in Lithuania, most press coverage of issues involving sexual minorities usually consists of short, sporadic articles covering a particular event or occurrence. Much of the reporting is recycled and repetitive. The Lithuanian press is particularly fond of Western gay celebrity profiles (like Elton John and Ellen Degeneres), who appear periodically on the pages of the dailies.<sup>7</sup> Rarely does the Lithuanian press cover stories of ordinary homosexuals. The lives of homosexuals are commonly presented as entertainment news and not as an ordinary topic requiring journalistic attention and diligence.

It is important to emphasize that Lithuanian mainstream tabloids such as *Vakaro Žinios* cover sexual minorities more intensely than the “serious” press. Focusing on sex, sensation and scandal and using bold, lurid headlines such as “Russian Show Business has been Occupied by Lesbians,”<sup>8</sup> “The President’s Daughter Visited the Gay Forum,”<sup>9</sup> “Famous Athletes - Hermaphrodites,”<sup>10</sup> *Vakaro Žinios* frames stories about sexual minorities in terms of controversy, violence and deviance.<sup>11</sup>

7. “Norėtų pažvelgti moteriškomis akimis” [He would like to get into the woman’s shoes: about Elton John], *Respublika*, May 5, 2001; “Kitokie: garsūs gėjai ir biseksualai” [Different: Famous Gays and Bisexuals], *Respublika*, May 5, 2001; “Vyraujanti mažuma” [The Dominant Minority], *Respublika*, May 5, 2001. “Buvusi lesbietė aktorė susižadėjo su vyru” [A Former Lesbian Got Engaged: About Anne Heche], *Lietuvos rytas*, June 1, 2001.

8. Saulius Petraška, “Rusijos šou verslą užgrobė lesbietės,” *Vakaro Žinios*, January 11, 2001.

9. Monika Strazdaitė, “Gėjų forumą aplankė prezidento dukra,” *Vakaro Žinios*, May 28, 2001.

10. “Žymios sportininkės - hermafroditai,” *Vakaro Žinios*, June 16, 2001.

11. Demarcations between the serious press and the tabloids in Lithuania are not clear cut. Both choose similar topics, use anonymous sources and rely on ‘entertaining’ devices. For more on the difference between the serious press and the tabloids, see Dahlgren (1992, pp. 1-24).

“Retarded Person Becomes a Victim of Homosexual Retiree;” “Minors and Gays?”<sup>12</sup>, “[A Former Parliament Member] Alesionka is Sinking in a Sex Scandal” and “The Depraver of Kaunas Boys has been Released from Jail”<sup>13</sup> claim the headlines.<sup>14</sup> These headlines point to the fact that the issue of sexual minorities is still considered a moral and not a civic issue in Lithuania. Since homosexuality is held to be an unnatural practice unacceptable to most people, some articles suggest that gays and lesbians seek to recruit children. Unfortunate incidents of pedophilia create an amorphous panic expressed in the press (“Predatory old men perverting boys”); frequently, being gay equals being a pedophile in the eyes of many.<sup>15</sup> This contributes to the mobilization of anti-gay sentiments. Consequently, homosexuals are often not trusted with children. The repeated labeling of male homosexuals as pedophiles and pederasts serves to underline a pathological character of homosexuality and incite fears and anxieties in the reader.<sup>16</sup>

The emphasis on child molestation can be partly explained by legislation on the age of consent in Lithuania. The country has not as yet equalized the age of consent for homosexuality and heterosexuality. For heterosexuals it is 16, for homosexuals 18.

By focusing on sex and sexuality and amplifying sexual decadence and perversion, the Lithuanian press defines what being gay involves. Inevitably, the issue of sexual minorities has transformed the debates about sexual morality and crimes. Even one of the most heinous murders of a rich Lithuanian priest and art collector Ričardas Mikutavičius in 2000 was linked to a “gay ring.”<sup>17</sup> Writing about a Vilnius gay dance club, the author quotes an anonymous heterosexual woman who states: “Generally [this club] is a nest of whores.” According to her,

12. *Lietuvos Žinios*, May 23, 2001. The story about the 14- and 15-year-olds who sexually assaulted an 11-year-old boy.

13. Jadvyga Karaliūnienė, “Kauno berniukų tvirkintojas - jau laisvėje,” *Lietuvos rytas*, December 7, 2000.

14. Artūras Navickas, “Homoseksualaus pensininko auka - silpnaprotis,” *Lietuvos rytas*, February 3, 1999; Lina Valantiniienė, “L. Alesionka klimpsta į sekso skandalą,” *Vakaro Žinios*, May 30, 2001.

15. The most publicized pedophile scandal shook Latvia in 2000. The Lithuanian press covered it extensively. See Valdis Girgensonas, “Latvijos prokuratūra nepanoro įrodinėti savo kaltinimų” [The Public Prosecutor’s Office of Latvia was Reluctant to Carry on with its Accusations] *Lietuvos rytas*, December 4, 2000. Also see the case of a Lithuanian pedophile, Jadvyga Karaliūnienė, “Kauno berniukų tvirkintojas - jau laisvėje” [The Depraver of Kaunas Boys has been Released from Jail] *Lietuvos rytas*, December 7, 2000.

16. The article on the Socialdemocrat doctor Alesionka focuses on accusations of his improper behavior with his patient boys. Lina Valantiniienė, “L. Alesionka klimpsta į sekso skandalą,” *Vakaro Žinios*, May 30, 2001. See also *Lietuvos Žinios*, “A Sex Scandal Erupted in Anykščiai” May 29, 2001.

17. Arvydas Dargis, “Kunigo lemtis - mirčių ir mistikos grandinėje” [The Fate of the Priest in a Chain of Deaths and Mysticism], *Lietuvos rytas*, December 23, 2000.

it is extremely popular among homosexuals who change partners frequently.<sup>18</sup> The daily *Respublika* reported that on May 23, 2000, the union of Lithuanian national youth "Young Lithuania" demonstrated in front of the parliament "against sexual depravity and homosexuals." Hence, homosexuals and depravity are inseparable.<sup>19</sup>

Gays alter mainstream conceptions of sexuality, gender and sex and can raise discomfort, ambiguity, anxiety, and tension among a population. Many presume that they threaten the 'natural' order of things. An important part of this assumption lies in the belief that homosexuality is unnatural, that gays try to seduce heterosexuals, and that one can change one's sexual orientation.

The issue of family as central to the reproduction of society and social order features in debates about homosexuality and the regulation of gay, lesbian, and transgender practices and representations. Many Lithuanian moralists and conservatives in an attempt to reinforce 'family values' seek to prevent media representations that explore non-traditional sexualities.<sup>20</sup>

Homosexuality is often discussed in the context of the Catholic Church. Newspaper articles present the Church as a defender of morality and family values, contrasting it with "deviant" and "unacceptable" homosexuals. Christian morals are juxtaposed with the bacchanalia and festivity of gays in the same sentence, as in *Lietuvos rytas*:

"For one week, the global center of Catholicism will become the capital of sexual minorities. A stream of pilgrims traveling to Rome to pray will encounter the mass parades of gays, transsexuals and lesbians. The posters of pilgrims with the greetings to the Pope will intermingle with the rubber penises, and men kissing passionately will loom amongst black dresses of the clergy..."<sup>21</sup>

To emphasize the contrast, the author describes the official position of the Church on the issue of sexual minorities: "The Pope called the parade of gays, lesbians and transvestites an insult to the Christian values...;" "homosexuality is a bleeding moral wound;" "the biggest sin after murder is homosexuality...;"

18. Algis Masys, "Lietuvos gėjų klubus pamėgo heteroseksualai" [Homosexuals Have Come to Like Lithuanian Gay Clubs], *Vakaro Žinios*, March 16, 2001.

19. *Respublika*, May 23, 2000.

20. The pornography debates which continued for almost a decade show that sexuality and its representations still haunt politicians and activists on the right. See Milda Augustinaitytė, "Pornografija prieš demokratiją" [Pornography against Democracy], *Veidas*, nr. 31, August 5, 1999, p. 14.

21. "Šventąjį miestą drebina dviejų pasaulėžiūrų karas" [The Holy City is Torn by the War Between World-Views], *Lietuvos rytas*, July 17, 2000.

“homosexual acts contradict moral norms.”<sup>22</sup> This very rhetoric, using contrast and hyperbole, attempts to portray the lifestyles of gays and lesbians as immoral aberrations.

“Not Everyone Agrees with the Legalization of Gay Marriage,” claimed *Lietuvos rytas* in the report on the Movement of Young National Democrats. Representatives of the movement were concerned about young Lithuanian liberals’ support for the legalization of gay marriage. The newspaper wrote that the Movement of Young National Democrats regarded gay marriage as the “destruction of the traditional and healthy family and as a complete obliteration of traditions... a direct annihilation of the foundations of the nation.”<sup>23</sup>

A similar incident was described by the Lithuanian press in June, 2000. Two organizations, the aforementioned Movement of Young National Democrats and the Organization of Lithuanian National Youth called “The Young Generation,” appealed to the Lithuanian government demanding a new national policy aimed at increasing the birth rate in the country by prohibiting abortions, ‘corrupt’ publications, gay organizations and their publications, and all striptease bars and clubs. The Lithuanian Gay League protested this appeal and promised to go to court if any of the demands of the ultranationalists were accepted.<sup>24</sup>

Sexuality has been the key target of social regulation in modern society. In everyday political circles, struggles over sexuality and its regulation are generally linked to views of social institutions and the most basic norms based on heteronormativity. As Diana Fuss has argued, homosexuality has been continually represented as deviant and linked to criminality because of its symbolic opposition to the dominant representations of heterosexuality as normative and lawful (1995, p. 2).

The Lithuanian press often invokes the concepts of the normal and the normative to provide an opposition to what is allegedly abnormal and deviant. It is obvious to readers that homosexuality represents the latter side of this opposition. News about sexual minorities often revolves around exotic and exaggerated sides of gay life such as gay pride parades, Mardi Gras and other gay festivities.<sup>25</sup> By showing extreme images of gay and lesbian life – cross-dressers and naked shaved-head gays; men wearing dog-collars and leads – the Lithuanian

22. Ibid.

23. “Gėjų santuokų įteisinimui pritaria ne visi” [Not Everyone Agrees with the Legalization of Gay Marriage], *Lietuvos rytas*, November 7, 2000.

24. “Lietuvos gėjai nuo jaunųjų radikalų ginsis teismuose” [Lithuanian Gays will Defend Themselves from the Young Radicals in Courts], *Lietuvos rytas*, June 7, 2000.

25. “Gražuoliai transvestitai” [Beautiful Transvestites], *Vakaro Žinios*, April 2, 2001; “Mardi Gras in Sidney,” *Lietuvos rytas*, March 10, 2001; “Vilniuje vyks tarptautinis gėjų forumas” [An International Gay Forum will take place in Vilnius], *Vakaro Žinios*, May 24, 2001

press is doing society a disservice by distancing gays from the rest of society. There were no news reports or articles about the complexity of people's experiences of being gay, bisexual or transgender.

The Lithuanian press commonly conflates sexuality and gender roles in its treatment of gays. It is often assumed that homosexual males are effeminate and lesbians are tough. In the aforementioned story about a former member of the Lithuanian parliament, the author quoted his colleague who stated that Mr. Alesionka "stood out amongst others for his tenderness and the exceptional gestures of his hands."<sup>26</sup> In the report on Russian show business, the author argued that "even before Alegrova's [Russian singer] features were strange, one could notice her masculine behavior and vulgar outfits resembling those of a prostitute."<sup>27</sup> In an article on two Lithuanian lesbians entitled "A Lesbian Couple Went to Court to Fight for Their Right to Live Peacefully" the author wrote: "on the street lesbians recognize each other by their masculine attire and appearance and by a peculiar glance. It is easier to recognize gay men from their feminine manners, their gentle voice, more original and colorful clothes."<sup>28</sup> It can be inferred from the above excerpts that gays can be easily recognized by certain mannerisms, speech and behavior. Both types, the "queen" and the "dyke," are represented as if their sexuality means that they are somewhere between the two genders. Thus lesbians are mannish, gays effeminate. The effeminate, handbag-waving "pansy" makes frequent appearances in Lithuanian sitcoms,<sup>29</sup> tough lesbian characters are much less visible. Both types, however, are seen as pathetic, ridiculous and comic. By presenting sexual minorities in this way, the Lithuanian mass media supports a system of rigid gender roles.

The Lithuanian tabloid press, first of all *Vakaro Žinios*, has instigated the forced, compulsory public outings of celebrities. "They Are Called Gays" headlined *Vakaro Žinios*, the most popular Lithuanian tabloid.<sup>30</sup> Exploiting highly visible personalities, the newspaper retorted Lithuanian celebrities, arguing that "accusing society of a negative attitude towards them, gays separate themselves from the others and are reluctant to speak publicly about their sexual orienta-

26 Lina Valantiniėnė, "L. Alesionka klimpsta į sekso skandalą," *Vakaro Žinios*, May 30, 2001.

27. Saulius Petraška, "Rusijos šou verslą užgrobė lesbietės" [Russian Show Business has been Occupied by Lesbians], *Vakaro Žinios*, January 11, 2001.

28. "Lesbiečių pora dėl teisės ramiai gyventi kovėsi teisme" [A Lesbian couple fought for its right for a quiet life in the court], *Lietuvos rytas*, August 26, 2000.

29. Notably *Kaimynai* [The Neighbors], *Tegyvuoja karalius* [Long Live the King], and *Šapro šou* [Šapranauskas's Show].

30. The series of articles "They are Called Gays" outing the famous Lithuanian men ran in *Vakaro Žinios* from January 4 to January 20, 2000.



tion.”<sup>31</sup> All of the articles, however, have been used to humiliate Lithuanian celebrities and create scandals. The use of homosexuality as a political tool continues to be effective, while homophobia remains deeply entrenched in Lithuanian society and the mass media.

Another pervasive trend in the rhetoric about homosexuals and homosexuality involves allegations that the very active homosexual lobby in Lithuania is connected to and financed by the international gay lobby. Some articles referred to the “powerful homosexual lobby” and “gay publicity machine” involved in pro-gay propaganda. “The Blue Mafia,”<sup>32</sup> “Priests and Seminary Students Acknowledge the Existence of Gay Clans in Seminaries”<sup>33</sup> claimed the headlines. It has also been alleged that influential homosexuals are doing favors for each other. The Movement of Young National Democrats insisted that Lithuanian liberals cooperated with the international homosexual lobby. The liberals’ effort to legalize gay marriage was the “result of an influential and latent homosexual lobby.”<sup>34</sup> While implying the existence of a kind of global gay conspiracy, reactionary radicals denied the idea that homosexuals are an oppressed minority.

There have been far fewer instances of positive coverage. Extensive coverage of the legalization of gay marriage in Holland was an exception.<sup>35</sup> The 2001 international gay forum in Vilnius was also been described comprehensively.<sup>36</sup> Foreign news is usually copied from foreign publications and presented in a sensitive and comprehensive way.<sup>37</sup> *Vakaro Žinios* ran a series of articles on homosexuality and homosexuals that described the legal, psychological and societal aspects of being gay.<sup>38</sup>

31. “Gėjai išeina į dienos šviesą” [Gays are Coming out to the Daylight], *Vakaro Žinios*, January 21, 2000.

32. Tadas Mekas, “Žydroji mafija” [The Blue Mafia], *Vakaro Žinios*, January 3, 2000, p. 8-9.

33. “Kunigai ir klierikai pripažįsta egzistuojant seminarijose gėjų klanus” [Priests and Seminary Students Acknowledge the Existence of Gay Clans in Seminaries], *Respublika*, February 26, 2000, p. 25.

34. “Gėjų santuokų įteisinimui pritaria ne visi” [Not everyone Agrees with the Legalization of Gay Marriage], *Lietuvos rytas*, November 7, 2000.

35. “Amsterdamė - homoseksualistų triumfas” [A Triumph of Homosexuals in Amsterdam], *Vakaro Žinios*, April 2, 2001.

36. Sigita Nemeikaitė, “Menininkė dairosi ir į Vilniaus gėjus” [An Artist is also Looking at Vilnius Gays], *Lietuvos rytas*, June 1, 2001; “Vilniuje vyks tarptautinis gėjų forumas” [An International Gay Forum will Take Place in Vilnius], *Vakaro Žinios*, May 24, 2001.

37. “Gėjų ir lesbiečių slėpynės artėja prie pabaigos: netradicinė seksualinė orientacija Vakarė pasaulyje vis mažiau turi įtakos karjerai” [Gays and Lesbians’ Being in the Closet is Approaching the End: A Non Traditional Sexual Orientation in the Western World has less and less Influence on Careers], *Lietuvos rytas*, June 23, 2001.

38. Stasys Dimbelis, “Stereotipų amžius” [The Century of Stereotypes] *Vakaro Žinios*, February 14, 2000; and February 15, 2000. Stasys Dimbelis, “Gėjus ne keiksmažodis” [‘Gay’ is Not a Swearword], *Vakaro Žinios*, February 9, 2000.

My analysis of a sample of the primetime programs on *LRT* (Lithuanian Public Television) and three commercial networks *LNK*, *TV-3* and *BTV* during the week of November 26-December 2, 2001 revealed that gay issues were considered neither important nor significant. The most notable example of reporting on gay issues was a story about the owner of the Vilnius gay club Aleksej Terentiev who had been caught selling drugs by undercover police. The evening magazine "The Process. X Sector" (7:45-8:20 p.m., November 28, 2001, *TV3*) devoted to criminal news utilized the bizarre to illustrate the way homosexuals live and look. The interviews with Terentiev, his friends and relatives were intermingled with shocking images of gay pride parades. The program also used sexualized sounds suitable to erotic or pornographic movies. By emphasizing the images of gays and lesbians in terms of controversy, violence and deviance, "The Process. X Sector" constructed them in sexualized and sexist ways, as in many other stories of sexual minorities.

Lithuanian television frequently exploits gays in the name of comedy. Gay characters are often featured in the locally produced comedy shows: "Tegyvuoja Karalius" and "Šapro šou" (both on *TV3*). Both comedies shamelessly peddle the image of effeminacy in gay men. Questioning a man's sexuality becomes a source of humor. A quick look at situational comedy on Lithuanian television indicates that gays are cast in stereotyped and demeaning situations.

In sum, several important trends recur in representations of homosexuals on Lithuanian television. First, sexual minorities are given limited credibility in the public arena. Television programs are mostly concerned with alleged threats posed by sexual minorities through their crimes. Second, gay characters are usually objects of ridicule and derision. Third, Lithuanian television perpetuates the association of gays with effeminacy and "deviance." Only one program during the sampled week, the talk show "Prašau žodžio" (Let's Talk, broadcast at 9:10-9:55 on November 29, *LRT*) demonstrated a move toward more positive depictions of gays on television. This talk show invited a gay man who presented his point of view about tolerance and intolerance towards gays in Lithuania.

#### *4.2. Representations of Roma, Jews, Russians and Poles in Lietuvos rytas*

##### *Roma*

According to the last population census conducted in 1989, a total of 2,700 Roma live in Lithuania.<sup>39</sup> Roma living in Lithuania are commonly called "Čigonai" (Gypsies). They are far more visible in the Lithuanian press than a decade ago,

39. Ligita Valonytė, "Surašinėtoja pas čigonus lydėjo policija" *LR*, April 10, 2001.

although questions remain as to the qualitative attributes of their media presence – how they are being presented and in what contexts.

The Roma minority received the cruelest stereotypical representations of all ethnic minorities in *Lietuvos rytas* (LR) during the researched period. Virtually all stories related to the Roma were systematically associated with crime, drugs, violence and asocial behavior. The criminal aspect prevails in Roma portraits. The headlines of the stories tell it all: “A Market Vendor Became a Victim of a Pickpocket,” “With Guns against Drugs,” and “Police Accompanied the Census Taker to the Gypsies”.<sup>40</sup>

As Viktorija Jonikova demonstrated in her short overview of the Roma minority, the Lithuanian press during 1994-1999 focused on two main aspects of Roma life: firstly, on their exoticism, crime and violence; and secondly, on their social, economic and legal hardships. According to Jonikova, the latter aspect was more prominent in the second half of the mentioned period. In the sociologist’s view, journalists did not succeed in “avoiding an *a priori* assumption toward Roma people based on unfounded myths and stereotypes ... Much attention is paid to the criminality of Roma, particularly to the drug trade (41 percent of published articles and reports deals with this topic).” It is interesting that in criminal reports, the ethnicity of Roma is emphasized, transferring the personal characteristics of the criminal to the whole community (Jonikova 2000b). Thus, discriminatory attitudes toward all members of the Roma community are reinforced.

The portrait of the Roma minority which emerged during the period of November 27, 2000 to May 9, 2001 in the biggest Lithuanian daily is far from flattering. The Roma are usually depicted as segregated and asocial, while police reports published in *LR* often mention “Gypsies” as thievish, ignorant, lazy, deceitful and rude. They are also pickpockets and professional hypnotists, cheating citizens out of their money (as in “A Market Vendor Became a Victim of a Pickpocket” about a thief of Roma origin).<sup>41</sup> By presenting Roma simply as criminals whose main source of income is crime, *LR* has consolidated the image of “gypsy criminals” in the Lithuanian mass consciousness.

Articles on drug-related crimes were usually related to the Roma minority. The reports imply that drug dealers are typically “Gypsies.” For instance, in the report “With Guns Against Drugs,” policemen fighting against the drug trade indicated that every day several drug addicts and drug dealers are caught in the

40. Loreta Juodzevičienė, “Turgaus prekeivė tapo apsuikrios vagilės auka” [A Market Vendor Became a Victim of a Pickpocket], *LR*, January 8, 2001; Arūnas Dumalakas, “Prieš narkotikus - su automatais” (With Guns Against Drugs), *LR*, December 7, 2000; Ligita Valonytė, “Surašinėtoja pas čigonus lydėjo policija” [Police Accompanied the Census Taker to the Gypsies], *LR*, April 10, 2001.

41. Loreta Juodzevičienė, “Turgaus prekeivė tapo apsuikrios vagilės auka,” *LR*, January 8, 2001.

Roma tabor (Roma living settlement) in Kirtimai, near Vilnius.<sup>42</sup> In another police report, entitled “A Farmer Turned the Growing of Poppies Into a Profitable Trade,” farmer Bronius Švilpa was caught storing eighteen bags of poppy heads and stems at his house. Wondering who might have informed on him, he told the police that “he sold three bags of poppies to Gypsies.”<sup>43</sup> In the story “Heroin Defeated a Member of the ‘Vilnius Brigade’”, Eduardas Bogdziulis, a member of this crime cartel, became addicted to drugs which he “acquired in the Roma tabor near Vilnius.”<sup>44</sup> News about people spotted in the tabor to buy drugs are a commonplace in *LR*.

The Roma are frequently mentioned in sensational yet downright trivial articles with headlines such as “The Amnestee’s Booty-5 Rabbits” (in which rabbits were supposed to be sold to the “Gypsies”)<sup>45</sup> or “Money Did Not Buy Back Her Boyfriend’s Love.” The latter report narrates a sad story about a female bank clerk, who stole money to pay a “gypsy woman” to get her lover back through witchcraft. When the crime was revealed, Bronė Barcienė was sentenced to three years in jail, while the bewitched “Gypsy”, Vera Sinkevičienė, disappeared mysteriously. Her relatives told the investigators that she had left for England.<sup>46</sup> “Horse Slaughterers in the Hands of Police” describes an illegal slaughter house which traded horse meat. The accused member of the company, O. Jankaitienė, admitted that she had bought “six horses from a Gypsy national, Erikas Černiauskas, an inhabitant of Šiauliai.” The report stated that “the organizer of this slaughtering might be fined for her illegal commercial activity and cruelty to animals.”<sup>47</sup>

During the researched period there were very few stories about the poverty of Roma. One story described the protest of an elderly, homeless Romani woman in the office of the Kybartai elderman, where she demanded shelter for herself and her seven children. Although a grave matter is reported, the tone of the story is strikingly humorous and trivial. The Romani woman is simply described as a troublemaker.<sup>48</sup> In another story, “The Title of Gypsy King Did Not Seduce [the Mayor of the Varėna District]” the mayor of the Varėna district tells the reporter that he is often called a Gypsy King by the Roma women who frequent his office to demand higher welfare checks. In the article, the Roma women are described as

42. Arūnas Dumalakas, “Prieš narkotikus - su automatais,” *LR*, December 7, 2000.

43. Loreta Juodzevičienė, “Aguonų auginimą ūkininkas pavertė verslu,” *LR*, December 13, 2000.

44. “Heroinas parklūpdė ‘Vilniaus brigados’ nari,” (Baltic News Service information), *LR*, December 7, 2000.

45. Gintaras Šiuparys, “Amnestuotojo grobis - 5 triušiai,” *LR*, December 22, 2000.

46. Aldona Jankauskienė, “Svetimi pinigai negražino draugo meilės,” *LR*, November 27, 2000.

47. Gintaras Šiuparys “Arklių skerdikai - policijos akiratyje,” *LR*, November 28, 2000.

48. Algis Vaškevičius, “Čigonės piketas - seniūno kabinete,” *LR*, February 20, 2001.

“aggressive” and “hot-tempered.”<sup>49</sup> Emphasis on the personal characteristics of the Roma such as their impulsiveness, unpredictability, passion and temperament is prominent in *LR*. One newspaper report even mentions a crime of passion: a Romani inmate committed suicide after allegedly being rejected by her lover.<sup>50</sup>

Only one positive story related to the Roma was identified in the article “Nice Promises Led to a Homeless Shelter,” in which a woman cheated out of her apartment by a crook decided to commit suicide. Fortunately, her old acquaintance, a “Gypsy woman” named Sonia, stopped her from this deed. The woman “said that she would be grateful to Sonia the rest of her life - not only for the temporary shelter but also for saving her life.”<sup>51</sup>

*LR* published no stories or news reports about the Roma as participants in the social and cultural life of the country. There were no reports on the activities of non-governmental Roma organizations. The newspaper did not cover government policy toward the Roma minority. Although the dire economic and social conditions of the Roma are implied in some reports, more extensive descriptions of Roma settlements and their environment (without modern conveniences such as electricity, running water and telephones) are notably absent.

All in all, out of 18 stories related to the Roma minority, 14 dealt with crime and drugs, three with Roma women as troublemakers, and only one with the positive experience of being helped by a Roma woman. The small number of stories about the Roma cannot be considered representative. My description does, however, indicate that the main Lithuanian daily uses a common stock of stereotypical representations of the Roma as “troublemakers,” criminals and deceivers. *LR* not only reflects but also perpetuates the negative attitudes of Lithuanian society toward the Roma.

### *Jews*

According to a recent sociological survey, Jews are the least valued ethnic group in Lithuania.<sup>52</sup> The reasons are mostly political, involving some Lithuanian politicians renowned for their staunch anti-Semitism and the conflicts of the Lithuanian ruling elite with Jewish organizations in Israel such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Anti-Semitism is still prevalent in Lithuanian culture and individuals cannot easily disentangle themselves. Yet Jews receive the most attention by the mass media of all ethnic groups. *LR* presents a diverse perspective on

49. Aldona Jankauskienė, “Čigonų karaliaus titulas nesuviliojo,” *LR*, April 25, 2001.

50. Virginija Petrauskienė, “Buvusi prostitutė nebesulaukė laisvės,” *LR*, February 21, 2001.

51. Virginija Petrauskienė “Gražūs pažadai atvedė į nakvynės namus,” *LR*, March 19, 2001.

52. From Virginijus Savukynas’s paper “Žydų atvejis” [The Jewish Case]. I am grateful to the author for providing me with a copy of his unpublished article.

the Jewish minority in Lithuania. In comparison with the coverage of the Roma minority, Lithuanian Jews enjoy a multi-sided and favorable representation.

Anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and Jewish cultural heritage are the three main Jewish-related topics in *LR*. From a total of 37 stories, 17 were devoted to anti-Semitism, 10 to the Holocaust (Lithuanian war criminals who took part in the extermination of the Lithuanian Jewry and Lithuanians who helped to save Jews), 8 to Jewish culture, and 2 to anecdotes of Jewish life.

*LR* extensively covers anti-Semitism in Lithuanian society. The rise of neo-Nazi groups in Lithuania, according to an editorial, is disturbing because the government does not do enough to stop neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda.<sup>53</sup> Columnist Rimvydas Valatka even accused the dominant groups in the Parliament of a “negligent attitude towards anti-Semitism”. “A publication calling itself a state newspaper openly incites anti-Semitic hysteria ... But the Chairman of the Parliament remains silent. And the Prime-Minister is silent too ... And the Parliament keeps silence. As if this is the way it should be.”<sup>54</sup>

In January 2001, Swedish television broadcasted a documentary about Lithuania, in which parliamentarian Vytautas Šustauskas made strong anti-Semitic statements. The documentary stirred the Swedish public and created a scandal in Lithuanian political circles. The procedures of political discussion were extensively described by *LR*. “The anti-Semitic statements of a member of the Kaunas City Council Vytautas Šustauskas, equivalent to the justification of the Holocaust, are absolutely unacceptable and harmful to the City of Kaunas,” claimed the representatives of three political fractions. The Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament Artūras Paulauskas asserted that Šustauskas’s public speeches harm the image of Lithuania in the world and incite national discord.”<sup>55</sup> Šustauskas’s scandal merited much coverage in the biggest Lithuanian daily. Virtually every day for the rest of January 2001, another article or news report on the development of the anti-Semitic scandal was published.<sup>56</sup> Finally, after extensive coverage in the Lithuanian press, the Union of the Center (one of the political parties) appealed to the Prosecutor General and the Minister of Justice to evaluate juridically Šustauskas’s declarations.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, as the newspaper reported, the leaders of the Kaunas Jewish community refused to participate in a public discussion with Šustauskas because of his anti-Semitic statements.

53. “Laiko Ženkliai,” *LR*, February 2, 2001.

54. Rimvydas Valatka, “Senoji politika rodo gelsvus dantis,” *LR*, November 27, 2000.

55. Arūnas Karaliūnas, “V.Šustausko išpuoliai sulaukė ryžtingo atkirčio,” *LR*, February 2, 2001.

56. See Arūnas Karaliūnas, Saulius Pocius, “Sukurtas perversmo planas,” *LR*, January 23, 2001; Tomas Šernas, “Gėdą užtraukė visai Lietuvai,” *LR*, February 8, 2001.

57. Dalia Gudavičiūtė, “V. Šustauskas kratosi savo žodžio,” *LR*, February 13, 2001;

Reporters of *LR* did not fail to report acts of anti-Semitism. The desecration of a menorah in December 2000 in the old town of Vilnius, was widely reported and discussed, as were the memorial plaques stolen from the Jewish graveyards in the district of Telsiai.<sup>58</sup> The Jewish community in Lithuania and the Lithuanian government hoped that the desecration of a menorah symbolizing tolerance and religious freedom was merely an act of hooliganism.<sup>59</sup>

It is clear that Lithuanian newspapers monitor anti-Semitic sentiments in society and attempt to present solutions for the problem in a passionate yet constructive way. The report about the anti-American and anti-Semitic mood in Mažeikiai, the city with an oil refinery owned by the American company Williams, is case in point. The report entitled “The Leftist Became Confused by the Moods of his Electorate” sought to dispel the alleged connection between Jews and criminal financial interests dominant in Lithuanian mass consciousness. Anti-American and anti-Semitic moods among the population of Mažeikiai proved to be only a figment of the imagination of parliamentarian Jonas Jurkus.<sup>60</sup>

The second major Jewish theme prominent in *LR* is the Holocaust. Both Jews and other Lithuanians still struggle against the mistrust that characterizes their daily political interactions. It could be said that Jews and other Lithuanians have irreconcilable perspectives on reconciliation and coming to terms with the past. As *LR* frequently reports, Israeli Jews blame the Lithuanian government for not being firm enough on the issue of war criminals, and the Lithuanian government and prosecutors respond that they are doing everything that is within their means. Such political conflicts reflect deeper tensions within Lithuanian society. While most Lithuanians tend to stress forgiveness as the moral lesson of the Holocaust, many in the Jewish community emphasize that forgiveness can also mean forgetting the past and exonerating the criminals.

*LR* reveals these tensions by describing the appeals of various public organizations in Israel and throughout the world for Lithuania to carry out historical justice.<sup>61</sup> The newspaper reveals the differences in the discursive practices of the two respective communities as well as their divergent historical experiences.

58. Elvyra Sabalytė, “Telsių rajone apvaginėjamos žydų kapavietės,” *LR*, April 20, 2001.

59. News report from December 30, 2000.

60. Rasa Čergelienė, “Kairysis susipainiojo savo rinkėjų nuotaikose,” *LR*, January 10, 2001.

61. “Izraelio litvakai nepasitikėdami žiūri į Lietuvos istorinio teisingumo komisiją,” Gintautas Alksnis, “Nacių medžiotojas giria Lietuvą,” *LR*, February 19, 2001. “JAV teisingumo departamento kriminalinio padalinio specialiųjų tyrimų skyriaus (OSI - Office of Special Investigations) direktorius Eli M. Rosenbaumas po Vilniaus apygardos teismo nuosprendžio, kuriame buvęs nacių bendradarbis Kazys Gimžauskas pripažintas kaltu vykdant Lietuvos žydų genocidą, pakeitė savo kritišką požiūrį į Lietuvą.”

Extended coverage of the trials of war criminals was reported in *LR* during the researched period. The trial of Aleksandras Lileikis and Kazys Gimžauskas accused of participating in the genocide of Jews during World War II dominated the Holocaust theme in the newspaper.<sup>62</sup> *LR* also reported on the requests of the Lithuanian government to have suspected war criminals J. Naujalis and A. Gecevičius (Gecas) extradited from the United States and Great Britain respectively.<sup>63</sup> The topic of the Holocaust also includes descriptions of public events commemorating the victims of the Holocaust<sup>64</sup> and public ceremonies to honor Lithuanian citizens who saved Jews during World War II.<sup>65</sup> Constantly reporting public representations and Holocaust ceremonies, the newspaper emphasizes the need to remember the Shoah.

The theme of Holocaust remembrance is closely related to the descriptions of Jewish cultural heritage and its commemoration and preservation, the third major Jewish topic covered by *LR*.<sup>66</sup> Lithuania, and particularly the capital Vilnius, had lively and active pre-war Jewish communities. The newspaper reported about former parliament member Emanuelis Zingeris's plan to restore the Vilnius Jewish Ghetto (the article was a summary of a *Wall Street Journal* article on Zingeris and his endeavors).<sup>67</sup> Similarly, the problems of the Kalvarija municipality in the restoration of synagogues were reported.<sup>68</sup>

Along with the Jewish cultural restoration, revival and commemoration plans, current activities of the Jewish community in Lithuania were also covered. Headlines such as "The Jewish Community will Celebrate Easter First," "The Jewish Community of Lithuania Handed to the Ministry of Education ... 400

62. "Žydų genocidu kaltinamo K. Gimžausko byla nutraukė teisiamojo liga," February 3, 2001.

63. See news reports from February 20 and March 27, 2001.

64. Vida Savičiūnaitė, "Kaune prisiminti žuvę Miuncheno žydai," *LR*, April 19, 2001.

65. News report, April 19, 2001. "Šalies Prezidentas V. Adamkus Žūvančiųjų gelbėjimo kryžiumi apdovanojo 49 žmones, kurie, nepaisydami mirtino pavojaus sau ir savo šeimai, Antrojo pasaulinio karo metais gelbėjo žydus nuo nacių genocido." News report, February 13, 2001. "2705 Lietuvos gyventojai, nacių okupacijos metais gelbėję mirčiai pasmerktus žydus, įrašyti į Vilniaus Gaono valstybinio žydų muziejaus baigtą ruošti sąrašą."

66. News report, "Vakar Vyriausybė patvirtino Religinių rankraščių tekstų (torų), perrašintų išimtinai apeigų paskirčiai, neatlygintino perdavimo žydų religinėms bendruomenėms ir bendrijoms tvarką. 371 tora saugoma Lietuvos nacionalinėje Martyno Mažvydo bibliotekoje." *LR*, December 14, 2000. News report March 1, 2001. "Vokietijos leidykla "Hartung-Gorre" vokiečių kalba išleido iš Lietuvos į Izraelį persikėlusio gyventi istoriko S. Atamuko monografiją "Žydai Lietuvoje. Istorinė apžvalga."

67. "Eksparlamentaro vizijoje - atkurtas Vilniaus žydų getas," *LR*, January 17, 2001 (Baltic News Service and *LR* information).

68. Liucija Burbienė, "Sinagogų kompleksas - per brangi dovana," March 15, 2001.



Copies of the Book ‘Dispelled Myths’ or ‘Jews Presented the Cardinal with Matzahs’ are frequent in the pages of *LR*.<sup>69</sup>

As noted, Jews merit the most substantial minority coverage in *LR*. The Jewish community and Lithuanian society are portrayed as tied to the past. Presenting the convergence of conflicting interpretations of the past, *LR* attempts to redefine public discourse concerning anti-Semitism, the Holocaust and historical trauma. It also alludes to the fact that willingness on both sides to accept the past and engage in dialogue is a path to reconciliation and historical retribution.

### *Russians*

According to the latest sociological survey covering the Baltics, 62 percent of Russians living in Estonia, 42 percent of Lithuanian Russians, and 39 percent Latvian Russians trust their respective governments.<sup>70</sup> Forty-two percent is an impressive number considering the dismal economic situation in Lithuania, but how does the press conceive of the Russian minority?

There were a total of 22 stories about people of Russian ethnicity living in Lithuania published in *LR* during the researched period of November 27, 2000–May 9, 2001. Of those, nine focus on crimes, seven deal with active Lithuanian-Russian politicians, four with culture and education, and two with historical justice.

To understand media representations of the Russian minority in Lithuania, one inevitably must remember history, particularly the traumatic realities of the post-World War II period involving the occupation of Lithuania by the Soviet Union and Lithuanian citizens’ extermination and exile to Siberia. *LR* published articles on post-war political prisoners and the victims of deportations to Siberia and their appeal for historical justice. In these reports, Russian KGB or NKVD agents figure prominently.<sup>71</sup>

Stereotypical representations of Russians as agents working on behalf of Moscow or even for the Russian Mafia provoke irrational and passionate hostility towards Russians in the press. Recent scandals involving Lithuanian politicians of Russian descent only confirmed this prejudice. Although

69. “Velykas Žydų bendruomenė pradeda švęsti pirmoji” April 7, 2001; “Subliuškę mitai” įrašyti į Lietuvos nacionalinę Holokausto švietimo programą, *LR*, December 23, 2000. “Žydai kardinolui dovanojo mačų,” March 3, 2001.

70. News report “Vietos rusai ima pasitikėti valdžia,” *LR* January 12, 2001.

71. Daiva Žimblienė, “Teisme – poeto ir politinės kalinės ginčas,” *LR*, February 26, 2001. Also see “Laiko Ženkilai,” March 6, 2001, about the participants in the 1991 massacre of Lithuanian citizens near the the Lithuanian television tower.

Lithuanian-Russian political figures are sometimes portrayed as actively participating in Lithuanian political life,<sup>72</sup> many allegations appeared in the press that they have been involved in anti-state activities. As *LR* reported, two Russian members of the Lithuanian Parliament, Sergejus Dmitrijevas and Vladimiras Orechovas, “made off” to Minsk to meet with members of the Belarusian National Assembly, which is not recognized by any democratic country in the world. The newspaper reminded readers of the fact that “both parliamentarians represent the Russian Union, and S. Dmitrijevas is the chairman of this party.”<sup>73</sup> A month later, the same Dmitrijevas was chastised by members of the Committee of Foreign Affairs in the parliament for his close contacts with Russian and Belarusian diplomats. It was alleged that Dmitrijevas supplied these diplomats with confidential and secret state information.<sup>74</sup>

Even stronger blame was placed on the Russian Lithuanian Parliament member V. Tretjakov, whose Russian-language newspaper *Litovskij kurjer* reprinted an article by Russian politician V. Alksnis advocating the territorial rights of Russia and Belarusia to the Lithuanian cities Klaipėda and Vilnius. “Is the great Russian chauvinist’s incitement to destroy the Lithuanian state merely a different opinion that is necessary to publicize in our country? It is difficult to dismiss suspicion that those who reprinted V. Alksnis’s article share his views about Lithuania and its history,” affirms the editorial, reinforcing the negative clout that accompanies these Russian nationals.<sup>75</sup> The same journalist who blamed the Lithuanian government for not being firm on the issue of neo-Nazi and anti-Semitic propaganda, argued in his article that the Lithuanian Parliament is full of lobbyists for Russia.<sup>76</sup> Naked hostility towards Russians sets the tone of this commentary.

The characteristic tone of all of these articles and reports is one of relentless threat from the Russians, who might subvert the Lithuanian government and attempt to join “mother” Russia.

Another example of the Russian menace is expressed in police reports. In these, Russian nationals are often identified as unstable (committing suicides by

72. Tadas Ignatavičius, “Po mūšio dėl biudžeto - pokylis,” *LR*, December 21, 2000 (about the richest member of the Lithuanian Parliament Victor Uspaskich). Aušra Pilaitienė, “Oponentai klibina Klaipėdos mero kėdę,” *LR*, December 1, 2000 (about the representatives of the Center and Russian fractions).

73. “Du Seimo nariai buvo slapta išsprukę į Minską,” *LR*, February 10, 2001 (Baltic News Service and *LR* information).

74. “Sunerimta dėl parlamentaro patikimumo,” *LR*, March 20, 2001.

75. Editorial “Laiko Ženkliai,” *LR*, April 24, 2001.

76. Rimvydas Valatka, “Seime - Rusijos būgnininkų maršas,” *LR*, March 26, 2001.

jumping from windows),<sup>77</sup> as members of criminal religious sects,<sup>78</sup> and as prostitutes.<sup>79</sup> Police reports commonly utilize the same brief references to criminals as “The assailants spoke Russian,”<sup>80</sup> “The intruders spoke Lithuanian with a Russian accent.”<sup>81</sup> The tacit message is that, while some criminals might be non-Russians, many criminals speak Russian or they speak Lithuanian with a Russian accent.

The interest of *LR* in conflicts, criminality and sensations overpowers other aspects of representations of Russians. During the researched period, only one article and one news report were devoted to education (Russian schools with Russian as the main language of instruction).<sup>82</sup> Two news reports mentioned Russian culture in Lithuania (the Russian radio which operated without a license and the newspaper *Echo Litvy* which stopped publication due to financial difficulties and allegedly appealed to Russian President Vladimir Putin for financial assistance).<sup>83</sup>

The coverage of Russians in *LR* indicates charged encounters between Russian nationals and the Lithuanian press. A significant number of mixed messages about Russians suggests that representations of Russians in *LR* are intimately related to wider political, cultural and historical issues. Nevertheless, professional journalists should accept neither history nor the behavior of certain individuals as an excuse for intolerant and stereotypical representations of the Russian minority in the Lithuanian press.

### *Poles*

Lithuanian Poles received the least press coverage, with a total of ten reports and stories. Lithuanian-Polish politicians accounted for five stories; education and politics for three; cultural matters for one; and one story about Poles and Jews.

77. Artūras Navickas, “Vyras gyvenimą baigė šuoliu iš devinto aukšto,” *LR*, December 14, 2000. As is the case, the nationality of a man is emphasized.

78. Arūnas Karaliūnas, “Kaunas svetingas rusų sektantui,” *LR*, December 4, 2000. “Lietuvos ryto” žiniomis, Lietuvoje šiuo metu yra kelios dešimtys Visariono bažnyčios sekėjų.”

79. Virginija Petrauskienė, Rasa Stundžienė, “Prostitučių ir policijos draugystė - amžina,” *LR*, December 16, 2000.

80. Arūnas Dumalakas, “Plėšikų maskuotė - policininko uniforma,” *LR*, January 25, 2001.

81. Gediminas Pilaitis, “Įsibrovėliai apsimetė apsaugos darbuotojais,” *LR*, December 29, 2000. “Saugos darbuotojais apsimetę plėšikai kalbėjo lietuviškai su rusišku akcentu.”

82. Rimvydas Valatka, “Gauta valdžia žudo liberalų įvaizdį,” *LR*, January 22, 2001. Daiva Zimblienė, “Rusų diplomatų dovana - kompiuteriai,” *LR*, February 10, 2001. “Ukmergės Senamiesčio vidurinei mokyklai buvo atvežta Rusijos Federacijos ambasados Lietuvoje dovana - du naudoti kompiuteriai su įranga.”

83. News reports: “Radio,” March 9, 2001; and “V. Putin is Interested in the Fate of the Publication,” *LR*, March 5, 2001.

Similarities in the attitudes of Lithuanians towards Russians and Poles is rooted in the fact that Lithuania and Poland, like Lithuania and Russia, share common histories with various historical wrongs committed against each other. The long common history of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and continuous debates about common cultural icons and sites still leave Lithuanian society with an abundance of powerful and unresolved emotions towards Poles.

The Polish ethnic minority in Lithuania is one of the most vocal groups. Lithuanian Poles almost always receive wholehearted support and assistance from the government of Poland. That is why sensitive issues regarding the Polish language and education, and national and ethnic identity, are extremely politicized and often result in problems between the states.

The focus of most articles is educational policy in eastern Lithuania, where the majority of Lithuanian Poles reside. As *LR* reported, a member of the Polish Parliament Tadeusz Wrona felt offended by a Lithuanian parliamentarian who issued a memorandum describing Polish politicians as rude and aggressive. The Lithuanian politician wrote that in a meeting with the representatives of the Ministry of Education of Lithuania, Polish parliamentarians had issued forceful orders about what had to be done to reform the educational system of Lithuania. Evidently, according to the Polish politicians, schools for Polish nationals needed to be reformed and strengthened.<sup>84</sup>

Similarly, in another report the problems of the Polish minority were placed within a wider framework of cooperation between Poland and Lithuania. Poland agreed to go ahead with “the bridge of electricity” between the two countries because, according to Polish politician J. Buzek, “the mood of the Polish minority in Lithuania has recently improved due to the inclusion of Polish nationals in the new government, the Parliament, as well as the gradual resolution of national minority problems.”<sup>85</sup>

In another report, the Commission of Ethics of the Lithuanian Parliament decided to demand that MP Gabriel Jan Mincewicz, who belongs to Polish Election Action, not disseminate false facts about another member of the parliament who supposedly took an anti-Polish stand on matters of education. The report also indicated that earlier Mincewicz stated that in Lithuania, Polish children are discriminated against because very little attention is paid to their education.<sup>86</sup> It should be mentioned that the former Minister of Education Zigmantas Zinkevičius exacerbated political and cultural tensions between Poles

84. “Lenkijos politikas pasijuto įžeistas,” *LR*, April 7, 2001.

85. “Elektros tilto kontūrai darosi ryškesni,” *LR*, February 6, 2001.

86. “Etikos komisija baudė ir taikė,” March 13, 2001 (Baltic News Service and *LR* information).

and Lithuanians by arguing that, although they are not aware of it, Lithuanian Poles are in fact Polonized Lithuanians. Political tensions dominating newspaper coverage overshadowed the remaining reports in *LR* on the activities of Polish politicians in their parties, the opening of the Center of Polish Culture in Vilnius, and Poles who saved Jews during World War II.<sup>87</sup>

The sampled television programs, unfortunately, indicate minimal presence of ethnic stories and characters in mainstream programming. Ethnic minorities are still rarely mentioned in major broadcast news programs. This fact demonstrates that television fails to mirror the 'real' proportion of Russians, Poles, Roma and Jews in the Lithuanian population.

Another notable example of ethnic representation on Lithuanian television is the weekly comedy show "ZbTV" (broadcast at 19:45-20:15 on November 26, 2001, *LNK*). It features the main character Zbigniewas, whose name is Polish and who speaks Lithuanian with a ridiculous Polish-Russian accent. His physical appearance and speech patterns are designed to invoke comic effect. It can be argued that "ZbTV" reproduces the traditional stereotype of a lower-class individual of Polish-Russian origin.

## 5. Conclusion

What do these representations say about the presenters and the imagined viewers? As demonstrated, there is a lack of in-depth reporting on ethnic and sexual groups in the Lithuanian mass media, and minority groups share relative invisibility and one-sided stereotypical representations. Representations, though primarily discursive, have real material consequences and correlates. It can be argued that by virtually ignoring ethnic and sexual minority issues, the mass media participates in the marginalization of those groups.

Sexual minorities remain a difficult topic of discussion and an extremely sensitive issue involving societal values, norms and sexuality. Homosexuality is frequently described as a scandal, and homosexuals are still portrayed as an underworld group. Homosexuality is still strongly associated with sexual promiscuity and deviance. Although there is little abusive terminology in Lithuanian newspapers, the trend is to ridicule and diminish homosexuals (such as in the headline "Lithuanian Gays will Prance to Vienna").<sup>88</sup> Television

87. Rita Grumadaitė, "Lenkai spaudžia valdančiąją koaliciją," *LR*, December 18, 2000. "Celebration," from the news report, *LR*, February 19, 2001; "Teisuoliai," from the news report, March 23, 2001.

88. "Lietuvos gėjai dums į Vieną" (about "Europride 2001" in Vienna), *Lietuvos Žinios*, June 13, 2001.

entertainment programs emphasize the comic and ridiculous sides of gay characters. This consistent stereotypical representation of gays and lesbians is further reinforced by the virtual absence of alternative role models to counteract such stereotypes.

The Lithuanian press has been very slow to validate news about gay issues. The media generally pays insufficient attention to the problems and discrimination suffered by sexual minorities, and serious representations of homosexuals as minorities remain infrequent. Gay events and opinions covered in the papers are overwhelmingly trivialized (for instance, “G. Garbo Blackmailed her Lover,” “Robin Hood was Supposedly Gay”).<sup>89</sup> It is symptomatic that when asked whether the Lithuanian mass media adequately, objectively, and comprehensively covers the life of Lithuanian and foreign gays and lesbians, 84 percent of respondents who identified themselves as gay or bisexual responded negatively<sup>90</sup>

Regarding ethnic minorities, the low visibility of Roma, Jews, Russians and Poles in the press and on television is also critical. A close reading of the most popular daily and television programs reveals an undercurrent xenophobia in a large part of news reports and broadcasts focusing on these minorities. The negative focus is overwhelming: most newspaper reports and television broadcasts focus on minorities who committed a crime. Much less attention is paid to stories about minorities experiencing problems, prejudice, racism or unemployment.

The Roma receive the worst representations. *LR* frequently refers to the entire Roma minority as criminal, deviant, socially insecure, inscrutable, and manipulative. In police reports published in the newspaper, the Roma ethnicity is virtually always emphasized.

Meanwhile, Jews received the most diverse and in-depth coverage in the largest Lithuanian daily, with coverage of Jewish-related issues ranging from detailed descriptions of anti-Semitism in Lithuanian society and news about Jewish celebrations and cultural events, to Holocaust commemorations and the trials of war criminals.

Russians received mixed coverage. On the one hand, they were shown as active participants in Lithuanian political life. On the other hand, their political behavior was described as threatening and serving the interests of foreign powers. As in the case of the Roma, news reports about crimes stress the Russian nationality of criminals. *LR* proves Teun A. van Dijk’s contention that in the press ethnic

89. “G. Garbo šantažavo meilužį” *Respublika*, April 11, 2000. “Teigiama, kad R[obin] Hudis buvo gėjus” *LR*, July 12, 1999.

90. Information taken from [www.gay.lt](http://www.gay.lt), 2001.

minorities are “systematically associated with conflict, crime, intolerance and [unreliability]” (1991, p. 246) in the case of Roma and Russians.

Representations of the Polish minority in *LR* focused on the extremely politicized problem of education. From these representations, Poles emerged as a self-conscious national minority that requires special status and rights.

It can be argued that the Lithuanian mass media describes ethnicity as problematic rather than as a positive quality of multicultural society. Minority members are rarely consulted about problems concerning them. The evidence gathered in my research on ethnic and sexual minorities indicates that media images tend to define these groups within the narrow confines of stereotypical representations. These reported stereotypes are then insufficiently counteracted by alternative portrayals reflecting a multiethnic and multicultural society.

## **6. Toward a new politics of citizenship: notes on policy problems**

In his book *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representation*, Richard Dyer has affirmed that the actual treatment of a certain group largely depends on how it is “treated in cultural representation” (1993, p. 1). In other words, how a group is represented determines, at least in part, how it is treated. A similar idea has been forward by Marguerite J. Moritz who, writing about sexual minorities, argued that:

“When the news media - and I use this term to refer to the quality press - represent a topic with which the mass audience may have limited personal experience,... the message is particularly potent because many audience members have no way of independently or critically judging the validity of the news account and the many messages it may carry” (1992, p. 157)

In Lithuania, as elsewhere, the increasingly democratic society sets the rules, norms and conventions by which social life is ordered and governed. Hence, the issue of representational practices acquires immense significance. For minority groups, the struggle for fair and equitable representation is a question of establishing new terms to describe who they are and to shape their identity in society.

How can a dominant regime of representation in the Lithuanian mass media be challenged, contested or changed? What are the counter-strategies that can begin to subvert the current representational process? What are the ways of

designing an effective “politics of representation” in the Lithuanian mass media? What conclusions can be drawn from the available evidence and finally, what research and policy implications need to be advanced from the collected information?

Efforts to improve the media’s coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities must be understood in the larger context of the practices of the media and the professional codes that guide the standards of Lithuanian journalism. Therefore, it is necessary to raise the awareness of both the majority and the minority population about broad issues of racism, xenophobia and homophobia in the mass media. We need to improve the information available to the general public about ethnic and sexual minorities so as to preempt the social reproduction of negative stereotypes and myths. This should be accomplished through research, education, and publicity campaigns in the media. With respect to two areas – research and policy development – I propose the following initial measures:

1. As the media industry’s awareness of minority issues is fairly limited, a *monitoring group* consisting of media scholars and professionals on media and intolerance should be established. This group would monitor the media and, in accordance with existing laws, propose measures to counteract the dissemination of racist, homophobic and intolerant views. It would conduct continual analysis of the portrayals of ethnic and sexual minorities, which would serve academics, advocates, and the media industry as an assessment tool measuring progress on representations of diversity. It could also promote responsible media representation of race and ethnicity and raise awareness among media professionals and the public about what is being shown and what is not.

Ultimately, this monitoring group could suggest a number of more concrete provisions to be included in the current media law to combat the expression and dissemination of racist and intolerant opinions in the media. It would develop guidelines for the coverage of ethnic and sexual minorities addressing (1) individual journalists and educators, (2) news organizations, (3) governmental bodies (such as the Department of National Minorities and Émigrés for the Government of the Republic of Lithuania and the Committee on Human Rights at the Lithuanian Parliament), and (4) minority organizations.

2. To combat insulting and demeaning media images about minorities work needs to be done with those who produce and write media material. *Seminars and training courses* for journalists and managers of media organizations on ethnic and sexual minority matters should be periodically conducted. These seminars may produce a number of action-oriented proposals aimed at improving, in particular via self-regulation and professional standards, the ways in which ethnic and



sexual minorities are depicted in the Lithuanian mass media.

3. To encourage the press and the electronic media to combat racism, xenophobia and homophobia, *prizes for distinguished examples* of media coverage of minorities may be awarded.

4. Because representations of ethnic and sexual minorities have been both insufficient and trivial, *minority groups* should also play a role in *promoting* both their *quantitative and qualitative representations* in the media. It does not suffice to contest 'negative' images of ethnic and sexual minorities with hopes of transforming representation practices in a more 'positive' direction. By directly challenging many of the media's representational practices, it is possible to publicly reveal the dehumanizing effects of the language of exclusion. Only by reexamining and questioning our own prejudices can we overcome dominant patterns of constructing ethnic and sexual minorities and reverse the pernicious impact of stereotypical representations on the knowledge and behavior of Lithuanian society. However, moving toward non-phobic representations of minority groups requires such groups to actively participate in the struggle for their legitimate inclusion in the public sphere.

*Publicity strategies of minorities* should focus both on mainstream media and the cultivation of alternative public spheres. Representatives of minority groups and rights advocates should continue to press media professionals for equitable and respectable treatment. Activists should stress the responsibility and accountability of the press in facilitating cultural awareness and understanding and in addressing social and cultural issues that are critical to Lithuanian society. To counteract prejudices and misrepresentations offered by mainstream Lithuanian press and television, alternative interpretations of ethnicity and homosexuality need to be developed and better publicized.

To fight minority exclusion and symbolic disadvantages, a politics of recognition must be promoted that allows space for representational diversity and encourages more complex and sophisticated representations of minority communities. There is a strong educational and moral case for including neglected or distorted experiences of ethnic and sexual minorities into the media narratives of a multicultural citizenship. As Bhikhu Parekh (1997, pp. 166-170) has noted, "since different cultural communities in a multicultural society sometimes have different needs, a collectively acceptable form of multiculturalism must acknowledge and accommodate those differences".

To compensate for the inferior resources and skills of subordinate groups, the media must provide a voice for minority interests rather than focusing exclusively on the interests of dominant groups. In James Curran's (1991, pp. 30-31) words, the "democratic media system should represent all significant

interests in society. It should assist the equitable negotiation or arbitration of competing interests through democratic processes". The media should be a 'countervailing' agency operating within a framework that ensures the representation of all interests.

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