

NATIONALISM AND MOTHERHOOD IN CONTEMPORARY GEORGIA

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Abstract

This paper aims at discussing the relationship between nationalism and motherhood in contemporary Georgia. Based on the interview results with 13 educated, young Georgian women, the paper demonstrates the ways in which the interviewees' identification with their home-country – Georgia and with national culture influences their attitudes towards motherhood, their ways of becoming mothers and different aspects of their lives. I argue that national belonging and internalized national values and concerns, such as population growth or the country's cultural/moral survival, together with the codes of behavior and norms, considered to be crucial for Georgian society by the respondents, is tightly linked with the women's conceptualization of motherhood as their primary role/duty and also, as their most innate desire and the most profound experience. In addition, national culture, morals or patterns of proper behavior in Georgia and women's approval of them, plays important role in the ways interviewees make decisions about becoming mothers: when, how and with whom they decide on mothering. Finally, conceptualization of motherhood as women's most important duty and desire, tied with national concerns over countries biological/cultural survival as well as with norms of behavior within the country affects many aspects of the women's lives such as educational or career plans - but affects them in different manners. In conclusion, nationalist ideology which sets standards and behavior and assigns specific and gendered roles to the members of national unity, in my research is articulated and internalized by the women and plays important role in conceptualization of motherhood, interviewees' attitudes and feelings towards mothering and influences many aspects of the women's life practices. However, even if the experiences differ, the respondents express desire to be fitting into what they understand to be the norms for Georgian women's behavior.

Table of Contents

Introduction	1
Literature Review	4
Women and biological reproduction of the nation	5
Women as transmitters and bearers of the national culture	7
“Everyone’s morality”	9
Background	13
Georgian Nationalism	13
What are the national values, tradition and culture and how it relates to women?	17
Politics, media, church and reproduction	19
Methodology	23
Analysis: Georgian women and motherhood	25
National motherhood	25
Motherhood for the nation’s sake as a personal desire	26
Ideological influences	32
Mothers and the society	36
What kind of mothers?	37
The role of the family	38
Time for becoming a mother	44
Choosing partners and fathers	46
Lives of the mothers	50
Conclusion	57
References:	61

Introduction

Nationalist ideology is focused on drawing the boundaries of the nations based on citizenship of specific state and/or membership of specific culture or ethnic group, and defines the characteristics of the people who belong within the nation in opposition to “outsiders”. (Yuval-Davis, 1998, p.25-26; Miller, 1998, p.9) Nationalism plays important role in constructing images of femininities and masculinities and in assigning gendered roles and the duties, defining norms of behavior to the members of national unity. (Mosse, 1985, p.1) Therefore McClintock’s (1993, p.61) claim that “All nationalisms are gendered” is very appropriate and legitimate. These norms and the duties which construct femininities in different nationalisms might differ, however, women’s role as reproducers of the nations culturally or biologically, and therefore defining women as mothers, is argued to be characteristic to many of the national projects. (Yuval-Davis, 1998. pp.28-31)

In this paper, I discuss the relationship between nationalism and motherhood articulated by young Georgian women based on the interviews with 13 young mothers, under 35, living in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi. Based on the interview results, I analyze how national concerns over population growth or maintenance of national culture and values are related to the interviewees’ desires, attitudes and ideas towards mothering and what influence motherly role – defined through national concerns and articulated by the women themselves - has on different aspects of the interviewees’ lives. I argue that the respondents’ conceptualization of motherhood as their innate desire and the most exciting life experience is very much influenced by what they see as their duty in front of the nation – to reproduce Georgians and to maintain Georgian cultural values. National role of mothering, which women explicitly articulate, is internalized and plays major role in how they think or feel about motherhood. In addition, the sense of belonging to the

nation/Georgian society, and the interviewees' expressed desire to conform to the perceived societal norms, influences the ways the women become mothers. The ways in which women depict national/societal norms and the values, determines not only their understanding of motherhood, but their mothering practices, which is linked with family, certain age and ethnic/cultural/religious origin of the partner. And finally, perceived importance of motherhood, combined with the patterns of becoming a mother, influences different aspects of the women's lives, their educational or career plans. The interviewees feel it as their own desire to be following the norms, national morals and standards of behavior in Georgia, and even if some aspects of their life practices do not completely fit into them, they tend to interpret their experiences in accordance to the perceived norms.

To sum up, the analysis of the interviews shows, how nationalist ideology concerned with maintaining countries' culture and expanding national population is closely related to constructing the meanings of motherhood. Moreover, the importance of maintenance of culture of the nation defines the ways women become mothers. But importantly, what my research also demonstrates, is that nationalism as an ideology effectively functions through people's self-identification with what they perceive as national values. My research shows, that it is the interviewees' identification with Georgiannes and therefore with all the national/cultural/societal norms and morals that defines their attitudes, their feelings and large part of their life practices. And even if actual experiences of the women do not fit in the established norms of behavior completely, the interviewees still demonstrate the desire to be conforming to them or pretend to be doing so.

For analyzing the role of nationalism and Georgian women's self-identification as members of national community in constructing the meanings of motherhood, and its influence on their

different life practices, I first provide the overview of theoretical approaches about the interrelationship between nationalism, gender and motherhood and the findings of different researches concerning the issue. Then I discuss nationalism in Georgia, explaining some of the specificities of Georgian nation-making process and its main values and principles, which are also reflected in the answers of the interviewees. Finally, I provide the analysis of the interviews leading to the conclusion, that the ways of conceptualizing motherhood as well as integrating mothering role in women's lives is influenced by the national values perceived and internalized by the interviewees.

Literature Review

As Ivekovich and Mostov (2002) open their discussion of nationalism and gender, the two concepts are social and historical constructions which dialectically shape each other (pp.9-10). However, analyzing interconnection between gender and the nation across different countries, introduces numerous specificities as well as similarities, leading to the conclusion that “nationalism is always gendered” (Pettman, 1996. p.56 as cited in Wilford, Miller, 1998. p.6).

Acknowledging the fact that the knowledge is always situated (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.1), and is derived from particular contexts and experiences, Nira Yuval-Davis (1997), provides an useful analytical framework for “gendered understandings of nation and nationalisms” (p.3). She differentiates between several major dimensions of the intersection between discourses of gender and of the nation. (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.4). According to Yuval-Davis, women participate in different national projects as: transmitters of national culture/traditions, signifiers of ethnic/cultural boundaries, symbolic representatives of the nation, or actors of different national/political/military struggles of the country (Yuval-Davis, 1998, p.23-30; Kesic, 2002, p.65). These major roles assigned to the women in nationalisms overlap and in complex, influence the ways of constructing womanhood in different countries or in different contexts, shape the understanding of women’s roles and duties in front of the nations. (Kesic, 2002. p.65).

In this paper, which is analyzing the relationship between young urban Georgian women’s understanding of motherhood, its link with nationalist ideology and its influence on different parts of women’s lives, I want to focus on women’s role as biological reproducers of the nation, and also on their role as bearer’s of the culture of the national collectivity, which needs to be maintained and passed on to the future generations. (Yuval-Davis, 1998, pp.28-31). Moreover, I discuss the role of nationalist ideology on shaping people’s patterns of thinking and acting

according to the norms and morals defined within one's own national community. I mainly bring the examples of nationalism-motherhood interconnection from post-soviet/post-state socialist countries, as the roles assigned to the women (mainly motherly, domestic) is argued to have been also in many ways similar in these countries, due to the strong revival of nationalist ideology and similar economic changes after the collapse of socialist regime. (Marsh, 1998, p.91)

Women and biological reproduction of the nation

As nationalism is concerned with creating boundaries of the nation, usually understood as a collectivity of "common origin" (Yuval-Davis, 1998, p.30) in order to "sort people into 'us' and 'them'", women as biological 'producers of children/people' are assigned the role of reproducing the nation within these boundaries. (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p.26).

According to George L. Mosse (1985), who provides interesting analysis of the role on nationalism in constructing the images of femininity and masculinity, as well as the norms, proper roles and behaviors for belonging to the society, and for not being rendered as abnormal and excluded in Germany and England of 18th century (p.1) - the roles assigned to the women in the society mainly defined them as "a guardian, protector, mother" (Mosse, 1985, p.17).

Many researchers writing about the intersection of gender and nationalism in post-state socialist countries demonstrate the same. The revival of nationalistic ideologies in post-socialist region is argued to be strong (Marsh, 1998, p.91; Rener, Ule, 1998, p.121) and As Rosalind Marsh(1998) describes, new nationalistic discourses have resulted in putting a great emphasis on women's "reproductive and nurturing roles" (p.91), defining them primarily as mothers, responsible for nation's "biological survival and moral progress" (Rener, Ule, 1998, p.121).

Assigning mothering role to the women for the sake of nation's expansion, leads to defining women's "reproductive potential for national needs, (Rivkin-Fish,2006,p.161). And according to Marsh (1998), directly attacks "women's reproductive rights and especially on abortion"(p.93). And similarly as Yuval-Davis (1998) argues, emphasis on women's role as reproducers of "national stocks' start with pre-natal policies" (p.31).

Widespread and politicized debates on abortion in different post-soviet countries provide good examples for this claim. Susan Gal (1994) shows, how abortion debates, closely linked with "national identity and the defense of civil society" (p.284) has been important part of Hungarian politics, has been central to the discourses of "physicians, lawyers, demographers, populist writers and even the liberal opposition" (p.285). Looking at the nature of the debates, one can conclude that these discourses see abortion as a "challenge to national identity", a "cultural rather than economic problem" and are suspicious of the power of the women to make decisions about their reproductive practices themselves (Gal, 1994, p.284). Based on the example of post-soviet Russia, Rivkin-Fish (2006) similarly shows, how pronatalists' and nationalists' discourses framed the issue of abortion "in terms of nationalist needs", linked all the concerns over reproductive health issues or women's other interests with "weakened Russia and "nation's impending extinction" (p.164). What is more interesting, Rivkin-Fish (2006) shows, that the influence of nationalist ideologies on abortion debates, has even been successful in actual restriction of policies for abortion rights in Russia. (p.164). However, according to Julie Mostov (2000) based on her analyses of nationalism in former Yugoslavian countries, pronatalist and anti-abortion rhetoric similarly associated women having abortion with "moral enemies of the nation", a clear demonstration that "the highest calling for women in the nation is that of motherhood"(p.99). But, what Mostov (2000) also shows is that, at the same time, in the state of

many ethnic confrontations and wars in the region, strong emphasis was put on women reproducing their own nation, and those giving birth to “outsiders” were also rendered as enemies (p.99).

Women as transmitters and bearers of the national culture

Together with the focus on the role of the women as reproducers of the nation within defined national borders, as Yuval-Davis (1998) shows, they are also given “the social role of intergenerational transmitters of cultural traditions, customs, songs, cuisine, and of course the mother-tongue” (p.28). What is more, this role usually identifies women with “ethnic and cultural boundaries” and defines them as “bearers of the collectivity’s identity”. (Yuval-Davis, 1998, pp.28-29). According to Ivekovic and Mostov (2002), women, as bearers of the traditions, are first, defined with such adjectives as “purity” and “suffering” and second, not only as biological reproducers of the nation, but as “allegorical mother whose offspring are the country’s guardians, heroes and martyrs”, passing on traditions and cultural ideals (p.11).

Similarly As Ketu H. Katrak(1992) argues, while “the arena of female sexuality – fertility/infertility; motherhood; the sexual division of labor – is the site of certain traditions”, women in nationalistic agendas are seen as “guardians of tradition”, and the images such as motherland are retrieved (p.392). The equation of women with nation’s culture and traditions has been discussed by Rozalind Marsh (1998), who claims that, the contemporary revival of the image of ‘Mother Russia’, after the collapse of Soviet Union, represents “a reappropriation of national identity and culture” (p.94). Similar is the symbolic importance of the images of ‘Hearth Mother’ in Ukraine, “a perfect Ukrainian women, and the spirit of the nation”, often used as “women as mother” - image by Ukrainian nationalists. (Marsh, 1998, p.94).

This “feminine symbolic representation reinforce cultural influences”, as Elisabeth Porter argues (1998, p.43). And the equation of the women with national culture also leads to putting emphasis on individual women’s “culturally ‘appropriate behavior’, mainly focused around controlling women’s sexuality. (Yuval-Davis, 1998, p.28).

The conceptualization of motherhood in relation to national concerns over population growth, cultural survival and keeping national/cultural borders, as Ivekovic and Mostov (2002) argue, results in regulating women’s reproductive practices, sexuality, everyday life “by the state and its moral and cultural institutions (church and family)” as “reproduction and sexual relations are political acts”, “sexuality of individual women presents a potential threat to the nation” and should be controlled. (p.11). And Similarly, as Willson and Frederiksen (1995) argue, women’s role in bearing and rearing members of the ethnic collectivities, carries critical implications for marriage patterns and the ways women’s reproductive capacities are commandeered and controlled by the social group”. (p.3)

The influence of religion, family and articulation of traditional or culturally acceptable female behavior in nationalist discourses has been discussed by other authors also. As Rozalind Marsh (1998) argues, nationalist discourse, well supported by religion in post-soviet Russia, and other soviet countries, defined family as “the smallest unit of the new ethnic or wider national group and gives it, and especially women as mothers, a mission in the name of community.” (p.94). What is more, Rivkin-Fish (2006) shows, how abortion debates in Russia, were heavily using the rhetoric of morality (versus “sin” and “murder”) – , denied any openness to sexuality and linked womanhood directly to family. For example, sex educational manual in early 90s in the country included such advice as: “sexual desire is natural and necessary part of human life and that sex is most safely and morally experienced when contained within the family and expressed in cultured

ways” (pp.164-165). Renner and Ule (1998) similarly argue, that putting women responsible for nation’s moral or biological survival, leads to defining them as and limiting them to “guardians of the home” (p.121). They claim, the revival of nationalism which appropriates traditional/religious values in its discourses leads to “internalization of the classification into public men and private women” (Renner, Ule, 1998, p.121).

However, national ideals centered around family and morality do not always correspond to the lived practices. As Patrizia Albanese (2006) claims, what the example of post-soviet Russia demonstrated, is that, despite strong emphasis on heterosexual two-parent households by nationalistic ideologies in Russia, where “father was synonymous with breadwinner” and women’s role was assumed to be mothering at home, “none of these assumptions adequately reflected social reality. Divorce, lone-parenthood, underemployment of men (and women, for that matter) and inadequate wages were facts of life in new Russia” in early 90s (Albanese 2006, pp.101-102). Because of economic hardship, the establishment of “traditional nuclear family as the Russian ideal was virtually impossible” (Albanese, 2006, p.102). Nevertheless, as Albanese shows, it did not prevent the nationalist attempts to increase “the social value of child-rearing” (Albanese, 2006, p.102) and to “encourage Russians to marry, remain married and have children”(Albanese, 2006, p.104).

“Everyone’s morality”¹

Adequately reflecting social realities or not, nationalist ideologies are argued to be playing crucial role on people’s identification with particular societies, in determining what is considered to be normal or appropriate cultural behavior.

¹ I use the title by George L. Mosse (1985:191)

Renner and Ule (1998) claim “national experience as a collective experience” influences the patterns of thinking, attachment of values to different moral standards and creates the idea of “common truth and common (authentic) sentiment”.(p.127). And as Ivekovic and Mostov (2002) argue: ““The nation” in the language of ethnocracy is portrayed as a natural community; identification with and loyalty to the nation does not involve choice but, instead, acceptance of the obligations of belonging and the mission of the nation, as articulated by its guardians”. (p.18). Or as Joyce Puri (2004) claims, citizenship defined in relation to nationalism, central to which is making distinction between ‘citizens’ and ‘others’, and determining duties and privileges of insiders “asks diverse inhabitants within the territorial boundaries to see their loyalty to their nation or country above all other parochial ties” (p.88).

Nira Yuval-Davis (1998) also emphasizes the influential potential of nationalist ideology on the people. As she says, the women are not just “passive victims” of nationalist ideologies; they themselves participate in maintaining national principles. According to her, “all women might be parties to these ideologies, as the active participation of women in various religious fundamentalist and fascist movements can show”. (p.31)

The influence of nationalism on people’s way of thinking and acting, has been well demonstrated by George L. Mosse (1985), in his ““Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe”, showing that the principles of normalness and respectability, norms of femininity and masculinity, distinguishing “insiders” from the “outsiders” in England and Germany have shaped the identities of different individuals of the societies, defined the goals and principles of almost all political or social movements. (pp. 23-30, 48-55, 91). He claims, that the influence of nationalism on the society “that identified with it” (Mosse, 1985, p.90) was so strong that even the feminists showed acceptance to the basic morals and norms of

respectability – a “restrictive perception of the role of women” and most lesbians “rested their plea that fundamentally accepted the standards and judgments of the society”, although exactly those standards were the main reason for controlling female sexuality (Mosse, 1985, p.91). Similarly, Michele Rivkin-Fish (2006) shows that, while arguing that “nationalists’ insistence on seizing control over women’s fertility appears increasingly acceptable”, and is gaining more and more public support in Russia, even Russia’s women’s organizations and feminist groups avoid discussing the issues of reproductive rights, abortion and contraception (p.167).

To sum up, nationalist ideologies, allied with the discourses of religion, culture and traditions, put strong emphasis on women’s role as biological or cultural² reproduction of the nation and for keeping its borders. These discourses play important role in providing definitions for femininities in different countries and in different contexts and assign particular roles and duties to the women - as mothers. Moreover, strong emphasis on morality and the family of national ideologies determine the norms of behavior or the patterns of the marriage for the women. Finally, As Mosse (1985) argues, the nation attempts “to provide symbols with which people can identify” (p.16) and vice versa, people tend to agree with the norms which nationalism presents and take up the roles it assigns to the members of national unity (“Everyone’s morality”- Mosse, 1985, p.191).

However, the literature I found on nationalism motherhood connection, and especially the researches done in post-soviet countries, although recognize the influence of national values on women’s perception of their roles/duties in front of the nation and on internalization of national/cultural norms and values by the women, focus more on nationalist ideology articulated

² nationalist ideologies can have many different implications with relation to gender as well, according to many different historic/cultural specificities, however, I discuss these two here and because of the focus of my study

by state or different institutions (media, church, education etc.) and less on actual experiences. In this paper I want to look at the role of nationalist ideology in connection with motherhood articulated, internalized and lived according to by the women themselves. In my research, which is based on the interviews with 13 young Georgian mothers (under 30), I argue, the way the interviewees perceive motherhood as one of the most important/exciting experience, women's duty and responsibility, natural desire and essential phase to go through is very much influenced by their perception of the role of motherhood as important for the Georgian nation's biological and cultural survival. The motherhood-nationhood link seems to be often emphasized and supported by the society as well and provides women with desirable social position. I demonstrate that perceived duties in front of the nation are evidently and directly connected with the interviewees' personal desires and attitudes concerning motherhood. Moreover, women's identification with Georgiannes and standards of the behavior, morals and norms perceived as important for belonging to the society, influence the specificity of the patterns in which women become mothers: when, how and with who they decide on having children. Finally, I show the mothering role, which is perceived as personal desire and the nature of which is defined by cultural norms, influences the ways the interviewees make choices about different aspects of their lives (education, career so on). And even if the actual life experiences do not completely fit in the standards perceived as normal and desirable, the interviewees still tend to interpret their life in accordance to perceived national values. To sum up, this paper shows shows, that national ideals of motherhood are perceived, internalized, taken up and articulated by the women. They shape the ways they think and feel about mothering and influence large part of their life experiences.

Background

In order to clarify the national ideas on which the answers of my respondents are based on, and their connection with the women's conceptualization of the motherhood, in this chapter, I briefly discuss the main components constituting Georgian nationalism, and the values/principles that determine the membership of the Georgian nation. I demonstrate that Georgianness in contemporary Georgia as well as throughout its history has been based on ethnicity (whatever has been understood as ethnically Georgian), Georgian culture, traditions; and in addition, on the religion of the majority of the country-Orthodox Christianity: itself serving as the major symbol of national identity for years, and playing influential role in shaping cultural/moral norms in Georgia (Jones, 2003, pp.88-89). Then I discuss some of the specificities of Georgian culture and the roles it assigns to the women. Finally, I bring several examples of how women/motherhood/sexuality are targeted through dominant nationalist discourses in the country nowadays.

Georgian Nationalism

Making of the Georgian nation dates back to the beginning of 20th century, when after separating from Russian Empire and before becoming the part of the Soviet Union in the 30s the first independent State of Georgia was established in 1918. The nationalist ideology and the main principles of it, established by Georgian intellectual elite of that time - promoting the idea of Georgianness by numerous publications of nationalist character or civil activities, included emphasis on Orthodox Christianity as the basis of Georgian national identity, Georgian traditional way of life, its culture and its heroic past (Chumburidze, 2007). Throughout almost 70 years of the dominance of Soviet Union, these established values determining Georgian's national identity as Nodia (2005) claims, not only have persisted, but have become even stronger

– that was reflected in three big public protests against Soviet Union, aimed at protecting Georgian language, cultural monuments of separate Georgian identity. (Nodia 2005, p.63, Nodia 2003,p.10). Since 90s, nationalism, similar to other post-Soviet countries has revived strongly, and nation-building after a being soviet-state for more than half a century, has become the main ideological bases of Georgian reality and political consciousness (Chumburidze, 2007, p.9). What is specific to Georgian nationalism, is that the first government of independent Georgia, was taken up by the radical nationalists, resulting in wars with ethnic minorities in the beginning of 90s and losing the territories considered to be historically Georgian (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) (Nodia, 2003,p.9). In addition to territorial and ethnic problems in defining Georgian nation-state, this was the time when Orthodox Church became really active in political arena again, took part in public demonstrations and protests, as an emblem of “Georgia’s authentic national identity” determining the main national values or political goals (Jones, 2003,p.88). And the nostalgic references of the first independent Georgian state its national principles, such as maintaining country’s so called unique culture, and unique ways of life were also often articulated. (Nodia, 2003, p.9)

So since then, while going through hard post-war and post-soviet economic transition Georgian nation-building process has been based on territorial, ethnic, cultural and religious components of Georgianness and consequently, “nationalism, patriotism and national idea, is what the civic life and thinking patterns of Georgian people have been founded on”³ (Chumburidze, 2007,p.9). Interestingly, together with articulating Georgian culture’s uniqueness, tied with religion, ethnicity or Georgian traditional way of life, the country, since Shevardnadze’s presidency till now - with National Movement and president Mikheil Saakashvili in the government, has taken

³ my translation

outspokenly pro-western orientation, seeing liberal-democratic values and compatibility with international standards of democracy as its ultimate political aims. (Jones, 2006,p.263, Nodia, 2005, p.78) This on the one hand has resulted in creation of the civil organizations, and adopting the legal system in accordance of international legal regulations. (Jones, 2006, p.263) But on the other hand, liberal principles and the country's strive towards the Europe soon proved to be not fully compatible with traditional or Orthodox Christian values, strongly established within the country. The national sentiments over "what constituted Georgianness" or what was Georgian "national project" (Jones, 2006, p.264) appeared more and more evidently on political arena, and Orthodox Church representing "holy grail of Georgian nationhood" played important role for mobilizing more and more national movements. Everything which was non-orthodox, was often conceptualized as enemies, "seeking to exploit resources and national treasures" and "introducing dangerous non-orthodox sets into the country" (Wheatley, 2005, p.144). West, associated with Europe, through religious and political discourses which appropriate Christianity as the bases of Georgian nationality and culture, started to be depicted as one of such enemies. (Wheatley, 2005, p.144).

Today Georgian political arena and the national ideology it is based on is full of controversies. The government itself has introduced nationalist agenda, loaded with national symbols (new flag and hymn), articulation of the importance of religion, connections with heroic past of Georgia (president was inaugurated by Georgian Patriarch in Gelati Monastery, built by David The Builder, king of Georgia from 12th century, considered to be a "Golden age" and the time of prosperity of Georgian nation). The promise of restoration of Georgian territorial integrity was Mikheil Saakashvili's main slogan (Svanidze, "The end of liberal nationalism?"⁴ 2010. para. 4)

⁴ The titles of the articles discussed in this chapter are translated by me

resulting in military struggle in South Ossetia with Ossetians and Russians in 2007. However, the government's simultaneous orientation to "the West" (Europe and the USA) together with strengthening the sense of nationhood and Georgian traditions and culture and religion, shaped a political struggle between government and opposition based on ideology of national sentiments, on the importance of maintaining traditional society and religion (Nodia, 2005 pp.43-44). Orthodox Church as symbol of country's culture and moral became the main reference for legitimizing political aims of any political party. Parties such as Christian Democrats, Merab Kostava's Society⁵, Traditionalists' Union etc. began to appear and play influential role on Georgian political arena lately. Any political party tries to prove its "better faithfulness to orthodox morals" (Gvakharia "Secular state and religious nationalism, 2010. para.4). Similarly, strong sense of national identity linked with maintaining Georgian culture, 'Georgian genes', religious principles and morals became the key issues for public and the society. Public organizations such as Orthodox Mother's union, Public Orthodox Movement etc., connected or not with the official patriarchate of Orthodox Church have become active resulting in numerous different protests and actions against the threats of Georgian values currently in Georgia, threats which include, as the article in the Newspaper "Lanchkhuti" (05.11.2009): anti orthodox-Christian values, 'appearance' of homosexuals, denial to traditions and the cultural ways of life. ("The treads and risks of the nation" 2009. para. 3,4,5)

To conclude, despite various political aims, building Georgian nation, and maintaining Georgian traditions, (the combination of ethnic, cultural and religious specificities) are the main values and the bases of Georgian political life. They depict everything considered as non-orthodox and non-Georgian as ultimate threats, and require maintenance of traditional/religious culture.

⁵ One of the leader's of Georgian nationalist movement in the beginning of 20th century

Consequently, these are the principles which play important role in people's identification with the country and Georgianness.

What are the national values, tradition and culture and how it relates to women?

Georgian culture tightly linked with religion often articulated and so cherished by the national ideology in Georgia, similarly to nationalisms across different countries has clear gendered implications and assign women their role in nation-building. These "societal codes and networks", the maintenance of culture have been main determinants of Georgian national identity, through Soviet Union's domination, and stays so till now. (Sunny,1989,p.316; Dragadze,1988,p.25). They might have modified throughout the time and numerous political/economic changes, but maintain the central role for defining Georgiannes.

As discussed before, religion as well as national concerns appropriating traditions, put strong emphasis on controlling women's sexuality, placing it within the family and tying with morality, as the practice in of many post-soviet countries (and not only) show. Georgian example is similar, however, the traditions of Georgia concerning female conduct and gender roles, as well as patterns of family might be slightly different.

As Sunny (1989) argues, "Traditional role for women is one of subordination, sexual modesty, and domesticity" (p.316). Tamara Dragadze (1988) claims, women's roles, are firmly defined and see women as mainly mothers and less as wives. "Good mother will automatically gain her husband's affection" (p.157). And that Georgians usually boast for their exceptional appreciation of the women is a result of equation the meaning of a woman with mother, whose role for the nation is respected (Sumbadze, 2008,p.104).However, simultaneously motherhood is placed strictly within the family and women's sexual behavior is linked with complete privacy. Premarital sex is treated negatively and is usually linked with religious norms and

sins.(Sumbadze, 2008, p.105) (It does not ever relate to male sexuality). Strict sexual norms can be seen as one of the reasons for early marriages (starting from the age of 18-19) as a usual practice in Georgia and especially in the regions. Moreover, these sexual norms, which define women as modest mothers in the family, absolutely exclude non-heterosexual behavior. And obeying to them is crucial for being considered as a member of Georgian society: “A person, however, who is visibly developed physically and mentally but does not manifest gender qualities in sex roles” is not considered as a full member; she “can be pitied but is unlikely to be fully accepted as fellow human being. There is a tolerance but from distance” (Dragadze 1988:156).

In addition, the sexual norms, usually linked with morality and religion, are felt deeply personal (Dragadze, 1988, pp.156-157). Finding cases of transgression of these norms in Georgia at the end of 80s were hard, as “Georgian life remains centered on social collectivities of family, circle of friends and the ritual banquet” (Sunny, 1989, p.316), people have wide networks of communications, with the friends and acquaintances resulting in fast information exchange, moral obligations, ties with close kins (Smith, Law et al., 1998, p168, Dragadze, 1988,p.105) and the violation of strict sexual norms, and openness to sexuality which “should be muted” and “channeled into” women’s “love of babies”, “can not be hidden from the public eye” and is usually followed by a huge scandal. (Dragadze, 1988, p.161)

The traditional approach of sexual modesty, wide social networks, collectivities of families which incorporate two or more families living in one household (parents, sons and their families, daughters usually move to the husband’s family) have persisted through the Soviet rule and are actual till today. Premarital sex is still perceived as unacceptable. (Tsintsadze “Disappeared females” 2010, para. 22) Most of the families live in two or three generational households, or

even if they don't, strong ties with close kins are maintained, and parents are hold responsible for new families, for providing financial support, or physical help by elder women to the young (Sumbadze, 2008, p.100). More than half of the children are being born by the women under 25, and the average marriage age is also around 25, though most of the families are created within the age from 20 to 25 (for women) (Sumbadze, 2008.p. 99; "Man and Women in Georgia" 2008:10). The importance of family, and controlled sexuality for women is also reflected in the study of 15 post-soviet countries in 1995, divorces in Georgia constituting 16%, is the lowest rate among the states, and the percentage of remarriage of the women - 5%, is also the lowest number. (Darsky, Scherbov, 1995, p.1) As Sumbadze (2008) says, Georgian women have less chance to remarry after divorce, as creating family with once-married women, is treated as a threat to a man's virtue (p.104).

Politics, media, church and reproduction

The contemporary political/media/religious discourses in Georgia, that take demographic issue as one of the most important priorities, are clear examples of the role of motherhood in nation-building process, and not surprisingly, these discourse not only articulate women's motherly role for the country's biological survival, but strongly tie it with morality and family.

The titles such as "SOS-the nation is aging", "Fatal threat to the nation", appear every day in Georgian newspapers (Rikadze 2008; Sekhniashvili, 2008). Huge resonance resulted when Georgian nation was reported to decrease by 50% by 2050 (Totadze "Georgian nation will be at the edge of extinction by 2050", 2008).

Demography is important part of governments campaign, since Mikheil Saakashvili came into the power, government has implemented numerous pro-natalist policies, such as free birth services (since 2004), building new maternity hospitals, giving material support with the amount

of 1000 GEL (500USD), to each newborn child (Which was abolished in 2008). These pronatalis activities, president's or government's representatives visits to hospitals - broadcasted by the media, are important aspect of governmental politics. However, exactly demographic issues are usual bases of criticism of the government as well. Opposition parties, demand better conditions for maternity leave and increased financial support to the mothers. Blame government, for "hating families with many children" for not providing enough support, and purposefully leading nation to the extinction. (Zabiradze "If constitution is good, nation is going to survive" 2010, Meshveliani "Politics" 2009).

What is more, Orthodox Church has directly involved in 'Georgian nation's survival', and since 2007, the patriarch of Georgia Ilia II, for the sake of expansion of Georgian nation, declared to be willing to baptize every third child of each family.⁶ These massive christening ceremonies are usually broadcasted live. In addition, the children will receive special stipend from Patriarch and will have an award of "Devoted man of the nation" after they are 18. (Nozadze, "Godchildren of the Patriarch" 2009) The influence of church is reported to have increased childbirth by 18 or 20% the next year; however the official statistical results do not approve this information. But the discursive importance of such articles for celebrating and promoting motherhood as women's national duty is clear. (Esselmont, "Church leader sparks Georgian baby boom", 2009, Dolodze "Demographic step is related to the initiative of the Patriarch", 2009)

What is more, demographic issue is usually tied with the women's behavior, morality and marriage.

⁶ This initiative is clearly directed at the Georgian nation, as most of the Orthodox Christians are also understood to be ethnically Georgian (around 80% of the country's population)

The assumed growing tendency of divorces in Georgia is often reported as the hugest threat for the future of the nation, leading the country to extinction by the church or political figures. (Ilia II, “Christmas advices”(n.d) para. 27; Todua, “Family portrait from exterior“ 2004)

The importance of women’s sexual behavior is more and more discussed. The huge scandals arise around the women protecting lesbian rights, outspokenly discussing sexual issues. The discussions directly relate the women with the nation’s moral degradation and the threat for future generations. David Mkheidze’s, article in the newspaper “Republic of Georgia”(#62, april 2010) is a good demonstration. Author, discussing the issue of liberal politics in Georgia, and criticizing the supporters of lesbian/gay communities, sex educational programs etc. focuses on three women Eka kvesetadze, (TV journalist) Shorena Shaverdashvili, (Editor in chief of the LGBT journal “Me”) both advocating sexual minority rights, and Shorena Begashvili (the moderator of the 1st TV show about sex). He, concerned with moral degradation of the nation, tightly links national morality with precious Georgian traditions and religion, (saying, for example, that the TV show about LGBT rights was held on purpose on the important religious holiday, so valuable for the majority of traditional Georgians) sees the three women as problems of the society. Because, as he says, they educate their and “our children” with propaganda of sexual liberation. The article makes it clear that what concerns Georgian nation, is women’s denial to the proper sexual and motherly roles, based on religious or cultural norms - the norms which need to be sustained. The threat which Mkheidze sees facing the nation, is women’s role in possible ‘degradation’ of the future generation. It is evident that the rhetoric takes mother’s role linked with national duty of bringing up the future generations, as the bases for criticism of the outspoken sexuality.

Women's role as mothers for the nation, the moral values and norms of behavior is one of the key themes for Orthodox Church as well. Numerous articles in religious or regular newspapers include discussions of motherhood, by the representatives of the church. Motherhood is presented as women's "real mission on earth", "bringing children up with Christian morality and dignity" is a woman's most sacred duty. Marriage serves the purpose of bringing up the children, and the conflicts between the partners should be settled without harming children's mentality and so on. (Asatiani "Mother's prayer" 2005, Priest Paisi "Mother" n.d.).

To sum up, Georgian nationalism is majorly based on maintaining ethnic, cultural and religious specificities in the territory of the country, (which is not itself settled). Ethnicity, religion or culture which determine Georgianness put emphasis on women's motherly role and tie it with the family and restricted sexuality. And the issues of mother's role for the nation's expansion or for maintenance of its culture play important role in contemporary discourses of media, church or politics – depicting women's motherly role, (and proper motherhood: in family, and for passing on cultural/religious morals) as crucial for the nation. My research shows the impact of these national values on the young urban women living in Georgia. I demonstrate how the conceptualization of motherhood by them is linked with the meaning of motherhood understood in nationalist terms and to their sense of belonging to national community.

Methodology

I did the research for this paper in Georgia, in April 2010. Using snowballing sampling I interviewed 13 young Georgian mothers, living in Tbilisi, whose social status, based on the criteria of living standards in Tbilisi, could be classified as middle class. The age of the interviewees varies from 23 to 34. All of the interviewees have received higher education. However, only 4 out of the 13 respondent are working currently. All the women identify as heterosexual, and do not question their sexual identity. Though one of the interviewees has had lesbian experience, she refused discussing the issue, as irrelevant for both her sexual-identity as well as for the topic of the interview. Almost all the women are married with the fathers of their children. Only two of them (Bako, Natia) are divorced, and one (Eka) is a remarried widow.

The names I use in the analysis are the women's real names as agreed with them.

I conducted semi-structured interviews, lasting for one hour on average. I transcribed and translated the interview results. In order to receive more open answers, I introduced my study as a research on women's ways of treating their experience of motherhood: how they felt about motherhood, what they saw as important about their motherly role. I purposefully avoided mentioning words such as national values, or nationalism, in the description of my project as well as during the interviews, not to trigger ideologically based answers only. Instead, I tried to form questions with more neutral terms and put emphasis on women's own experiences. However, women's reference to the nation, national/societal values and norms turned out to be strikingly evident in the ways they talked about their experiences. References such as "being a Georgian" or "while living in Georgia" framed the discussion of the reasons of why and how women thought, felt or acted in a certain manner.

It is also important, that many times, responses were based on the interviewees' perceived mutual understanding between me – also Georgian – and them. Numerous times, my acceptance of the articulated values, feelings and desires and my approval with them was taken for granted. I think my Georgian origin, which led the women to assume that their ideas and attitudes towards different issues would be shared, understood and appreciated helped them to be more open about their personal experiences as well as about their viewpoints. Me, myself, tried to be empathic and supportive, which is, of course, not difficult and unusual for me, as being born and brought up within the same country and culture, I, if do not share completely, am well aware of many components that determine Georgian women's self-identities. Finally, I think my age 21, single status, and no outspoken desire for having the children, which would qualify me as girl and not yet a women, in my respondents eyes, (because young women, who are not yet mothers are not referred to as women in Georgian language) played its role in the respondents clear and descriptive presentation of motherhood to me – to a girl who is still not familiar with the experience, and consequently with the feelings which women experience as being mothers.

Analysis: Georgian women and motherhood

The interviews lead to several interesting observations in how Georgian women conceptualize motherhood. And about the ways in which their ideas about the women's motherly role as well as different aspects of their life practices are related to their identification as members of Georgian community. I argue, that women's ways of seeing motherhood as one of the most important and exciting experiences in life are directly linked with and shaped by their perception of mothering role for multiplying the Georgian nation, and passing on cultural values to future generations. This attitude towards motherhood together with the norms of behavior, women perceive as important for being a member of Georgian society determine the ways they make decision about having children: when, how and with who they become mothers. Finally, motherly role and motherhood practices influence many aspects of women's lives, their education career and so on, but affects them differently, based on their social/financial or other conditions. Throughout the analysis, it is also evident that not every woman's experiences fit into what they perceive as norm of Georgian society, but they still express to agree with it and desire to conform/to have conformed. To sum up, nationalist ideology, internalized and articulated by the women, plays influential role in the ways women think and feel about motherhood, and make numerous decisions about how to live their lives.

National motherhood

The link between nation's survival, expansion or well being and the women's role as mother has been described by most of the interviewees. Two main aspects of motherhood-nationhood connection could be distinguished from the women's responses: viewing motherhood as important for the nation's biological survival, and treating motherhood as a role of a women to bring up the children with proper cultural norms, pass on Georgian values and traditions to them,

and moreover teach them rules of behavior, proper moral values, provide them with desirable life conditions such as educational opportunities etc. Conceptualization of motherhood in these terms, as discussed above, is characteristic to most of the nationalist ideologies. (Yuval-Davis, 1998,p.28-31). However what the responses also demonstrate is that this nationhood-motherhood connection seems to be tied with the ways women conceptualize motherhood, see it as the most valuable or important experience, as happiness, contribution to life or as fulfillment of women's natural desire – clearly showing how dominant national values become internalized and experienced as one's internal attitude and feeling - national morality becomes “everyone's morality” as Mosse (1985) would argue (pp.191-195). Finally, the women's responses also demonstrate how their perceptions about the role of the mother for the country has been influenced by the ideologies from different institutions, such as church or medical establishments, and also from the articulation of motherhood-nation connection in Georgian society.

Motherhood for the nation's sake as a personal desire

Nana:

Motherhood in the first place is very important for the country and the society, because if the nation doesn't expand our country can not develop. Also, it is important how you bring up your children, if you fail to bring them up normal and polite, the society can not form properly. That is why mothers have a really important role.

Nana's response clearly demonstrates the direct link she sees between nation's biological survival or “normal” development of the future generations of the society and women's role as mothers. Not only is she aware of one of the major national concerns - to “expand” the country – but shows that she has clear ideas of what “normal” or proper membership of it means, and sees it as mothers' duty to bring up the children with the values she considers to be important for the society.

Tamar's response sounds very similar:

Motherhood is important, as you multiply the nation at the first place, besides you give love and warmth to your children, teach them Georgian traditions and habits... Mother's and child's relationship is very specific, after you become a mother, you change. After having a child motherhood stands in the first place. This is often really difficult, but is great at the same time.

So, Tamar, similarly to Nana, links mother's role with the biological reproduction of the nation in very direct words, and moreover connects motherhood with passing on Georgian "traditions and habits" to the children. Later in the interview she also emphasizes other duties of mothers, such as providing children with education, bringing them up "normal":

"Firstly, I am happy to be a mother as I love my child very much. And also the duty of the mother is to bring up normal children and give them education."

The responses show how the motherly role is assigned and taken up by the women in nation building process. Almost none of the interviewees connect concerns over population growth or keeping the national culture with the role of a father – showing that – nation building usually employs constructing femininities vs masculinities where "women"⁷ reproduce nation physically and symbolically", and men have different roles, such as to "protect, defend and avenge the nation", for example. (Ivekoic, Mostov, 2002,p.10). In Georgia, as Sumbadze (2008) argues, child-rearing is understood as purely women's duty, and men's participation in feminine business is perceived as shameful (p.108). The answers of the women, who do not mention father's role in bringing up the children similarly shows that they perceive this duty purely as their own responsibility. However, Tamar's response also shows how she connects what she sees as motherly duties with her own experience of being a mother, by talking about motherhood as "great", as happiness, and by viewing it to be standing at the first place in her life. Nationalist values such as concerns over the population growth and "normalcy" of the future generation,

⁷ my emphasis

which the women seem to be well aware of, are tightly connected with the ways most of the interviewees conceptualize motherhood in general, see it as exciting experience, happiness, as the most important part of their lives - demonstrating the influence of the national values not only on peoples attitudes towards different issues (motherhood in this case), but also on the ways how they experience different practices, and perceive what is valued for the nation (bearing and rearing children) as their own value and desire.

I'm really happy to be a mother, as it's everything for me now, the base of my existence. You wake up in the morning thinking about your child. All your life is dependent on the children. This is something I could never refuse to have. It is a motivating power for me to. You know, even pronouncing the words that you are a mother makes you feel different.

Explained Ninuca, depicting motherhood as the most important aspect of her life, as her primary concern and the source of the motivation. Moreover, her response shows her awareness of the value attached to motherhood, as even pronouncing of it in relation to herself makes Ninuca feel better. Motherhood has been talked about as “excitement” or “pleasure” almost in every single interview.

As Natia said:

I think one of the most important things in life is to become a mother. I am happy to have experienced this and to have a child. I know I can not pay as much attention to my child as I ought to, but my daughter is everything for me.

Natia, who similarly treats motherhood as one of the most important experiences of the life, which makes her feel happy, also shows that motherhood, is not detached from cultural/societal norms, of what being a mother means. She shows that she “ought to” pay a lot of attention to her children in order to see herself as a good mother:

“Mother should give children numerous different things, love and care. Mother should teach them how to behave, what is wrong and what is right. It is a big responsibility” – She added.

Her response shows, what she sees as important and happy experience of hers, is also linked with responsibility of being a mother, with teaching norms of behavior, or different values to the children. Sometimes, this responsibility of the mother is directly linked with contribution to the nation. As Nana, after talking about the role of motherhood for nation's expansion and for better future generation also noticed:

I think I have contributed a lot. It is not a small thing to be a mother of two children. When I had only one child, I thought it was just for my pleasure, but now, when I am bringing up two children, I think I contributed to my country as much as I could.

These answers show how the ways in which women perceive their motherly experiences and value them are connected with the national ideals about the role of motherhood for the country, for contributing to population growth and its proper development. The women are well aware of the value attached to mothering in nation-building process and themselves value motherhood in very similar terms. Eka:

The role of a woman as mother is really important. I have seen forty years old women who are not mothers, and there is something different about them, as if there is something wrong. Motherly instincts are what every woman has, and therefore a woman needs to experience motherhood. And of course, the more mothers there will be and the more children will be born, the better it is for the country

In Eka's answer, not only is motherhood linked with a better future of the country but with women's "natural motherly instincts" as well. Discussing motherhood in "natural" terms, and at the same time expressing excitement about the experience appears in other interviewees responses also:

When you hold your child in your hands, this is an absolutely unique feeling. There is the instinct in your body which tells you how you should behave, what to do. Doctors can tell it to you, family members might help, but mostly you know what your child needs. There is a very special connection. When Iziko was born, she was taken out of the block to be given medication, hundred children were crying in the hospital, but I could recognize her cry. I felt her as absolutely my part.

As it has been argued, one's own experiences or dominant values established within given culture usually become "natural", and "right", moreover if *feels*⁸ "natural;" (Anderson, Carter, Lowe, 1999, p.66) and the conceptualization of "'natural mother' into national service" is not also a rear practice. (Martin, 2004,p.172). Gvanca's story similarly and evidently shows, how she connects her motherly feelings with biological and instinctual attachment with the child, how she treats motherhood as a uniquely special experience. However, this naturalized ways of seeing motherhood as we saw in Eka's talk, appear together with the discussion of the better future of the country, and moreover depict motherhood as inevitable experience for every woman. This connection between national ideals - defining roles of the mothers for contribution to the population or culture of the nation and conceptualization of motherhood (as natural, as the most important, as inevitable for every women) in women's talks appears very clearly in Bako's response:

You should have a child to appreciate the feeling of motherhood, to see numerous things in life in a different way. Some women don't have children, but I think every woman should become a mother, it is necessary, it is what women are being born for. I think I have not created anything more valuable than Nikoloz. Firstly, this is a really emotionally loaded experience and secondly, this is a great responsibility which is on the women. These two are interrelated, every women should feel it and have children.

First, Bako, who clearly frames motherhood in naturalistic terms, saying that a woman is born to become a mother, similarly to Eka, sees motherhood as inevitable experience to go through for every woman. She sees child as the most valuable creation of hers. However, this approach, or a "natural" and "emotionally loaded" experience of mothering is also combined with the responsibility of mothering, she puts upon every women. Moreover, the responsibility, Bako

⁸ original italics

talks about, is connected with nation's needs, both for its biological reproduction and for bringing up proper children:

Children make our lives beautiful. But giving birth is not enough, you should look after and bring up the children. Today, it is really hard to bring up the children properly, to have enough patience...

And she added: "We're a small nation, and it is really important to have and bring up a child."

So the links between perceiving motherhood as the most desirable and 'natural' experience, responsibility of mothering and national needs become clearly evident in Bako's description of what motherhood means to her. Moreover depicting motherhood as the most important experience and treating it as a norm for every women, similarly in Bako' as well as Eka's talks, puts mothers in clearly privileged position to non-mothers:

As Bako said:

I, for example, have friends, who are of my age (30) and have no child. I...how to put this, I am somehow sorry for them, they can not experience the feeling. There are cases when women can't have children because of health problems, which is understandable, but I even think they should adopt.

In Bako's and Eka's responses, childless women are depicted as those with whom "there is something wrong" (Eka) and for whom we should be sorry (Bako). And clearly, the discourse, shaped by the internalization and naturalization of women's duties in front of the nation excludes everyone who do not fit. As Morrel (1994) argues, when motherhood is conceptualized as a norm and "the deepest knowledge a woman can experience, childless women are forever excluded from women's way of knowing", and whatever the interests, or life experiences of non-mothers can be, they will always be perceived as at least "shallow" in comparison to motherhood or be rendered as having something wrong (Morrel, 1994, p.76). The perception of being a mother as a privilege is more explicit in Bako's response elsewhere:

I am experiencing problems in personal life now, but this is not connected with my child, my child is my power, is my privilege, I know, if everything goes wrong, I have already done something in my life, I have a child.

It seems, motherhood which she sees is a privilege and the contribution to life, is connected with the concerns over having and bringing up the children by the women (or every woman). Bako, as many other interviewees, mention a basic national concern over the population growth, which is typically used by most of the national discourses, and especially those concerning reproduction, abortion and so on (Rivkin-Fish 2006, p.164; Marsh, 1998, p.93; Renner, Ule 1998, p.129; Gal, 1994, p.284).

Ideological influences

In addition, while discussing the importance of having children for the nation's sake and emphasizing the importance of bringing up the children, Bako also mentioned the factors, related to her understanding of good mothering:

“My job and communication with psychologists, trainings and numerous requirements for mothering I have read have helped me to deal with lots of mothering issues”

Her description of the ways she has been taught how to bring up the children (by psychologists, co-workers), demonstrates the ideological influence of the environment in constructing the meanings of motherhood and also shows how well internalized it is by the members of the population, in their understanding what has to be done (to become mothers) and how it needs to be done (how to bring up the children). As she mentioned later:

And we all know, that our priority in life is to have three and more children, supported by Patriarch. If Ilia II will be their godfather they will really be blessed. I think everyone who can afford it materially should have more than three children. And oh, I just remembered, after 5th child in the family Aversi⁹ will help (she laughs).

Clearly, the pronatalist initiative of Ilia II, patriarch of Georgian Church to encourage childbirth by christening every third child, as well as the initiative of Aversi providing financial support to

⁹ The pharmacological company which has a campaign of providing financial support to the families with more than five children

large families have contributed to the ways Bako approaches the meaning and the importance of mothering and links it to the nation's population growth. What is more, her response marks that, what is considered to be the duties of good mothers are also influencing her ways of defining motherhood. In conclusion, Bako's response is a clear demonstration of the interrelations between women's perception of motherhood as natural or exciting experience, linked with concerns over population, supported by the perception of a 'better social status' than the childless, and also shows that the national ideology not only calls for biological reproduction of the nation, but also provide guidelines for defining good mothering, and this second aspect is also really influential in women's understanding of motherhood as a contribution to the society, or to the country.

The influence of ideological work of different institutions in connecting motherhood with nation is evident in Ruso's response as well:

Motherhood is related with the change of demography. As far as I'm concerned one child doesn't change demographic data, two replace their parents and three children contribute to national growth. Oh...at least this is what I learned in Geography. Let's see, I hope to contribute to this change as well. Anyways I'm proud to have gifted one more person to Georgia.

Ruso's answer also shows that the role of educational institutions in creating the linkages between mothers and nation's survival, which seems to be internalized by the women and perceived as important. According to Tamar Mayer, "cultural, religious and political ceremonies – along with education", "exploitation of national media and museum and control of the national "moral code" – keep national consciousness alive and the nation "real" (Mayer, 2000,p.3). In addition, the articulation of national ideology seems to be influential not only for women's understanding of the importance of motherhood for the nation, but for their understanding of motherhood as their pride, their own pleasure and as a fulfillment of women's primary duty.

Some interviewees consider the nation-motherhood link so ordinary and natural, that do not even think that the connection needs to be explained, as Teona said:

For Georgia it is very important that a Georgian woman had many children, as we are almost on the edge of extinction. But oh, what am I explaining, you probably know it better than me, right? A Georgian woman should have four children minimum so that Georgianness could survive. I am not sure if I will be able to do this, but at least I will have two children.

Teona's response, which is using references to Georgianness and Georgian woman's duty as the explanation of her response, also draws tight ties between nation and motherhood. And she thinks, this link or the concerns over population growth is shared by everyone. Her response shows that she doesn't even think that the explanation is needed, as me and her - Georgian women - supposedly should know and agree on what the meaning of the motherhood is. What is also interesting is the integration of what is perceived as important responsibility of a mother (having more than four children) in actual life. However, Teona, although describes having many children as women's duty, is not sure if she can do it herself. Similarly, and interestingly, although almost every woman I interviewed described women's motherly role as crucial for the country, none of the women actually has more than two children. They express the desire to have many children, but, in fact, are not planning to, emphasizing economic problems, educational plans, or difficulties of mothering as main reasons. However, their own lived practices do not change their perception of national values in relation to motherhood, the interviewees describe so strikingly clearly. What it shows, however, is that on the one hand, living up to the requirements nationalism sets for the women, is almost impossible even for those, who accept and value these standards unconditionally and try to follow them or pretend to be doing so (not to mention women who can not/do not become mothers). And on the other hand, the influence of the ideology is so strong, that it is not challenged even when it is not lived up to.

Interestingly, the interconnection between nation's growth and well being and women's motherly roles has been ridiculed in the responses of some of the interviewees. However, it still seems to be perceived as important . Anna:

Motherhood certainly has an important role. Well, it is sometimes funny to me when I hear it during the toasts about the mother's on Georgian tables, saying that the future of the country depends on us. But in reality it has a role. I think it is my duty to have children as I am Georgian. Duty is a bad word though, not even is it a duty, but you should be wanting to do something for your country, and bearing children is important. I want to bring up the children in the way that they feel like Georgian and not something else.

According to Anna's response, it is evident that connecting motherhood with the growth of the nation can often be overestimated or articulated too often, which might be funny or annoying to some women. However, she challenges the emphasis put on the women's mothering role while drinking alcohol and telling toasts of the table¹⁰, not the idea itself. For her, identifying as a Georgian woman should include a desire (which she herself experiences) for contributing to the national growth and bringing up 'Georgian' children as well. So, in Anna's answer, the responsibility of the women in front of the nation can be easily replaced (and should be replaced) by a desire to contribute to the nation for being (or as one is) its member once again points at strong internalization of what is seen as national. In addition, Anna's slightly cynical approach to toasts at the table, reminds of Bako who, while talking about the importance of bearing many children, remembered the assistance of Aversi to the families with more than five children with laughter. It shows that first, there is an overemphasis put on the need of population growth and the women's connection with it in the country, by different institutions or by the society on everyday life level. And second, this connection can be the reason of laughter or cynicism by the women. However, the basic assumptions of the ideologies are never challenged. Women view

¹⁰ Saying toasts during so to call - feasts, which is considered to be a Georgian tradition is a usual practice in the country. And the toast for the **mothers**, family, religion, and Georgia are usually important part of them.

motherhood as the most important and exciting experience. And this perception, I argue, is directly linked with national ideals – with the contribution to the nation’s biological survival, and with motherly duties for raising the children with proper cultural/traditional values.

Mothers and the society

Moreover, the emphasis put on motherhood as “one of the most important things” (Natia) women can do (well supported by national ideology), as we saw, creates the feeling of privilege for the women, the feeling of pride. This perception of motherly role as the most valuable part of women’s life, which a woman is to be proud of, seems to be supported by the society as well.

What the feeling it is to be a mother? It is a responsibility over a new life, which, I think is great to experience. Also it is a sense of pride among your peers and with elder people as well. When they ask if I have a child, and get to know that I am bringing up a daughter who is two years old, I feel that something changes, I feel to be somehow more respected, treated as an adult. As if they’re saying “You have a child, you are a woman now”. I feel to be standing above some people. I don’t mean in a bad way. It’s just I’m somehow having more functions, I’m one step ahead.

Teko’s answer shows that her position in the society has changed as she is a mother. She understands motherhood as having more responsibility than others and being a “step ahead”, which also leads to experiencing more respectful approach by the others. Becoming a mother is viewed as becoming a woman (implying that non-mothers’ social status is lower than woman’s - that is equated with motherhood). And mothering role as one of the most important duties or responsibilities of the women is strongly supported by the society. This support and approval is even anticipated by the women. Nino:

“When I went out in the street for the first time after my daughter was born, I was so happy, so proud, I thought everybody around knew that I was a mother, or I wanted everyone to know”

It seems, Nino, before experiencing any change in the attitudes of the society towards her, was already predisposed to get support. As she knows that motherhood is an appreciated practice, giving her the sense of pride.

In conclusion, the aim of this chapter was to discuss the ways in which women establish links between motherhood and nationhood and the role this connection plays on their views towards the meanings of motherhood. I argued, that, firstly women's responses demonstrate their awareness of the national ideals. Their responses connect motherhood and nationhood in two major ways: motherhood for biological reproduction of the nation and motherhood for bringing up proper members of the nation. What is more, I also showed the ways in which this connections are tied to women's perception of motherhood, as one of the most valuable, exciting experiences, women's 'natural' desire and women's privilege, an experience which should be strived for by every woman. Finally, I showed that women's attitudes toward motherhood and its links with nation's well being is supported (or possibly has been shaped by) ideologies of different institutions (church, educational/ medical institutions). Celebration of the motherhood as women's most important duty is also supported by the society. To sum up, this chapter is a demonstration of the strong influence of nationalistic values on the interviews viewpoints: women's responses demonstrate that not only are they aware of women's role in nation-building process, supported by institutions/society, but they have them internalized, experience it as their own desire and value.

What kind of mothers?

As we could see the respondents show the awareness about the women's role as mothers for nation's cultural or biological survival, and moreover, this motherhood-nation connection is reflected in and influences their attitudes towards motherhood as primary, the most important goal, or natural desire for them or for a woman in general. Moreover, these perceptions play important role in how women see themselves in the society: as doing something to be proud of, which, I argue, is connected with the women's understanding of themselves as proper members

of the nation, whose attitudes and behaviors are in harmony with national needs, such as population growth or healthy future generation. However, as it has been argued, assigning women the role as biological or cultural reproducers of the nation, is also linked with the control of women's sexual (or other) behavior by "different regulations – customary, religious or legal – which determine the family units within the boundaries of the collectivity and the ways they come into existence (marriage)" (Yuval-Davis, 1998,p.30) and it has been the practice in many post-Soviet countries (Marsh, 1998.p.94). In my sample, similarly, the role of the norms of (sexual) behavior, perceived as important for being a member of Georgian society by the interviewees, influence the ways in which they make decisions about having children: when, how and with whom. Though, motherhood is seen as the happiest and the most important experience, it should not be any kind of motherhood. Decision about having a child in women's talk is directly linked with marriage and family (sometimes defined as a norm of the country and sometimes connected with the religious rule) and is associated with certain age (usually before 25). What is more striking, several interviewees would only have children with Georgian spouses, that clearly marks the importance of the women and their own identification with the nation in maintaining ethnic boundaries of national community. (Willson, Frederiksen 1995, p.3). For others, religion and cultural similarity (also basic components of the national unity) play crucial role in deciding on with whom to start the families.

The role of the family

As Teona, when she was asked about *her* experience of making decision on having children explained:

I was 18 when I had my daughter. In Georgia in general, the first thing to do after the marriage is to have a child. I think, it's better to wait for one or two years after you marry, in order to adjust to your new situation, new family, be ready for becoming a mother and giving the child what she/he really needs. But in Georgia, you don't talk with your husband about

this, you don't say: "you know, I need some time to think and prepare". It is internal to every Georgian woman that we should have a child after marriage. I didn't really think a lot about having my first child either; as soon as I was pregnant I had my daughter. Of course I would do so, I wanted to have a child, nobody refuses to it.

Teona's answer is of particular importance, as not only does she describe her experience of having a child, but she makes very clear explanation of how it should happen in a Georgian women's life. Her response shows, that decisions about having a child, are made (should be made) within marriage, and straight after the marriage. Although, she presents another model of starting a family as more appealing to her, Teona's response also demonstrates that there are certain norms she perceives as 'internal' for Georgian women, what she herself experienced as a desire to fulfill and what, she thinks, nobody would refuse to. The pattern which Teona describes as Georgian women's way of becoming mothers, it seems, is more or less followed by all the other respondents. And even if the experiences differ, as not everyone is able to live their lives exactly according to accepted standards, women show to agree on what it is a normal or desirable way of life in Georgia, and express the desire to conform/to have conformed to them. One of the key issues discussed by the women for deciding on having a child, which is also clear in Teona's talk, is the importance of marriage – which is, as it has already been discussed one of the crucial mechanisms for nationalisms in regulating female sexuality. Every interviewee sees marriage as a step to take before deciding on mothering, they consider it as important and as a norm for Georgian society. Moreover, all the interviews had their children within marriage. As Natia, who was 23 years old, when she gave birth to her first daughter said:

I would not have a child outside marriage, and you can see I did not. I married first. It is hard for many reasons, and moreover, you know we live in Georgia, where you should not have children without being married.

As Natia's response shows, not only does she see it as hard to bring up the children without a partner, but she also thinks it as a violation of societal norm for living in Georgia, which she would refuse to do.

"I think it is necessary for every child to have a family, in order to develop normally, not to be different from other children in school or kindergarten". – Said Teko.

We can see that a full family is perceived as an important aspect for child's development her/his inclusion in the society. What is more, as Teko continued:

"If I had been pregnant before marriage I would have problems with my family, my parents would surely ask me to marry. I would also not want to have a child on my own."

Teko's response similarly demonstrates how marriage is perceived as a norm by her, which she wants to obey, not to have problems with parents, to avoid problems which child might experience later – clear demonstration of strict sexual norms in Georgia internalized by Teko herself, and by her family members. Similarly, most of the interviewees perceive marriage as the prior necessary step before having children and usually refer to the norms of behavior in Georgia to explain their attitudes. Sometimes, the norms of Georgian society are replaced by the influence of the religion –which is itself a crucial factor for self-identification with Georgianness as discussed before:

"Before having children, crating a family is a must. I am an Orthodox and I am a Christian, and for me, family is decisive. I can not imagine having children outside marriage." –said Nana.

Most of the women say to have followed this standard for having children in their own life experiences. However, Bako's example is slightly different from what is perceived as normal and is interesting for several reasons. As she said:

Marriage was really important for me to decide to have Nikoloz. Having a family is really crucial before giving birth, I think. A husband helps you to bring up a child, helps to avoid many problems, helps financially. In my case, I might not have married if I had not been pregnant. We both wanted child, I was pregnant and we decided to marry. As in Georgia, you can not have children without having a family, at least my parents would not let me do

so. I also don't think I ever could make such decision. But everything happened really simply, I did not really think about what could happen next. I was twenty three, and I think it is high time to have a child. I really wanted it, I knew I had to have a child, and god gave him/her to me, and I decided to marry and follow my desire.

Bako, in her explanation of the necessity of marriage before having children, first emphasizes physical or financial help from the spouse. However, in fact, it is obvious that her experience has been influenced of what she thinks is a societal norm in Georgia, where one “can not have children” without family. It is also interesting, that Bako’s story is slightly different from what is considered to be a norm: she was pregnant before she married, and she divorced during pregnancy. As discussed before, in Georgia, female sexuality is strictly placed inside family, and premarital sex, and being pregnant are not socially acceptable. However, Bako’s desire still to obey these norms, by saying that she would never have children on her own, which she did not really manage, but with which she seems to agree, resulted in her marriage. What is more, the failure of maintaining the family and therefore living according to established pattern, as her response shows, turned out to be traumatic, both for the mother and for the child. As she continued:

However, this was a quick decision; marriage because of pregnancy is not what one should do. Me and my husband had known each other for little time. I think you need more to get to know a person, to get used to....So my family separated fast, when I was still pregnant and my child is the one who really suffers from it. He does not know his father, and usually asks me if he at all has one. In fact, he does, but has never seen. This worries me a lot; I have cried numerous times, I see how traumatized Nikoloz is.

I think Bako’s story, her difficulties in catching up with societal standards and problems she experiences for her failure and trauma which she thinks her child has, shows how norms of behavior or proper morals, although accepted and internalized are not really easy to be fulfilled for every life and are experienced painfully. However, they are still perceived as desirable ways.

Moreover, Bako's response also demonstrates the perceived importance for women to become mothers. She describes having known that she had to have a child, and as elsewhere in the interview she put it, motherhood is "what a woman is being born for". As we saw earlier, in the first chapter, viewing motherhood as one of the women's most important/natural duties, is tightly connected with national ideals of the women's role, its also influenced by the religion, (as Bako put it, god gave her a child) and this connection, internalized by women, combined with other ideals of proper behavior (such as having children only inside marriage) for belonging to national unity (for living in Georgia, as Bako put it), define how the women make various decisions, and how they experience different life matters.

What was also evident in the interviews is that, the women's decision to have a child is absolutely simultaneous with the marriage, what Teona described as the pattern or internal desire of Georgian women. Most of the interviews similarly have had their first children as soon as they were pregnant after the marriage, without really thinking about the decision or making plans:

As we married my husband and I both wanted a child really a lot, actually we did not even talk about it a lot, we knew we wanted. I always loved children anyways. I was pregnant after the second month of the marriage and of course I had a child.

– described Ninuca, connecting her decision with her desire for having a child. According to Nana:

I had my daughter one year after the marriage, it is hard to say, I was young, and I could not quite realize why or if I wanted a child. It is just how it went, spontaneously and without planning. With the second child it is different, motherhood is a nice feeling, it was for my own pleasure that I decided on giving birth for the second time.

Nana's and Ninuca's responses show that the decision about having the first child is somehow equated with the marriage in the women's perception and is reflected in their life experiences as well. What is more, this equation is usually described as "internal", as a desire, or as something not even to think about, which I think shows, how certain standards of behavior, dominant values

within the country influence the ways the women perceive and live their lives. Even, in the cases, when interviewees say, that they have thought of postponing children after the marriage, either they describe their final decision as a strong desire, or as a desire to fit in the society around them, Ruso:

We had Nika after two years of the marriage. We were using birth control for one year, but finally we realized we really wanted a child.

I was hesitant on having a child, as I was 22, and I thought I had some time before I really had to become a mother. Me and my husband were planning to take care after our careers, and settle financial problems before having a child. However, everyone around me had a baby, and I felt somehow different from them. At one point, all my friends got married and had children. I was ridiculous, visiting them and taking care after their children. I felt like I also wanted to have a child.

Ruso's answer shows, that even if she tried to plan her life in a slightly different manner, than the usual stories of the women develop, she felt ridiculous, and different because of the decision. Her story reveals the importance of living the life in the ways which is considered usual or normal in the society, in order to be a member of it and not to feel excluded – “different” and therefore “ridiculous”. What is more, obeying to the norms is usually described and experienced as one's own desire.

The equation of the marriage and bearing children in the women's answers can be associated not only with societal norms inside Georgia, but directly with national needs as well:

“Motherhood is really important for multiplying nation, for creating more families and bringing up the future generations” – Said Natia, who equating motherhood with marriage, shows to be aware of the role of this norm for growing of the population or for bringing up the children. As George Mosse (1985) describes in his analysis of nationalism, family as an institution for controlling sexuality and establishing “acceptable sexual norms”, function of which is “exercised on children”, is directly linked with the future of the nation and population growth, and therefore is one of the main aspects to be normalized, defined and controlled by nationalistic ideologies.

(Mosse, 1985, pp.19-20). It seems, in our sample as well, the importance which is put on the family as a norm – associated and equated with childbirth is related with the ways national concerns and ideology function and create standards of proper behavior and attitudes (putting emphasis on the importance of the marriage) guaranteeing better future of the nation. What is more, dominant national values are usually shared and internalized by the people.

Time for becoming a mother

What is also important in women's talks is the emphasis on the age for marriage and having children. In Georgia, due to the strict moral/societal/religious control of sexual behavior, especially that of the women and placing it only inside marriage, the age for creating families is relatively young. (And the family is equated with having children). This seemingly also influences when the interviewees think the time for a woman to become mother comes. As we saw, Ruso considers the age of twenty two, as the time when one can still wait before becoming a mother, though most of her friends already had children by that time. In this sample, the age of the women to start families varied from 17 to 24. It can be concluded, that the normal time for women to start families in Georgia is considered to be somewhere under 25, first, all the interviewees had their first child before this age, (and this is also the pattern as the statistics show ("Man and Women in Georgia" 2008:10)), second, as Bako explained her decision about having her first son, she was twenty three, and this was the time she knew she needed to become a mother. What is more, Bako, who is now 30 years old, mentioned that she is sorry for her friends, who are of her age and do not still have children – defining the age of 30 as already too late for following normal pattern of starting a family in Georgia. Interestingly, in the women's discussion of the age for mothering and the role of marriage for the decision, the importance interviewees put on women's motherly role becomes evident once again. Motherhood and

having children is perceived as more important than marriage after certain age, and is linked with women's understanding of motherhood as a crucial and necessary experience in women's life. The attitude, which as we saw, is very much influenced by national ideals of womanhood as motherhood, is important for women's appreciation in the society and is internalized by the women and linked with their own desires and wishes.

For me having a family was important, as I was 20, and I was not in a hurry. I was not worried, that I was not going to get married and have children. Even If I'd marry slightly later, I don't think it would be a problem. Family is important, but I think when a woman is getting old, and is not married, it is better to have a child. Every woman needs a child, or at least I think so. I think they need it to feel good, to feel important. I know how motherhood feels, and I think everyone should experience this, it is the greatest stimulus in life to move ahead, to be motivated in your professional development for example.

– Explained Tamuna. Her response shows once again, that the marriage and motherhood is perceived as something to be done in women's life, and moreover, needs to be done by certain age. However, it also shows the importance which is put on motherhood for every women's life. The parallel she draws between becoming a mother, and feeling as “important”, shows that motherhood is a step for a woman for establishing herself in the society, and what is more, it is perceived as a stimulus for other desires women might have. The importance of becoming a mother after certain age is described by other interviewees as well:

“If I would not have a family up to a certain age, I would definitely have a child” – said Ruso, or as Ninuca said:

A child needs both a mother and a father, but if a woman is already in the age that she really wants a child, it is not decisive if she is married or not. I would not have a child if I wouldn't marry, as I was still young ¹¹ and had the whole life ahead.

These answers demonstrate, that there are certain societal norms defining the age for marriage, which, as we saw, is equated with becoming a mother, and these norms are reflected not only in

¹¹ she was 18

women's viewpoints but also in the ways they have made decisions about having children – in complete correspondence of what they see normal and therefore desirable, or at least trying and pretending to be fitting perceived norms. However, even these norms become flexible with the perception of motherhood as the women's most important experience, (directly linked with women's duty in front of the nation, as I have demonstrated) in the answers of the interviewees.

Choosing partners and fathers

The connection between the norms and standards of behavior described by the women and the concerns of nationalistic ideologies defining these very standards, becomes very visible, in the ways in which women choose their partners, the people with whom they desire to have families and children. Women as discussed earlier, being given the role of biological reproducers of ethnic groups and defined as bearers of its culture, also are required to give birth to and bring up the members of “national stocks” (Yuval-Davis, 1998,p.31, Ivekovich, Mostov, 2002, pp.11-12) and not to “outsiders”. Most of the women show to have this aspect of national ideology well internalized. Partners of all the women I interviewed are Georgian, what is more, according to the interviewees, some women would refuse to marry and have children with the person of different nationality, others pay more attention to the religion of their partners. However, all the women emphasize the importance of maintaining Georgian traditions and cultural norms, see it problematic to change their values and principles, and once again put stress on their role to contribute to the growth of the Georgian nation, and teach traditional values to their children.

Eka:

I would not have a family with the other nationality, in no case: I think my child should be Georgian. I don't really know why I think this way,... I am generally a free and accepting person, but with this issue, I am very determined. I can not find enough arguments, but I would not fall in love with a foreigner, do you believe it? I have never been attracted by someone of other nationality, and moreover why should a Georgian women give birth to

either Armenian or Italian? I think, even if I'd love someone, it would end soon; I would not ever have a family with him.

I have a lot of foreign friends, but marital relationship is different. There are lots of traditions, values in the family, which I think can not be adjusted and changed. What is more, different religion is also unacceptable. Having a family with a foreigner I think will change you and it will affect your children, it is not only about love, lots of more things are related.

Eka's response is a clear demonstration of numerous national concerns by which her attitude has been shaped. Although at first, she expresses uncertainty about her viewpoint, she it is evident, that national ideals play important role in the way she thinks. Eka views it as a duty of a Georgian woman to bear Georgian children. Traditional values and maintenance of cultural practices, religious beliefs within the family and during bringing up one's children are of crucial importance for her. However, national values seem to be internalized by her on an unconscious level, without really thinking about it, as she said, she just would not fall in love with a foreigner. But as soon as she starts to analyze and think about the reasons of her views, reference to national concerns about giving birth to Georgian children come the first. The same affect of national values on women's decisions is described by Teko:

I don't know if it is good or bad, but I can't marry a foreigner. I can't really explain. Actually why not? if you like someone of different ethnicity, why not to marry? But I guess, I myself would not like a different kind of person. I can't say that is comes from my family, or environment. It's just me, I am myself the type of person who could not have an affair with a foreign man. I don't think there is anything wrong with them, I am happy to communicate and be friends, but nothing more.

Teko's response also shows, that national norms are not always functioning on a conscious level, but are still taken up by individuals. She does not explicitly refer to national needs in her response, and she can not find explanation of the ways she thinks about marriage and links it with her personality type. However, the nationality of a partner plays crucial importance in her decision about marriage. Teona:

I am really surprised when I see Georgian girls marrying foreigners, why not a Georgian? Why to multiply other nations? Is not it better to give birth to pure Georgians? I don't

understand and I don't like this, I don't want my daughter to think the other way. I don't believe in the fairy tales of having a beautiful life in a different country.

- What if you fall in love? With Armenian for example?

Well, love is a different topic, I can not criticize other girls, I know. But I would not do it myself. What hardship can I be in to decide to marry someone and leave my country? I would rather have many problems with a Georgian. I prefer Georgian for being Georgian. Well, I'm not talking about foreigners, who have become Georgians, maybe many Armenians, living here are better than many Georgians, helpful and caring, but still when you can continue Georgianness, why wouldn't you?

Teona's response is interesting as in her answer, concerns about the purity and continuity of the nation seem to have determinative power for her preference. She chooses Georgians just for being Georgian and nothing else. However, what is also interesting, her attitude is not directly related with stereotypes about the people of other nationality, or ethnic minorities (Armenians), she does not differentiate between Armenians-ethnic minorities, or people who could promise "beautiful life" abroad. But more with her ideas about what the role of Georgian women is in front of the nation, to "continue Georgianness". What is interesting is that she emphasizes both cultural belonging to the nation (as many Armenians have become Georgian) and ethnic origin, prioritizing the latter. However, both components seem to play role in her understanding of what being a Georgian means, and who one can marry and have children with.

Nevertheless, not all the women express such a radical position:

I don't really know If I would marry or not, I did not ever think about it. I lived in Germany for a year, but there I knew I would not get married. Anyway, if I really loved someone I'd marry. But I would really try to bring up my children in a Georgian way, I'd make them feel Georgian spirit. I would try to baptize them in an orthodox manner. Although I'm not very religious, I think Christianity is a guideline for living in a right way, which I think is important – Anna

Anna's response shows that although she does not link her marital decision with the nationality of a partner, she still finds it important to maintain Georgian "spirit" in her children's life, teach them what is considered to be right by the religion in the country. And religion is seen to be one

of the main factors for keeping Georgianness of the children. Religion is seen as decisive for many other women as well, Nana:

I have never thought about it, but I think the main thing is that the person was orthodox Christian and nationality does not matter. I think I anyways would not be able to live with and adjust to a person who is not Christian. Besides, I live a religious life, and I think you can not have children without religious wedding, also I want my children to be orthodox Christians.

In Nana's response, the emphasis is put on the religion. She is religious and for her rules of starting a family in Orthodox Christian manner is of decisive importance. However, many women perceive religion as important for evaluating people's way of life, principles, and values. For some of the respondents, it is important that their partner would be Christian (orthodox or not), Ruso:

For me love is a priority, however banal it might sound, and also the understanding between the partners is important. Well, I'd rather him not to be Muslim, it would be hard for me to change my religion, but I don't differentiate between the Orthodox and Catholics. As for the Muslim, I think I'd not be able to accept. As I'd have to change, change my views about how to live, what is wrong and what is right, which I wouldn't really like to do.

It seems that, what Ruso calls the understanding between the partners, is very much connected with religion and on the ways religious ideals determine women's perceptions about right and wrong behavior, desirable ways of life. And as Yuval-Davis (1997) argues, religion is "in close relationship to that of culture" and "can become some of the most intractable and inflexible symbolic boarder guards of specific collectivity boundaries and cultural traditions" (p.42). It seems, in women's responses also the emphasis is put on maintenance of values and principles of life which women relate to religion. With the women who do not live intense religious life, the difference between Catholicism and orthodox Christianity is not decisive, as the basic values are perceived to be similar.

To conclude, nationalism and women's sense of belonging to the country of their origin, or a national unity is influential for their attitudes towards numerous issues and plays important role

in the ways women plan and live their lives. Perceived responsibility in front of the country or nation are playing role in the ways women see motherhood as one of the most important role and duty. Moreover, different standards and norms such as the importance placed on marriage, the age of starting a family, and the choice of a life partner is usually linked with different national ideals, norms of behavior, concerns about population growth and women's role in building the nation. These norms and standards seem to be internalized and taken up by the women, often on the unconscious level, or even if not taken up completely, are not challenged. They are reflected in women's desires, attitudes and the ways they make decisions, or would like to make decisions about when, with whom and in what circumstances they have children.

Lives of the mothers

The role of a mother - tightly linked with the needs of the nation, which women see as one of the most important experiences of the life, as the happiness and the major concern of a woman, together with other norms and values of how, with who and when women should become mothers play important role in the life of every women. The aim of this chapter is to look at how motherly role and common patterns of starting the family are integrated in the lives of the interviewees, how they are combined with other duties or desires which women have, and what influence women's attitudes towards motherhood has on the ways they interpret and evaluate their lives. I argue, that although early marriage or mothering have been the reason of changing different live plans, women view as important, have been obstacle for reaching certain goals or fulfilling many desires, the feeling of satisfaction and happiness with women's motherly role (influenced by national ideals, and supported/appreciated in the society) is talked about as compensating by the interviewees. What is more, motherhood is often presented as the major motivating force and stimulus in women's lives, a positive change, plays key role in women's

perception of themselves as the full value members of the country, the nation, the society. What is more, although the ideas about motherhood are very similar in women's talk, their lives are not always conforming to the norms and standards which they perceive as important completely.

Ninuca:

When you get married, you don't think a lot what results can come after giving birth to a child. I did not think about planning my life with children. But then I had Elene. And of course, mothering is an obstacle for many other desires. I was a student at that time, but I could not study well. I could not be an active student, go to my friends when I wanted, etc. I love my child, but yeh, motherhood is restricting in many ways, everyone knows this. Now I'm not planning to work with my profession any more, as I studied law, and firstly, it is hard to become really good professional in this field when you already have a family, and second, starting career for me requires more time than I can find. I still want to work, may be I will find an easier job, which I will be able to deal with.

Ninuca's response shows the change which early marriage has caused in her life: the denial to professional development, or limits to what she sees as active life. However, Ninuca does not talk about the change with regret:

To say the truth, bringing up Elene was not really hard, I was studying, so my mother was helping, I also had a nanny. I could deal with it somehow. And I know I refused to follow the profession I chose, but I will never regret to have married and to have a child.

Similar is Teko's answer:

I had to change many of my plans because I became mother, I had to change my university and the whole plans for the future. But somehow I am not sorry for this now. This is such a huge responsibility and pleasure, that I can say no to some of other desires.

Both, Teko and Ninuca view motherhood as their responsibility as well as pleasure, which could be opposed to many different desires or aims in life without regret, as it is seen as more valuable and important. They can adjust their plans of the life according to the demands of the children and the family, and do not treat it as a problem. (or at least do not problematize the changes when discussing the importance of motherhood). However, it is still clear, that the perceived pattern for deciding on starting the family is an influential factor for the women to plan their lives, reach their other goals and fulfill their desires. Some women undergo such change in life

more painfully. Nino perceives the influence of her marriage and children on her life as more problematic:

It was really hard for me, when I had my first child at the age of 20. As I could not deal with my professional development the way I desired. I wanted to become a doctor, but this is such demanding profession which you can not easily combine with having a family. All my life, I was very determined, I always worked hard and was a successful student. I went through all stages to qualify as a doctor, and you know, what work it takes. But I still decided not to work. It was a big stress. Now I don't even have a desire to do anything else, as I always think my career as a doctor will affect my children – it'll take all my time, and I'm somehow too proud or ambitious to work for a different thing. At some point I felt as really useless, as if I had no place in society. And what I got to know with time is that, maybe having children was also one of the priorities for me, as at least this is what I chose to do myself. And even if I would be a good doctor, I wouldn't be happy without having what I have now. I have seen women who are successful in career and unsuccessful in private life. I need to be having children. I don't want to be like them.

Although Nino expresses the feeling of stress with refusing to her career plans because of the family and the children, her response also makes it clear, that in fact she prioritizes her experience as mother and considers her position as still more desirable than childlessness and professional growth. However, what is also clear in Nino's answer is that, after experiencing stress or disappointment, she “learned with time” that motherhood is also a priority for her, which she herself “chose”. However, the way Nino interprets her choice does not reflect on strong societal norms – as we saw, linked with national concerns, influencing women's choices about marriage and motherhood and influencing the ways women perceive what a priority or the important goal is. For Nino, it was painful to refuse to her plans, but she can always find justification and rethink her experience based on, as we saw, widely shared attitude towards motherhood as women's most important duty in life, necessary for everyone. However, these attitudes are really helpful for women to find their role in the society:

Maybe I would like to change the fact that I married too early, (18), but motherhood teaches you a lot, changes your relationships with people. Now I'm really proud to be a mother of two children-

– Nino concluded.

Although she emphasized the motherhood as an important of her in social relations, her answer still expressed the feeling of regret for starting a family early. Nevertheless, perceiving one's motherly role as a compensation for numerous different matters in the life is prevalent in every interview. In some of the women's responses, not only is being a mother perceived as compensating for the goals and desires women find hard to combine with motherhood, but as the only achievement to wish for, Teona:

I think, if I were not a mother, I would not be a complete person. Some people are successful in career, some in sports. I think my success is being a mother. As I think my mission on this world has been fulfilled partially. May be I don't have a job, or a car, but I am a mother which is the first thing. Of course, living person desires a lot, I want to be working, but now it is secondary for me. My child is in the first place. When I imagine that I can not pay enough attention to her I lose desire to do anything else. May be it is important for a women to have both, a family and a career, I would really love to work but It is impossible to do.

I think Teona's example is really interesting, as she depicts her motherly role as everything she wishes for, as it stands in the first place. However, it is also important to see, that she expresses the desire for having a career as well. I think in this case, when for her, as she says it was impossible to combine both (because of early marriage, motherhood), being a mother is interpreted and perceived as a major success, which she connects with fulfilling the womanly mission on earth.

Motherhood is also usually associated with the feeling of self-realization, the feeling of being needed and important and usually women describe it as a feeling they can rely on when having strong disappointments, problems in life, Bako:

Having Niloloz, was a big event in my life, as I had many problems during pregnancy, I divorced with my husband, had problems with the family, was alone and depressed. Child was, how to say it....it was like coming into the light after darkness. It helped to regain my self-esteem. It changed me radically and positively. I felt responsible for someone's life. Yes, having Nikoloz also resulted in my refusal to studying abroad, I had different plans. But, I knew I could not go with a child. But I already have a child and I should plan my life

according to that. I can't fulfill all my wishes sometimes but I will never say, "what if I didn't have a child", I can not have anything better than my son, and I can not do, or can not have done anything better than creating him. And on the other hand I really think I became better, I care more about my behavior, my child should have a mother to be proud of and I am more careful.

Bako's response shows the ways having a child serves as helping women with other problems they experience, as it raises self-esteem, gives them an important role and responsibility, gives the feeling of "having done something", which is perceived not only compensating for or more important than other desires, but as a positive change as well, Gvanca:

I see my life as really bad, if I imagine it without my children. This is probably because of my situation, if I didn't have Iziko soon after my mother died, I would be feeling much worse, it gave me a big stimulus. I might have led really unacceptable life as well, I don't know what I would do, I used to be really irresponsible. So Iziko was really a positive influence, I think the way I decided to live¹² is better. Children don't disturb me in fact in finding it hard to achieve what I want to do. Yes, I want to have more productive life, work, go out and enjoy more. I can do it with my children, It is other factors that disturb, financial problems for example.

First, the responses of Gvanca as well as Bako's shows how becoming a mother helps them overcome traumatic experiences in life. What is also interesting, both responses describe motherhood as a factor influencing their "better" or more correct and acceptable behavior, their fitting into the norms, which for them is understood as a positive change women can go through. Motherhood, which as I argued, is with a huge influence of national ideology is conceptualized as a desire and as a norm by the women, here is presented as a normalizing step in women's life which defines their responsibility in front of the children and society, and helps them obey the norms. However, it needs to be mentioned that the trauma which Bako talks about, related to her fast decision to get married¹³, consequent divorce and problems with family were caused exactly

¹² Gvanca was pregnant, when her mother died and decided to have her first daughter and get married. It seems her description of being irresponsible and leading unacceptable life comes from her (and widely held) negative attitude towards premarital sex.

¹³ as she noticed in her interview earlier

by desire and failure of living up to the established norms, similarly Gvanca's understanding of her life before marriage as wrong and unacceptable, is also related to deviating the norms. Both examples are good demonstration of how restrictive the standards and established patterns are for women. They are hard to follow, and women's lives do not always coincide with them, but failure of conforming to norms causes additional problems in women's self-perception or in relation with their environment.

What is also interesting in Gvanca's response is the emphasis on social/financial conditions which together with the way of life she led determine what she can and can not achieve. It is not only about getting married and being a mother, but also about being economically capable to afford fulfilling other desires. If you compare Gvanca's response with Eka's, for describing motherhood as stimulus for her to achieve anything in life, the role of financial/social conditions becomes obvious:

My daughter helps me in many things in life, gives me stimulus to live. If I had not been a mother, I mightn't have done so much, for example I wouldn't have such motivation for career development. Now I'm satisfied with what I do. Or I really know, I would not buy my apartment, if I were alone. I would spend time on travelling, for example. But, when my husband died, I felt like I did not want anything more in life, and having Dea was everything I wanted to live for. I have never had a problem with her, when she was small my mother was helping me, my whole family was helping me to say the truth. Now she is already grown up, can stay alone at home, so I don't see any problem.

Eka's perception of motherhood as a stimulus and support to go through hard times is similar to that of Gvanca's. However, the way she managed to live her life is quite different, and shows, that very similar principles and motivations in life, are differently lived when combined with women's social/financial conditions. Eka had support from the family, and help from the mother, so she could combine her role as a mother with the lifestyle, she seems to be enjoying with. Support from the family, similar to Eka, has also been described by many other interviewees, by

Teko and Ninuca for example, saying that their mothers took care after the children, when they themselves went to the university. The role of the extended families, which are usual way of life in Georgia till now, seems to be first, helpful for the women to combine motherhood with other parts of their lives, and second, supports maintaining usual patterns of marriage, having children by the women through helping them deal with mothering role.

In conclusion, what we could see from the analysis is that, the understanding of motherhood as contribution, as a motivating force, as a positive change and for some women the most important thing in life is usually prevalent in every woman's talk. This understanding influences women's many aspects of women's lives; it can cause changes in life plans, in their possibility to develop professionally, live active social life etc. But experiencing motherhood as women's one of the most important role seems to be perceived as compensating for these changes. This shows, how national ideals, relating motherhood to nations cultural/biological survival, and influencing what women feel and desire (strong will to become a mother, as it is conceptualized as the most important experience of a woman), play important role throughout the lives of the women, influence their decisions and serve as justification or explanations for the choices. What is also interesting, though women's attitudes about motherhood are quite similar, not all the women have the same life, their experiences are different, either they can't quite follow established patterns of their lives are influenced by other different factors such as financial condition or support from the family.

Conclusion

The analysis of the interviews shows the huge importance of nationalist ideology and women's identification with Georgian nation on the ways they conceptualize motherhood, become mothers and combine their life with mothering. The responses demonstrated how national values, such as concerns over population growth and maintaining Georgian culture are internalized by the women of my interviews and are linked with the ways they experience motherhood, see it as the most exciting experience and the happiness, as their natural, internal desire – a clear demonstration of the ways nationalist ideology, well established values and usual social/cultural practices influence and construct people's desires, aims or viewpoints. Moreover, women's perceptions of motherhood and the national values in relation to it, internalized by the respondents, seems to be well approved and supported by the society. Motherhood is celebrated not only from different institutions, such as Orthodox Church – a national symbol, determining principles of national values in Georgia - medical or educational institutions, but from the society as well. Motherhood seems to be celebrated during everyday practices, during Georgian feasts, for example, where the toasts for mothers as contributors to the nation are being drunk, as it was said - ridiculously often. However, motherhood and its value internalized by the women and appreciated by the society, creates the sense of pride and privilege of the mothers, standing above to those non-mothers in the society. Clearly, national ideal of women as a mother – leading to naturalization of motherhood and viewing as every women's desire and duty or the most important contribution to life by a woman also leads to the exclusion of all the women who are not mothers, from proper women's, full member's status of Georgian community. Thus, they are excluded from membership of the national unity. Other women, non-mothers- need to be pitted but their image still remains depicted as those, with whom there is something wrong.

Moreover, motherhood and the celebration on motherhood is national ideology, as it has been argued, does not mean appreciation of any kind of motherhood, it is linked with morality, family and restricted female sexual behavior. Especially in Georgia, where women's sexual (heterosexual, not to talk about lesbianism) activity still remains as a taboo, creating the family is perceived as the only way for women to have the children and even more, marriage is directly equated with having children. In addition, marriage and motherhood are linked with certain age, according to the interview, preferably the age is somewhere under 25. This can be the result, of also strict sexual norms for the women in Georgia, which based on so to be called old Georgian traditions, requires female sexual life to be started only after the creation of family. Therefore, early marriage is a usual practice even in contemporary Georgia. However, not all the interviewees have fully conformed to these sexual norms. But what their talk show, is that, they still desire to have been more "normal", or pretend to be so now, after they married and are mothers – good women and good members of the Georgian Nation. What is more, deviation from the sexual norms seems to be problematically perceived not by the women themselves only, but also to be leading to problems with the family, and the social environment. Women know well how one should become a good mother while living in Georgia and while belonging to Georgian society and what is more they desire to act so.

The importance of Georgian nationalism, one of the main components of which is creating ethnically Georgian nation, (and the wars with Georgia's ethnic minorities demonstrate the importance of ethnic component of national ideology) becomes more evident, when women talk about the ways they choose their partners. It is striking that the nationalist concern over keeping ethnic/national borders through female body (Ivekovic, Mostov, 2002, p.10) seems to be so

internalized by the interviewees in their preference of ethnically Georgian as their only partner, that they can not even find the explanation for their attitude. However, some of the women do not pay as much attention to ethnicity. But the religion, morals, lifestyle and the principles which are perceived to be related to Christianity (and has really been so throughout Georgian history) or to Orthodox Christianity are still of determinative importance for every women.

Finally, the perception of motherhood as an inevitable experience for a woman, combined with the patterns of marriage plays influential role in many aspects of the interviewee's lives. Early marriages cause problems with their educational or career plans. However, the priority, even in those women's talks, who experienced it as really hurtful to give up different life ambitions for motherhood's and family's sake is given to a motherly role, as it defines them again as better than non-mothers. Or, motherhood, and the importance of motherly role is used as a self-defensive explanation by the women for different frustrations they had to go through. However, not every woman experienced serious obstacles by becoming mother. The interviews show, that most of the women, who had children at early age received support and help by their or their spouse's mothers. The tradition of extended families in Georgian culture, where kinship ties are kept close seems to be helpful for many women in dealing with their nationally determined gendered role as a mother and a wife. In addition, women's experiences are also different according to diversity in social, financial conditions they have. Though the ideal of national motherhood, and the type of motherhood is shared by the women, their lives differ. However, it does not prevent national ideology to be a major determining power of women's viewpoints. To conclude, as my interviewees' sample and the analysis of the interviews demonstrated, nationalism, at first, places strong responsibility of motherhood on the women, and on the other hand the national ideal of motherhood is largely internalized by the women themselves. The

women of my interviews, through their responses can be seen as influenced by national ideology on the one hand, but as actual makers of nationalism on the other.

Importantly, nationalism, by the codes of behavior and morals it sets for the members of national unity, by defining motherhood as women's most important function, by controlling sexuality on the first place and limiting it to family and children – of course, for the nation's survival's sake has numerous implications. As it was evident, these norms of behavior, are hard to be lived up to even by the women, who show absolute acceptance and positive attitude to them. And, many women are completely excluded from this national discourse of motherhood and family: women who do not/can not become mothers, lesbians, ethnic/religious minorities etc. to name just a few.

Finally, if nationalism makes women, women also make nationalism as a result. And I consider that, it is a useful observation for the research of nationalism-gender intersection for the feminist authors and especially in post-soviet region, who may be aware of the two way relationship between the two concepts, usually discuss its one – official national discourse side. And may be as Rivkin-Fish (2006) names it - the approval of abortion politics in Russia by feminists: “The paradox of women's responses” - will not seem to be so much of a paradox at all. (p.167)

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