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Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree
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“In the Name of the Mother”: Media Discourse, Nationalist Ideology and the Politics of Reproduction in Post-Socialist Macedonia

By

Neda Petkovska

Submitted to

Central European University

Department of Gender Studies

Erasmus Mundus Master's Degree of Women's and Gender Studies

Supervisor: Erzsébet Barát

Second Supervisor: Rita Monticelli

Budapest, Hungary

2016



Universidad
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Abstract

This research project explores to what extent specific media representations in Macedonia come to produce and reproduce nationalist ideology through promotion of traditional gender values via intensified typification of the female body. More specifically, it sees how nationalism operates and is mediated through political media in relation to women's reproductive rights, particularly the right to access legal abortion. The interest to focus on this question is the implementation of a project for promotion of traditional family values by the Macedonian Government which culminated with restrictive measures on the Macedonian abortion law in 2013.

I have established the theoretical background of this project on three main domains: nationalism, media, and gender. Relying on nationalist studies from a gender perspective, the thesis explores the discursive patterns that the nationalist ideology draws on, when using media to present certain gender roles that are argued to be necessary and desirable for the nation-building and/or nation-maintaining. Therefore, the major research question in this thesis is: How is Macedonian nationalism mediated through political media in relation to dilemmas on women's reproductive rights?

The method applied in order to explore this question comprises discourse and visual analysis of the media space directly communicated by the Macedonian Government embodied in the media campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*. The scope of the analysis is the media campaign data published within the period of 2009 (when the aforementioned campaign started its broadcast), until the end of 2013 (when the Law for Termination of Pregnancy came into force).

The thesis shows how the Macedonian authorities appropriated the media space for the purpose of normalizing the introduction of restrictive measures on the access to legal abortion.

This media appropriation is articulated through an ethnic nationalist discourse rooted in strong patriarchal values of heteronormativity and gender discrimination. The thesis also shows how this way of expressing the nationalist sentiment eschews other important social and economic issues in the country and promotes further ethnic dogmatism and unjust gender power relations.

Abstract in Italian

Il progetto di ricerca vuole esplorare in che misura specifiche rappresentazioni mediali in Macedonia producono e riproducono ideologie nazionaliste tramite la promozione di valori di genere tradizionali attraverso l'estrema tipificazione del corpo femminile. Nello specifico, la tesi va ad analizzare come l'ideologia nazionalista opera ed è diffusa/divulgata attraverso i media politici in relazione ai diritti riproduttivi della donna, e in particolar modo al diritto di accesso all'aborto legale. L'interesse per questa domanda di ricerca deriva primariamente dal progetto implementato dal Governo Macedone con il fine di promuovere valori familiari tradizionali e che nel 2013 ha portato all'approvazione di misure restrittive nell'ambito della legge sull'aborto.

Il background teorico del progetto di ricerca include tre campi di ricerca: ideologie nazionaliste, media, e genere. Basandosi su studi di nazionalismo da una prospettiva di genere, la tesi esplora motivi narrativi ricorrenti che sono alla base dell'ideologia nazionalista nell'uso dei media per presentare i ruoli di genere che sono considerati necessari e desiderabili per la costruzione simbolica della nazione e/o la sua difesa. Pertanto, la centrale domanda di ricerca posta alla base di questa tesi è: In che modo viene mediato il nazionalismo attraverso i vari media politici in relazione ai dilemmi riguardanti i diritti riproduttivi della donna in Macedonia?

L'approccio metodologico impiegato al fine di rispondere a questa domanda include l'analisi del discorso e delle immagini presenti nei contenuti medialti trasmessi in modo diretto e in forma di comunicazione unilaterale attraverso la campagna divulgativa *Illustrando le Conseguenze Negative dell'Aborto*. Nell'ambito della ricerca sono stati utilizzati dati riguardanti la campagna mediatica pubblicati tra il 2009, anno dell'inizio della campagna, e il 2013, quando la legge sull'interruzione della gravidanza è entrata in vigore.

La tesi descrive/analizza come le autorità Macedoni si sono avvalse dello spazio mediatico al fine di normalizzare l'introduzione di misure volte a restringere l'accesso all'aborto legale. L'avvalimento di questo spazio si articola attraverso un discorso etnico-nazionalistico che ha le sue radici in forti valori patriarcali di etero normatività e discriminazione di genere. Inoltre, la tesi dimostra delinea come questo modo di esprimere il sentimento nazionalista distraa da altre questioni sociali ed economiche nel paese e promuova e rafforzi il vigente dogmatismo etnico e le inique relazioni di potere specifiche del genere.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my very great appreciation to Zsazsa, my research supervisor, for her great support, patient guidance, useful comments, and for believing in me. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Rita Monticelli for her generous assistance and availability. Many thanks to the new friends I have met in Budapest, for they made my studies here a pleasant experience. I would like to extend my gratitude to Elisa Totino for contributing to the Italian version of the Abstract. Finally, big thanks to my family, for the immense support and hope they gave me through the most personally challenging period for my wellbeing.

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1. Introduction

Macedonia is a country with a population of two million situated in the Balkan peninsula. Since its independence in 1991 following the disintegration of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, the country has been facing both economic and political crisis on several occasions. Almost immediately after constituting the country's borders and legislature, Macedonia was faced with strong disapprovals regarding its name, nationhood, and sovereignty, by practically all neighboring states, the European Community (EC), the United States, The United Nations and other international organizations. The widespread disapproval together with the consequences of the breakup of Yugoslavia, resulted in trade embargoes that sunk the country's economy. Macedonia would soon be seen as one of the most under-developed countries, having lost more than 60 per cent of its trade economy (Ramet 2002).

The country's international issues mirrored its internal ethnic strife. Several factors were at play. First, the ethnic wars in the Former Yugoslavia had started and there was a fear of hostilities reaching Macedonia. Second, the multiethnic population of Macedonia had multiple, separate, and competing opinions about the rights of different ethnic groups living in the country. Ethnic Albanians, Serbs, Turks, Roma, and Vlachs constituted substantial minorities in Macedonia and they started questioning the legitimacy of the Macedonian Government which was led by an ethnic Macedonian president and mainly ethnic Macedonian officials.¹ Moreover, the biggest ethnic minority, the Albanians, although composing some 20 per cent of the general population, and as much as 80 per cent population in specific territories, lacked meaningful access to education or other administrative institutions in the Albanian language (Ramet 2002).

¹ Nevertheless, the biggest minority in the country, the ethnic Albanians, were always part of the ruling representative coalition of the Macedonian government (Ramet 2002).

The dilemmas raised in relation to these questions led to a major revolt between ethnic Albanians and ethnic Macedonians. On the one hand, the Albanian population demanded their legitimate rights through questionable means. On the other hand, the Macedonian population would negate the rights claims of ethnic minorities, and would employ state violence and means of governance to suppress such demands. This revolt culminated eventually in 2001 with what was called by the media – “the Macedonian insurgency”.² The insurgency ended with a peace treaty in the same year. With the treaty ethnic minorities secured their rights on paper; however, reality was a more complex affair. The Macedonian Government made little attempt to implement the laws that were promulgated in this treaty and instead managed to engender increasing dissatisfaction, communalism, and strife among the population.

Growing up in the post-war period, I remember growing distance between me and most of my friends who were not ethnic Macedonians. As children we could not understand exactly why, but we could feel something hostile around us. Being raised in a municipality predominantly inhabited by ethnic Albanians made me aware of the post-war transformations. The landscape was changing: It was getting more ‘ghettoed’ with more and more ethnic Albanians moving in, and more and more ethnic Macedonians moving out. The separation of these ethnicities was widening. The bad implementation of the 2001 treaty led to the production of space where different groups living in the same space could no longer speak the same language nor could understand each other. This happened to me and my family, and though we never moved out, we felt threatened living there, mostly because of the media reports and news on the dangers associated with that place. The media played a big part in shaping our ideas about our neighbors. What I felt threatened the most about was my sexual freedom as the media depicted ethnic Albanians as violent and sexually harassing people. I felt envious of friends living on the other side of the city for being able to wear fewer clothes in the summer, or for

² For more details, see chapter 2.

being able to engage in public display of affections with boyfriends or girlfriends, and similar teenage concerns. Not that on the side where I lived was impossible to do the same things, but there was a present (only through the media explicable) fear of (sexual) violence and uncertainty.

A few years later, in 2006, the Macedonian people elected the right-wing *Internal Revolutionary Macedonian Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VRMO-DPMNE)* to government and to a majority in the parliament. This party was the same one in power during the 2001 conflict. It had continued to rule to the present day. Soon after its election, following similar politics of ethnic intolerance as before, the government started paving the way for a legislature that came to embody strong nationalist discourse, emphasized values on tradition and heteronormative gender relations, and a marked intolerance for democracy and free speech.

This legislature introduced the Law for Termination of Pregnancy in 2013 when the Macedonian Government and the Ministry of Health proposed the new bill. After a short debate in Parliament held in the absence of opposition parliamentarians the bill was passed on June 10.³ The legislative text marks crucial changes from the previous law of 1972 in terms of the availability of access to abortion services. For example, while in the previous law abortions were considered urgent procedures, the 2013 law required that women seeking abortion attend consultations three days in advance of the procedure. During these consultations with an obstetrician, women would be pointed to the “benefits of continuing the pregnancy” (Official Gazette of RM 87/2013, 4). Besides the changes from the previous law, the 2013 law incorporates elements that restrict access to abortion, such as highly demanding conditions under which women can request abortion services, different levels of decision-making

³ A video from the parliamentary voting is available on the following link <http://www.alfa.mk/News.aspx?ID=58065#.V0mzTb5vrDc>. The material shows the parliamentary screen counting 101 members, however the total number of voters is 62 - all voted *for* the Law, with zero *against* or *neutral*.

committees, gigantic fines for lawbreakers, and questionable protection of the right to patient's privacy such as easily accessible registered evidence of the abortion procedures in the medical record of the patient (Official Gazette of RM 87/2013).

The law that significantly restricted the access to legal abortion was predated by pro-natalist demographic politics that are the source of ethnic discrimination and the proliferation of nationalist narratives. This demographic discourse revolved around explicit remarks on the potential threats of disappearance of the Macedonian population, threats linked to the lowering birth rates. At the same time, the strategies that were about to be implemented starting from 2009, included media representations at the center of the 'battleground'. This thesis thus aims to explore how Macedonian nationalism, during the period of 2009-2013, is mediated through political media in relation to discourses on women's reproductive rights. More pertinently this thesis enquires after the consequences of such discourses of nationalism for women's reproductive rights, especially the right to legal access to abortion. Looking at the extent to which female bodies are typified, this project engages in a critical analysis of one specific media campaign produced by the Macedonian Government and broadcasted on national television under the title *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*. I argue that the media space in Macedonia is appropriated in order to articulate and circulate hegemonic masculine and heteronormative politics as a way toward restricting the access to legal abortion.

Thus far, academic studies in Macedonia have explored the question of the nationalist discourse present in the country (see Vangeli 2011). Other studies have related Macedonian governmental media campaigns in general with traditionalist and communalist ideology (see NVO Infocentar, Open Society Foundation 2015). However, there is no scholarship that investigates this specific media campaign in relation to nationalist ideology and its articulation of denying women and men from equal access to state and medical recourse. This thesis tries to fill that gap by looking at the fields of media, nationalism and gender in the Macedonian

context. Only after setting the questions of this project in these fields of studies, has it become possible to confirm the argument of this thesis which is that the Macedonian Government valorizes a traditional cultural mode of the ‘two genders’ while concentrating its efforts into normalizing the introduction of new policies of reproduction by appropriation of the media space.

Chapter 2 sets the basis for analysis, elaborating on the proceeding paragraphs. It reviews the Macedonian context and its ethnic relations foregrounding the theoretical definitions of understanding this thesis. The chapter starts with a critical discussion of the demographic planning policies delivered by the Macedonian Government and its executive bodies. It highlights the relationship between the concerning theme and key concepts in this project and the literature produced in the relevant theory. Here I provide definitions of the concept of nationalist ideology and the way in which its discursive patterns are articulated in the Macedonian context. I then reflect on the gendered aspects of this ideology in relation to the demographic strategies of the Macedonian Government. Finally, I review the role of the media as part of the political discourses in order to reproduce and proliferate its scheme and ideals.

The third chapter offers an analysis of the media campaign directly communicated by the Macedonian Government. In the first part of this chapter, I provide the methodology used for that analysis, which is discourse analysis that incorporates the systematic study of the visual, textual, and contextual articulation of the media materials. The chapter describes and problematizes six advertisements created as part of the media campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*. The analysis shows the explicit and implicit messages conveyed to the audience through media representations and their effect in shaping the public notion of the gender roles and women’s reproductive rights in Macedonia. I argue that the campaign material produces and multiplies binary gender roles that engender heteronormative relations

of power. Further, the advertisements depict the female body as a carrier of the symbolic national rather than as an autonomous entity. In this way, women's reproductive capacities are rendered national responsibility according to which women have a little saying on matters such as access to abortion. Finally, through the articulation of nationalist discourses, the campaign is directed only to the ethnic Macedonian population and does not reflect the real social relations in the Macedonian society at the same time distributing false information too.

Chapter 4 discusses the prevailing tendencies throughout the entire campaign, including its planning and consequences. In this chapter I reflect on the audiences of the advertisements, the ways that their opinions on the matters in question are shaped, and their capacity to absorb the 'right' message conveyed through the videos. I further examine the relation between the alleged ultimate objective of the demographic politics in Macedonia — that is sustainable economic growth — and the means appropriated for achievement of this objective. I suggest that this relation is contradictory and counterproductive. The last part discusses in detail the production of a *hegemonic masculinity* and *emphasized femininity* as ways of cementing the double-sided gender system of power relations (Connell 1987).

Finally, in the conclusion, I summarize the major arguments of this thesis in relation to the promulgation of the 2013 Law for Termination of Pregnancy and the reactions to it. Further, I point to the major findings of this project. Lastly, I briefly point to some potential issues for further research on this topic.

2. Situating the Demographic Strategies of Macedonia: Gendering the Nationalist Discourse through the Media

What is nowadays called ‘The Republic of Macedonia’ used to be part of the Yugoslavian Federation until the year of 1991. Its social and political arrangement was socialist federation with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (or the ‘League of Communist in Yugoslavia – LCY’) as the ruling party and Josip Broz Tito as its president (Ramet 2002, 6). In this federation, Macedonia was recognized as an autonomous country and its constitutional name was The Socialist Republic of Macedonia. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia consisted of six federal republics (including Macedonia), Socialist Republic Bosnia and Herzegovina, SR Croatia, SR Serbia, SR Montenegro, SR Slovenia, and two autonomous provinces, Kosovo and Vojvodina. After the death of the lifelong President Tito in the 1980, the cohabitation of the various ethnic groups was shaken by the rise of the ethnic nationalism. 10 years later, this nationalism intertwined with an economic and political crisis, led to the disintegration of the federation and the Yugoslavian wars (see Ther in Stone ed. 2012, Ramet 2002, Djokić and Ker-Lindsay ed. 2011, Denitch 1996, Jović, 2009). Macedonia never became part of these wars, since its citizens voted for independence in a national referendum and the country withdrew the Yugoslav Federation with removal of all officials from the Yugoslav institutional bodies (Ramet 2002, 184).

The media played a formative role in these conflicts and in the proliferation of the nationalist sentiments. Part of these sentiments was directed towards women’s role singling out the duty of being mothers at the time of the wars and the subsequent loss of people. Dubravka Žarkov, explored the question on what became widely called the ‘media war’ (2007, 3). Žarkov recalls that it is not known who introduced the term but by the end of the 1980s it was commonly used by the media and the politicians (ibid.). It referred to the engagement with the media of different political actors from all of the republics in Yugoslavia in order to promote

their respective nationalist politics in which one's own party, and nation, were seen as the savior and the other as the enemy (ibid.). Žarkov argues that this so called 'media war' played an important part in producing 'ethnicity', "with notions of femininity and masculinity, and norms of sexuality as its essential ingredients" (ibid.). In that way, the media not only took its part in the manufacture and circulation of the nationalist ideology but also took part of the construction of meanings about the gender roles and the sexuality assigned by the nation.

In 2001, ten years after the independence of the country, Macedonia got involved in its own ethnic armed conflict. It lasted for less than a year, but it left significant ethnic tensions. The two parties in the conflict were the ethnic Macedonians on the one side (represented by the Macedonian government and the police forces) and the ethnic Albanians on the other (represented by the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA)) (Daskalovski 2003). The war ended with the Ohrid Agreement, in August, 2001. What was left afterwards, was a strengthened discourse of nationalism and fueling hatred between the different ethnic groups in Macedonia.

The media coverage of the events and the political statements for the public press show that both politicians and the media houses were using nationalist language and were appropriating 'us – the good ones' and 'them – the enemy' rhetoric (Icevka and Ajdini 2004). For example, the then Macedonian President, Boris Trajkovski, in an interview for the CNN stated that "We are fighting terrorists, not rebels, and we have exercised the utmost restraint in tackling them." (CNN 2001, online). By using the word 'terrorists' he cut the line between the enemy of the state and the nation, and the victims of this war.

Similarly, the media reports of the conflict were biased and were encouraging the nationalist narrative not only throughout the conflict coverage itself but also after its official end. For instance, Gordana Icevska and Ilir Ajdini in their article *Same World, Parallel Universe: The Role of the Media in the Macedonian Conflict* are using the same expression

‘media war’ to describe the media discourse present at the time of the conflict and soon afterwards (2004). In their reflection they state that the “media reporting during the conflict served to inflame the political situation” (Icevska and Ajdini 2004, 27). The ethnic Macedonian media, reporting in Macedonian, was using the vocabulary of ‘fighting the terrorists to defend the fatherland’; at the same time, the ethnic Albanian media covering the happening and reporting in Albanian language were using the terms ‘Albanian fighters’ fighting against the Macedonian government [that usurps their rights as an ethnic minority in the country] (Icevska and Ajdini 2004, 37-38). According to Icevska and Ajdini, and the reports they are using in their article, such as reports from the EU and reports about the media made by the Helsinki Committee in Macedonia, this divergence in the media speech was due to the biases the media had towards the side they were taking and its financial and political control by the Macedonian government (2004, 39). In addition to biases, they also make notice of political pressures to the media houses such as the pressures on TV House A1, which at that time tried to “use variety of sources and tried to present the attitude of the other side” (Icevska and Ajdini 2004, 43)⁴. In that sense, their article emphasizes the key role of the media in Macedonia in shaping the notions of ethnicity, as well as the possible ways in which the media can be instrumentalized for the production of nationalist ideas about the ethnic preferences and rejections.

The after-war period in Macedonia continued generating even stronger nationalist dynamics and media controlling discourse. Eventually that resulted in ethnically based division of the population and media employed in service of the political parties involved. In the following section I will present the definitions used in the fields of studies operated with in this thesis. Correspondingly, it will be offered further background on the Macedonian nationalism and the nationalist politics on gender more generally. This specter will be narrowed down later

⁴ Less than ten years after the conflict, in 2011 the TV House A1 was confiscated by the Macedonian Government and some of its employees were sentenced for detention in what was seen as a highly controversial scandal at that time regarding the freedom of expression within the media.

on when discussing the nationalist program in Macedonia. Finally, I review the media discourse as part of a nationalist ideology and the media practices and freedom of expression in the country.

2.1 Nationalism, Media and Gender

Macedonian nationalism has its roots before the 2001 war conflict. Since the independence of the country, in 1991, the term ‘the Macedonian conflict’ used to describe the political disputes between Macedonia and Greece over the constitutional name of the Republic of Macedonia (Danforth 1995). The Greek authorities have been arguing against the use of the constitutional name of Macedonia after its independence because of the similarity of historical and geographical region bearing the same name in the contemporary territory of Greece (Vangeli 2011). This dispute resulted in international dilemmas over the acceptance of the constitutional name of the country, trade embargo and veto from NATO’s membership by the Greek officials. Another issue that became more visible in the country in regard to its sovereignty recognitions was the partial disagreement from some of the other neighboring countries. For example, while Bulgaria recognized the territory of Macedonia, it didn’t recognize the Macedonian nationality. Similarly, Serbia refused to accept the Republic of Macedonia due to some prevalent notions in Serbia that referred to Macedonians as South Serbs or to Macedonia as Southern Serbia (Danforth 1995, 12; Ramet 2002, 177; Denitch 1994, 102).

At the same time, Macedonia already had an ethnically and religiously diverse population. The biggest minority in the country was, and still is, the ethnic Albanians who are predominantly Muslim (Ramet 2002). As pointed out in the previous parts, the ethnic relations deteriorated since the country’s independence and resulted with armed insurgency in 2001. In my opinion the reason for this deterioration of the ethnic relations is precisely because of the ‘media war’ going on before and during the Yugoslav wars and the light shed on the Muslim

population throughout of it. Therefore, it does not come as surprising the fact that the media took biased and one-angled position on the coverage of the armed conflict of 2001.

Furthermore, Macedonia exited in the Yugoslav federation as the poorest constitutive country. Heavy industry that was the most profitable in the economy was stationed in the northern part of Yugoslavia — far away from Macedonia in the South —which belonged to Slovenia later (see Ramet 2002, 175-202). It is believed that these economic difficulties, resulting from the Yugoslav disintegration, the name dispute with Greece, and the progress of mass communication altogether encouraged a nationalist ideology accepted by the Macedonian Government (Danforth 1995; Vangeli 2011). Loring Danforth argues that “uneven economic development and improvements in mass communication” are one of the main reasons for the resurgence of *ethnic nationalism* (1995, 11).

2.1.1. Ethnic Nationalism and Modernist Approach to Nationalism Studies

Danforth accepts a more alternative understanding of the meaning of ethnic groups that draws on Frederik Barth’s definition, that is: “ethnic groups are defined as categories of ascription and identification that people use to classify both themselves and others” (1995, 13). In this way ethnic groups can be understood when ethnic boundaries are created even if there is no “objective cultural criteria” rather than being understood as groups that share mutual origins, language, history, and culture which is to take an essentializing approach towards defining ethnic groups (ibid.). Nations, on the other hand, are understood in terms of the modernist approach in nationalist studies where nations are seen as “imagined political communities” that came about as a result of the new capitalism and its demands, not before the 18 century (Anderson 1983, 6). The notion of *imagined community* is credited to Benedict Anderson. He claims that nations are imagined in that most of the members of one nation might never even have meet each other but they are aware of their mutual lives in the same community

(1983, 6). Nationalism, according to Gellner, is the “political principle which holds that the political [the state] and the national unit should be congruent” (1983, 1). Gellner’s notion is that nationalism is the ideology that invents and creates the nations before their existence rather than being an ideology that reflects some kind of “self-conscious awaking of the nation” (Gellner 1964, 168). However, both Anderson and Danforth, point out that Gellner’s notion regarding inventing a nation might be misleading since it implies falsity (Danforth 1995; Anderson 1983). ‘Imagined nations’ does not mean that it is a fake construction, but rather that it is a historical and social constructions (Danforth 1995). Danforth further continues that the theory in which nationalism invents nations fails to recognize the existence of the ethnic, religious, regional, and class identities that existed before the nation-states were invented (Danforth 1995, 16). Drawing on Geertz, according to Danforth, these “primordial attachments of social existence”, are the strongest and the most powerful constructions of nationalism (1995, 15).

It is precisely these attachments to the past events that have built and maintain the nationalist ideology in Macedonia today. Anastas Vangeli used the category ‘antiquization’ as a typical example of how the nationalist project in the country, turned to the myth of national belonging to the ancient Macedonians in the time of the Alexander the Great (Vangeli 2011). It is interesting to mention this ongoing nationalist discourse of antiquization in the country in which the ethnic Macedonians are seen as descendants of Alexander the Great and so seen as glorified in that way. However, this thesis does not offer space for deeper engagement with that specific aspect, even if it is part of the wider context.

Anderson shows the ways in which this process can become feasible. In his view, the new capitalism together with the print media, such as books and newspapers, introduced a completely new point of view to the temporal and spatial understanding of belonging to a certain community: through reading the same stuff people acquired the sense of mutual

belonging (Anderson 1983, 9-46). This theory is fruitful for this project because it uncovers the potential that the media has to convey particular ideologies. It is limited, though because it understands nationalism as a social phenomenon rather than as a discourse in which certain relations or power are appropriated (Mihej 2011). Therefore, the notions of ideology and gender are necessary if we are about to see the mutual connections/the intertextuality of the fields studied in this work.

2.1.2. Ideology and Nationalism

The departure taken here on the concept of ideology starts from Luis Althusser's theorizing of ideology (1971). Althusser draws on a Marxist theory of ideology, particularly on the concept understood by the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci. However, he further develops this theory, since the original Marxist viewpoint of ideology sees it as a state-apparatus that works in direction to oppress the working class; that is, its understanding of ideology is in economic terms. Althusser, on the other hand, points out that ideology is vital for the social reproduction and it cannot be seen in strictly negative terms and abstract mechanism of ideas that would distance people it from the reality (Althusser 1971; Howarth 2000). He sees ideology as a social practice in all fields of society that produces material reality. It is also crucial for the formation of the social subjects and their identities (ibid.). Yet, he does not reject the notion of ideology as an oppressive state-apparatus. In that regard, Althusser develops a twofold theory of ideology. On the one hand, he defines ideology as "system of ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser 1971, 32). In this way the notion of ideology is seen as an 'imaginary assemblage' that has no history (Althusser 1971, 34). On the other hand, ideology is seen as a 'lived relation between the social subjects' (Howarth 2000, 93) and has its own material existence. This way of viewing ideology allows to consider ideology as always present in the apparatus, i.e. seen as a

(symbolic) practice (ibid.). The ideas of the social subject exist in their actions (Althusser 1971, 42). Altogether, “ideology is an ‘imaginary’, albeit ‘lived’, relation that a subject has to its real conditions of existence” (Howarth 2000, 93).

Ideology becomes hegemonic when it comes as an ‘instrument of domination’ (Gramsci, Forgacs ed. 2000, 196) through winning the consent of the ruled. Antonio Gramsci uses the word ‘hegemony’ to refer to the practice of ruling when those that are ruled become consent to that rule. Gramsci calls the state apparatus hegemonic when it creates a “new ideological terrain, determines the methods of knowledge, and determines the forms of consciousness” (Gramsci, Forgacs ed. 2000, 192). It means, according to Gramsci, ideology and hegemony are closely intertwined (Howarth 2000). Then, if we talk about the ideology of nationalism, it can be said it is ideological in that it departs from the idea of a tendency to conflate the boundaries of the political and the national unit, and it enjoys a hegemonic status in a given society.

2.1.3. Gender and Nationalism

The next point I am looking at is necessary for this discussion and it is something that is missing in the modernist theory of nationalism, namely gender relations. In Anne McClintock’s words, every nationalist ideology is embedded in gender forms (1993). According to McClintock, nationalist ideology represents relations of power that are institutionalizing gender difference despite the ideological investment of ‘popular unity’ (McClintock 1993, 61). In that sense, women and men do not get the same treatment and equal access to the resources of the nation-state (ibid.). Furthermore, nationalism has the notions of masculinity and heterosexuality at its crux (Enloe in McClintock 1993, 62; Peterson 1999; Nagel 1998;). Since nationalism arises from ‘masculine memories, hopes, and humiliations’ (Enloe in McClintock 1993), it follows to a certain point what is anti-feminist. Thus, the

nationalist discourse is necessarily a gendered discourse and the nationalism studies cannot be theorized without considering a gender perspective (McClintock 1993, 63).

Hence, nationalism affects men and women differently and unequally. The way women are affected in relation to their reproductive rights is one of the main interests of this work as it is one of the main institutions keeping the nationalist order in place. The feminist literature on nationalism argues that one of the positions appointed to women in the nationalist project is as 'biological reproducers of the nation-members' (Peterson 1999, 44). V. Spike Peterson argues that "all groups seeking multi-generational continuity gave a stake in biological reproduction" (1999, 44). In fact, one of the nationalist narratives visible in the nationalist discourse is the fear of the disappearance of the nation, so nation-sustainability is one of the major concerns of the nationalist agents. The only way for keeping the nation 'alive' this discourse sees is through regulating (the abuse of the) women's reproductive rights. Limitations on access to contraceptive techniques and knowledge, restrictions and/or total ban on abortion access, promotion of family values through economic and moral encouragement for bearing children, are the usual methods used by the pro-natalist politicians (Peterson 1999).

These kinds of offenses on women's rights are visible in every nationalist discourse (see Yuval-Davis 1996; Gal 1994; Bracewell 1996; Vojvodic 2012 Shifman et al. 2002; Albanese 2004). And these offences become institutionalized in most of the cases. The way this institutionalization is normalized and maintained is through establishing hegemonic relations of controlling and shaping the public opinion. And the media space bears the biggest potential and burden for mediating the nationalist ideology between the promoters (the governments, politicians, nationalist movements) and the receivers (the general public). Therefore, I will call this space *political media* since it is the institution in which the political discourse operates and very often is appropriated by it for conveying the particular ideologies.

2.1.4. Political Media Appropriation in a Nationalist Discourse

The literature on media and nationalism primarily explores two ways in which these fields are intertwined (Mihej 2011). One part of the literature deals with the means of exploiting “various mediated cultural forms”, such as cinema and television industries, in order to reproduce the nationalist discourse (Mihej 2011, 10). The other part is engaged with seeing how media institutions, such as TV houses and channels, newspapers, cinema industries, are politically instrumentalized: “Synthetic accounts that embrace both aspects at once” are far rare (ibid.). This project aims toward taking into consideration these kinds of accounts i.e. to see how both the media is exploited and the media institutions are instrumentalized in order to serve the pro-nationalist, nationalist discourse in Macedonia.

In order to see the ways of the potential of media appropriation, Sabina Mihej’s division of multiple *facilities of mass communication* is of significant relevance here (2011, 21). According to her, three dimensions are necessary for the production, the circulation, and, the consumption of media material and information:

- a) common codes, such as languages and alphabets;
- b) information and communication technologies, for instance paper, magnetic tapes, DVDs, the printing press, microphones, cameras, radio and television sets, mobile phones, personal computers and the like; and
- c) institutions that govern or run the production, use or distribution of information by relying on these codes and technologies. (Mihej 2011, 21)

The institutions referred to in the last point include the “legislative and the executive bodies” (2011, 21) responsible for the production, the regulation, and the proliferation of the material/the information. By legislative and executive bodies, Mihej refers to the bodies that implement laws that regulate the public use of language, and the privately or publically funded publishing companies, TV channels, etc. (ibid.). What is noticeable in the case of the Macedonian nationalist discourse is the merged and the vague line between these legislative

and executive bodies. Namely, the analysis in the next chapter deals with media material that is produced, controlled and executed by the same body, the Macedonian Government, through the appropriation of the public and private institutions that are supposed to hold independent possession and control of the information and communication technologies. I refer to this kind of merging or conflation of institutional power as a political appropriation of the media.

The Media houses should be ideally independent institutions providing services of producing and disseminating information. That is independent media that is not part of the state power, i.e. a media that is not influenced by governmental or political party ideologies or/and corporate interests (Dunham, Nelson, and Aghekyan 2015). In this regard, my notion of mass communication and media diverges from the modernist scholarship on nationalism that sees the “sheer existence of shared, centralized and standardized channels of communication” as automatically engendering ideas of nationalism (Mihej 2011, 22). The instruments of mass communication are not always building nation-wise, but can also challenge the nationalism, especially in the era of globalization. Sabina Mihej provides more examples, when even in the past the media technologies were not used in order to create national unity (see Mihej 201, 23–25). Interesting it might be, that topic is not of the main concern for this paper. Nevertheless, the media freedom, or media independence, is an important issue here for my concerns about ideologies of nationalism and their gender implications and therefore in the following part I will reflect on the media practices in Macedonia in relation to the media independency.

As part of the Yugoslav Federation, the media press in Macedonia was in the hands of the state. Generally, in Eastern Europe, the countries started changing their media systems in the beginning of the 1990s with the fall of the communist system (Open Foundation Society⁵ 2005). That meant the media houses went from being owned by the government to being owned by (global) private corporations or individuals. This transformation was perceived as freedom

⁵ OFS from here on

of the media (OFS 2005, 35). However, although possessed by the state, the media press and broadcast in Yugoslavia enjoyed some freedom in terms of presence of media diversity on national and international level (OFS 2005, 36).

In Macedonia, the first private television channels were put in operation soon after its independence (*ibid.*). The Macedonian state broadcaster was transformed into public service television (*ibid.*). Yet, the report by Open Society Foundation for 2005 firmly states: “substantial reform took much longer to achieve, and is still ongoing, assisted by the intergovernmental missions, which have tried to help the country to resolve the ethnic tensions that led to a violent insurgency of local Albanians in 2001” (OSF 2005, 36). Nonetheless, the difficulty to provide an independent public service persisted and even increased with time due to the governmental appropriation of the media space. The 2015 report on media freedom in the Balkan regions by the Freedom House notes “worrying patterns of press freedom violations in 2014” (Dunham, Nelson, and Aghekyan 2015, 6). The report continues: “Macedonia’s score has declined 10 points in the past 5 years, making it the worst performer in the region” (Dunham, Nelson, and Aghekyan 2015, 7). The problems featured in the report are: “suppressing critical reporting by politicians and businesspersons, pro-government bias at public broadcasters, political pressure by party leaders and private owners, harassments, threats and opaque ownership structure” (Dunham, Nelson, and Aghekyan 2015, 6-7).

From the reports it is evident that the public and the private media space in Macedonia is politicized and appropriated. This fashion started only to increase after the independence of the country and it continues to grow ever since. Simultaneously, the nationalist discourse in Macedonia has taken higher intensity. I argue — considering the two parallel processes in Macedonia going on in the fields of media and nationalism, and considering their theoretical background — the Macedonian media space is politically hijacked in the service of a nationalist ideology. Having in mind the nature of ideology, the media space is also in the service of

cementing traditional gender roles and the promotion of patriarchal values. The ways the Macedonian government engages in the processes of production and circulation of media material with nationalist propaganda will be elaborated in the following sections.

2.2. National Demographic Strategies in Macedonia

In February 2008 the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of the Republic of Macedonia published a strategic plan for demographic development for the period of 2008 and 2015 (Strategy for Demographic Development of RM⁶ 2008). In this strategic plan, the demographic dynamics in Macedonia is designated to be ‘problematic’ and therefore the necessity for such a plan is seen as justified action. ‘The problem’ is assigned to consist in the decreased numbers of natality rates and the increased numbers of mortality rates (ibid). According to the document, in 2006 the natality rates were 11,1 live births on every 1000 inhabitants; and these numbers are compared to the period of 1948 – 1952 when the same rates were 39,3 live births per 1000 population (2008, 9). The document does not provide specific mortality rates per age but states that the general mortality rate for the period 1994 – 2006 has increased with numbers up to 9.1 persons per 1000 (2008, 11). What is officially envisioned as the major goals of this strategy is the stabilization of the population growth, swapping numbers between the natality and mortality rates, and the decline of what is called “rapid aging of the population” (2008, 5). The objective is planned to be achieved through improvement of the quality of life and the human capital (ibid). Sustainable economic growth is seen as the ultimate result of the implementation of such a strategic plan.

The first part of the document offers factual data of the demographic structure in the Republic of Macedonia up to the year of 2006. One of these paragraphs presents the birth rates

⁶ SDDRM from here on.

of the women in Macedonia divided by ethnic belonging. The text points out “...there are two groups of women. On the one hand, are women with high birth rates (Roma, Bosniaks, Albanians and Turkish [women])⁷ and on the other hand are women with very low fertility rates (Serbian, Macedonian, Vlachs and “others”)⁸ (2008, 10-11). Further, the document argues that these differences in the “reproductive behavior” might have negative results for the overall “reproduction of the population” (2008, 11).

In the second part of the document are presented the means of implementation of the strategic plan. Several actions to be taken are listed, such as protection of the human rights in the country, ‘long-term planning, continuity and sustainability of the interventions undertaken’, inter-sectoral cooperation, etc. One of the actions explicitly states “promotion of the family as a basic component of the society and [implementing] active policies in direction of [providing means for] family support” (2008, 34).

When comparing the goals of the strategic plan to the description of the demographic realities and their aspects considered problematic, it can be immediately inferred that the goals of increasing the birth rates are selective and they are targeting part of the population - only women with low fertility rates who happen to be predominantly of non-Muslim religion⁹. Even more, the statement that different reproductive behaviors of the ethnic groups can result negatively for the overall reproduction of the population discriminates women that belong in the group marked as ‘women with high birth rates’ who in contrast are mainly people of Muslim religion¹⁰. It implies that these women are not part of the overall population, or rather not part of the desirable nation. They even represent potential threat to the women with lower birth rates and to the desirable population of the country.

⁷ These are the official names of the categories of the population by self-determination according to the last census of RM made in 2002 (Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2005, Book XIII).

⁸ See footnote 7.

⁹ See the final paragraph of this subchapter for further explanation.

¹⁰ See footnote 9.

Thus, I argue that the strategic plan and the demographic politics introduced by the Macedonian government are nationalist practices that follow, as Nira Yuval-Davis calls them, “hegemonic discourses in relation to national reproduction” (1996, 17). The patterns I recognize in this case overlap with the “people as power” discourse and the ‘Malthusian discourse’, discussed by Yuval-Davis in her article *Women and the Biological Reproduction of “The Nation”* (1996). In this text, Yuval-Davis examines in what ways women are affected by the national and ethnic processes in relation to the women’s role in the reproduction of the nation (1996, 17). She identifies three nationalist discourses of hegemonic relations of power. Those are: “people as power” discourse, eugenicist discourse, and the Malthusian discourse. Briefly, the “people as power” discourse aims toward continuous population growth as a way of creating powerful nation; the eugenicist discourse deals mainly with the quality of the nation, rather than its quantity; and the Malthusian discourse primarily aims towards reducing birth rates of population that is considered to be undesirable (Yuval-Davis 1996, 17-23). Although Yuval-Davis makes clear distinctions between these three discourses, I suggest that in the case of Macedonia, evident through the strategic plan for demographic politics of Macedonia, *at least* two of the discourses discussed by Yuval-Davis are intertwined in order to serve the Macedonian nationalist project.

In this regard, the Macedonian government follows the “people as power” discourse to increase the birth rates of the desired part of the population. The methods used, are encouraging women, through financial support, to give birth to more children and making efforts for decreasing the abortion rates (SDDRM, 2008). On the other hand, the government policies also articulate the Malthusian discourse when it comes to the ethnic groups that are assumed to be non-desirable. The strategic plan clearly establishes that there are possible dangers of uneven reproductive dynamics between different ethnic groups. Therefore, it discourages population growth within certain groups that are seen not to belong to the wanted nation. Educative

programs on birth control and family planning for women, are the means towards reduction of the birth rates within the ‘non-desirable’ part of the population. Moreover, the aforementioned financial support considered as stimulus for children’s birth encouragement, is only to be awarded to women who live in geographical regions where the birth rate of living child is less than 2.1 per capita (SDDRM 2008). In this way, women who belong to the ‘non-desirable’ ethnic communities are further discouraged from having children since the geographical locations of their dwelling ranks higher in numbers of birth rate than 2.1 newborns.

Throughout the strategic demography document are visible open ethnic and gender discrimination and more hidden religious discrimination, in the development of the strategic document and policies. First of all, in the discussion of the pro-natalist plans in the document, its author (the Macedonian Government) claims to intend implementing policies, such as the financial support, or the educative programs, only for women. Like that it incorporates the nationalist ideology of different treatment and different access to the state resources for men and women. On the one hand, it positions women’s place in the domestic sphere with one predominant role, that is maternity and family care. On the other hand, it denies men from being part of the family planning and the family duties, locating them exclusively in the public sphere of life.

Furthermore, the document differentiates not only women as bearers of the offspring’s responsibilities, but also distinguishes them by their ethnicity. One part of the female population in the country is seen as vulnerable for their fertility is low. These women are categorized as ‘Serbian, Macedonian, Vlachs and others’ (SDDRM 2008). Nevertheless, the majority between these groups is the ethnic Macedonians¹¹. The other part of the female population is presented as the potential victimizer for their fertility rates higher than that of the

¹¹ According to the last census in the country, the total number of ethnic Macedonians (both men and women) is 1297981. The total number of Vlachs is 9695, Serbs 35939, and others 20993. (Republic of Macedonia, State Statistic Office, 2002, book X: 62).

Macedonian women and bears the risk to overpopulate them. Among these, the majority is ethnic Albanian women¹². Hence, the major policies for encouraging birth giving are targeting ethnic Macedonian women; in contrast, the major policies for discouraging birth giving are targeting primarily ethnic Albanian women. The narrative of mutual overpopulating between these ethnic groups of people and the fear of dying out of the nation is implicitly suggested in this document and it converges with the nationalist rhetoric. However, since it discriminates on the level of ethnicity, we are talking about emergence and proliferation of ethnic nationalism.

Finally, I suggested earlier that the strategic plan for demographic development of Macedonia produces religious discrimination as well. This implication comes from the overlap between the ethnicity of the two categories of women (those with low and high fertility rates) and their religious determination. The last official census in Macedonia (2002) divides the population in four categories: overall population at the level of settlements, total population by declaration of ethnic affiliation, total population according to mother tongue, and total population according to declaration by religion (Republic of Macedonia State Statistic Office 2002, Book X). The census does not juxtapose the ethnic affiliation in relation to religious affiliation. However, it does offer a geographical map of the population according to their ethnic or religious belonging. If compared the geographical locations of the population with their ethnic and their religious determination, it can be inferred what ethnic group has what religion. It can be concluded that the mentioned ‘Roma, Bosniaks, Albanians and Turkish’ women in the SDDRM predominantly declare as Muslim women while the referred to “Serbian, Macedonian, Vlachs and ‘others’” (2008, 11) are declared as Orthodox Christians. Swapping the vocabulary of ethnicity, follows that the women with low fertility rates are

¹² According to the last census in the country, the total number of ethnic Albanians (both men and women) is 509083. In comparison, the total number of ethnic Turks is 77959, ethnic Roma 53879, and ethnic Bosniacs 17018. (Republic of Macedonia, State Statistic Office, 2002, book X: 62).

Orthodox Christians and women with high fertility rates are Muslim. The difficult, indirect access to this information makes it well hidden in the SDDRM document. In that way the document ostensibly proclaims an alleged equal treatment towards the population and a single goal of increasing the population of the country. Nevertheless, what comes to be implicated as the official objective is a nationalist, anti-tolerant discourse of privileging ethnic Orthodox Christian Macedonians, and considering the target groups of its policies, encourages traditional gender roles and fixation of heteronormativity.

In 2008, another document that was published by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the *Working Programme of the Government of RM for the period of 2008 – 2012*¹³. This document precedes the strategic plan for demographic development and is the basis for its strategic goals. In its introduction it is given list of the pillar objectives and principles of the working of the government for the given period. Besides, economic growth, better living standard, some agricultural and infrastructural improvements etc., there is an objective listed as “healthier nation that respects the traditional values, including the family values and the procreation of offspring” (WPGRM 2008, 2). In this objective alongside the already explained way of articulation of the ‘people as power’ and the ‘Malthusian’ discourse is visible the presence of the less tangible ‘eugenist’ discourse in a sense that besides the desire for more ethnic Macedonians, they are desired to be in a specific health state as well. The eugenist discourse was later on embodied through the governmental media campaign entitled *The Choice is the Healthy Life* in which the main theme was a promotion of ‘healthy’ food and a ‘healthy life-style’¹⁴.

¹³ WPGRM from here on.

¹⁴ Though this healthy life-style in the advertisements was represented through a strong negative positioning of drug addictions, alcoholism, and similar problems that are considered to be a ‘chosen life-style’ by the Macedonian Government, rather than social health issues.

Further on, in part III of the Working Programme, titled as *Country of Equal Opportunities for All*, stands bullet point marked as *Demographic Development and Family Support*. In it is stated already in the first sentence:

Family is the basic pillar of the society. The long tradition of large families in Macedonia has been disappearing in the last 20 years. Therefore, the government of the Republic of Macedonia will implement precise measures [for dealing with the ‘problem’] through the *Strategy of Demographic Development 2008 – 2015*. (WPGRM 2008, 21)

The paragraph continues with a list of measures that are about to be implemented. Most of these measures, as in the previous planning document, are directed towards the women — who already are assumed according to the document to be future mothers — to whom is indicated the planned financial and social support for mothers where the fertility rates are lower than 2.1 per capita. One of these measures however, differs from the general pro-natalist policies of direct financial and social support and it states: “continuous media campaign for family promotion and [encouragement for having a] third child” (WPGRM 2008, 21). This campaign was released a year later, in 2009. I argue that the media campaign promoted by the government conveys strong nationalist messages that are oriented toward encouragement for large families belonging in the ‘proper’ ethnic groups and at the same time against the reproductive rights of women such as that of abortion. Also, they further establish hegemonic heteronormative relations of power which produce and maintain binary gender roles.

In order to see this in its complexity, in the next chapter I will analyze six of the advertisements that are part of this political media campaign for promotion of family values titled *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion* under the slogan “Choose Life: You have the Right to Choose”. These advertisements were broadcast on most of the national TV channels and brought up many controversies by the audience about their alleged aims. In what follows I will present the context and the content of these commercials and will problematize their ideological message and aim.

3. State Media Campaigns: “Explaining or Preaching”

In this chapter I will focus on the Macedonian media campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion* [original title: *Кампања за објаснување на последиците од абортусот*] promoted by the Macedonian government as part of the national strategic goal for encouraging population growth. I will make a ‘systematic analysis’ (van Dijk 1985, 3) of the six advertisements that were produced for the sake of this campaign in 2009, aired on most of the national TV stations such as MRTV, Kanal 5, Sitel. I argue that this campaign is part of the nationalist propaganda and state ideology present in Macedonia that articulates the discourses of ‘people as power’, the Malthusian discourse and the eugenist discourse (Yuval-Davis 1996, 17). I further claim that the Macedonian government appropriates the media space for generating nationalist discourse while at the same time produces gender discrimination, existential frustrations, and increases the likelihood for gender based violence. The advertisements that are part of the campaign present unrealistic images of the Macedonian society and of certain social phenomena in order to demonize the abortion utmost. Finally, this chapter tries to recognize how the ideological work done in and by these advertisements is affecting women’s bodies and reproduces heteronormative, ethnicized hegemonic relations of power. That is - as David Croteau and William Hoynes say – my analytical aim is to recognize the “fit between the images and the words in a specific media text and ways of thinking about, even defining, social and cultural issues” (2003, 160).

3.1. Methodology

For the purpose of this chapter I will do a multimodal analysis: a combination of critical textual and visual analysis of the political discourses the campaign ads draw on. The ultimate question I try to explore is the ‘ideological work’ done by texturing the given material in its specific shape and contents (Fairclough 2003, 58). I need to attend to both systems of signifying

because of the nature of the advertisement material taken for analysis, that is textual and visual motion picture.

Discourse analysis is particularly fruitful in understanding the production of meanings in a given social context (Tonkiss 1998). It entails “critical and interpretative attitude towards the use” of the language and images used in a specific social setting (Tonkiss 1998, 245). As in the case of my research, I am taking a critical and interpretative stance toward the videos I have chosen in order to see what kind of meaning-making they enact and maintain, and what this production of meaning does in the production of a nationalist and pro-natalist discourse.

In the context of doing discourse analysis research, discourse refers to a “system of language which draws on particular terminology and encodes specific forms of knowledge” (Tonkiss 1998, 248). In a social context, the use of language is seen as a ‘social practice’ that is shaped by and the expression of particular power relations that come to be reiterated as ‘given’ or ‘natural’ (ibid.). This way of theorizing discourse(s) is in fact an adaptation of a Foucauldian perspective i.e. discourse is seen as “tactical elements of blocks operating in the field of force relations” (Foucault in Howarth 2000, 49). In this project I employ with both of the notions on discourses. On the one hand, I am looking at the specific language use in the videos I am analyzing and the forms of knowledge and meaning produced through it. On the other hand, I am looking at the power–relations that affect the social world presented in the videos in convergence with the social world of the target viewers in Macedonia. In that way, I can perform the deconstruction of the relation between the textual presentation and the ideology that informs the videos that are part of the campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*. My analysis is focused on the way in which this relationship constructs the social and cultural images of particular gender ideals, (and) more precisely the production and labeling of the female body in terms of a patriotic act of reproduction, as well as, the power dynamics that circulate in and around these (re)presentations.

I mentioned previously that this project engages partly with political discourse analysis. My understanding of political discourse analysis comes from Fairclough and van Dijk's notions on it:

In the spirit of contemporary approaches in CDA this would mean that critical-political discourse analysis deals especially with the reproduction of political *power, power abuse or domination* through political discourse, including the various forms of resistance or counter-power against such forms of discursive dominance. In particular such an analysis deals with the discursive conditions and consequences of social and political *inequality* that results from such domination. (van Dijk 1997, 11).

In this sense, political discourse is not only identified by its actors or its politicians (van Dijk 1997, 12) but it is understood within a larger picture that takes in consideration all of the relevant participants that might not even be directly involved in the political discourse, including the citizens, the “recipients in one-way modes of communication” (1997, 13). For instance, in this understanding of political discourse, the media is seen as an integral part of a political discourse that “needs to focus on its audience” (ibid.). This notion of political discourse is important for my project as the data of my analysis which is taken from the political media: the ads are communicated by a political actor, the Government, in a one-way manner and presented to the audience via media institutions in the public space. Thus, doing political discourse analysis is necessary for I am exploring how political power relations i.e. domination is re/produced through the appropriation of the media space by the government's campaign and what kind of gender inequalities result from this appropriation.

The analysis explores six advertisements launched as part of the governmental campaign in Macedonia entitled *Campaign for Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*. These advertisements in video format were aired on national TV houses — but mainly the public broadcast service, Macedonian Radio Television (MRTV) — starting in 2009, in which period the intensity and the frequency of the showing was the highest. After the big controversies surrounding these videos, their attention-force decreased, though it is

possible that some of them are still aired sporadically on some of the TV channels, but I have no particular knowledge to this effect.

It is important to note that these six videos are all of the videos included in the campaign. In addition, the governmental campaigning for promoting the traditional values of the family with pro-natalist discourse included more advertisements. The remaining advertisements were classified by the Macedonian government under another campaign with different name, *Family Values*. In this campaign the author tries to encourage the viewers to create bigger families but does not focus on questioning the right to legal access to abortion. The ads in that campaign are not of main concern for this project, even if they are part of the re/production of the nationalist discourse and in that sense cannot be totally ignored. My focus, nonetheless, remains on the six videos since the ultimate aim of this thesis is to shed light on the meaning production of ‘abortion’ as a particular reproductive right of the women, the concept that is in the center of the six video in the chose campaign.

The structural method of analysis is to present the video content for the reader first, and to engage with a deeper analysis on the discursive practices employed with in the videos later. In any case, this strict separation between descriptive and discourse analysis is impossible since as the author of this project I present the material to the reader with an interpretation that comes from a specific position. In that sense, even the mere recount of the video’s content is filtered through my personal understanding of it. Yet, YouTube links to the videos are provided in the footnotes. These links are the very same data I used for the purpose of the analysis.

The language in which the videos are produces is Macedonian — a fact that already bears discursive relevance in itself as it shows the ideal, imagined target audience of the material that is the Macedonian ethnic group — regardless weather the Albanian minority in actual fact speaks Macedonian or not, and if so how much. To make the monolingual choice even more marked, we need to know that Macedonia is a country with two official languages,

Macedonian and Albanian. People that speak Albanian are the significant ethnic minority in the country¹⁵. As we have seen in the previous chapter, my claim was that the population targeted with the pro-natalist policies and campaigns is the majority of ethnic Macedonians. The production of the material only in Macedonian language confirms the claim previously made. I provide my own translation of the texts narrated in the videos. The English translation is as accurate as possible in order to bring the linguistic context of the Macedonian language onto the horizon of intelligibility to the readers of my thesis in English. Even so, the language used in some of the videos was beyond my translation skills because of the linguistic (metaphorical) discrepancies caused by some of the chosen scripts. At the points where this was the case I specified accordingly.

In each of the videos I am exploring the intentions, the purposes and the goals that function as part of a more complex political process (van Dijk 1997, 18), i.e. as part of the nationalist discourse and project as a whole. Further, I pay attention to the discursive structures and strategies used in the videos that are seen as a political text. In that sense, I deal with the specific language use, its specific syntactic and stylistic choices and its more complex pragmatic use that van Dijk calls ‘local semantics’ (1997, 30). In this way, we can see the linguistic tendencies of the political narrative to emphasize meanings that would be expected by the producer of the text to invite positive, favorable stances by the reader with regard to the notions defended by the producer of the material (van Dijk, 1997). I shall also focus on certain ‘syntactic manipulations’ through the use of a particular language choices (van Dijk 1997, 33) when establishing the ideologies at work. A further observation is made of the ‘linguistic

¹⁵ According to the last census in the country, the total number of population in Macedonia (both men and women) is 2022547. The ethnic Macedonians are 1297981. And the total number of ethnic Albanians is 509083. Compared to the remaining ethnicities, Turks are 77959, ethnic Roma 53879, ethnic Bosniacs 17018, Vlachs 9695, Serbs 35939, and others 20993. (Republic of Macedonia, State Statistic Office, 2002, book X: 62). This makes the ethnic Albanian minority the biggest minority in the country with around 25 per cent of the total population and approximately 70 per cent of the total ethnic minority population in Macedonia.

superstructures’ such as argumentation (van Dijk 1997, 29) offered in the videos. As Teun van Dijk clarifies, “persuasion by argumentation has sometimes been described as the hallmark of democracy” (1997, 29); furthermore, “nationalist or populist appeals in such political argumentation are classical examples of persuading (...) by making reference to the benefits for the nation or the people” (1997, 30). For this reason, analyzing the specific argumentation in the videos made in the chosen Macedonian governmental campaign is crucial to deconstruct the ideological messages conveyed through the videos. The same applies to the rhetoric used in the videos. For example, van Dijk, points to the possible ways of rhetoric use to construct a discourse. The author mentions *repetition*, *addition*, and *deletion* as particular rhetorical devices of discourse formation (1997, 34-35). Here it will be specially examined the rhetoric of “deletion of information for partisan reasons” (ibid.). Further, I am looking at the “expression structures of the sound and the graphics” that can play direct or indirect role of underlining ‘partisan meanings’ (van Dijk 1997, 36) In that sense, dramatic music, volume levels, image focus, and peculiar frame adjustments are not to be neglected in the following sub-chapters. Finally, I am seeing how the specific representations function in the specific context of the Macedonian society and politics, and how the way they function shapes the public opinion that is then used to legitimize ambiguous and offensive political measures.

As any analysis, the discourse analysis has its own limitations, too. So far I have justified the reasons for using this particular method for the thesis, and partly it has been touched the matter of the situatedness of the researcher’s interpretation, which might be seen as one of the flows of this kind of analysis. Discourse allows for multiple and different ways of interpreting the given data — and that can be its advantage and its lack at the same time. On the one hand, it allows for the emergence of different points of view, different standpoints, and therefore more options for critique and potential solution. On the other hand, it can be perceived to lack scientific credibility due to its positionedness that entails the assumption of political

stance by the researcher in relation to the actual event she studies. The analysis in this project aims to make explicit the reasons for the production of the (anti-)abortion advertisements and its effect on the reproductive rights, while departing from a feminist standpoint.

3.2. The Abortion Video

Abortion [Аборт] was one of the most controversial commercials that was eventually censored in 2013 by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (Radio MOF 2013, online). The video¹⁶ for the advertisement is 52 seconds long and presents a scene set in a hospital hall of an obstetrics and gynecology department. In the middle of the hall there is a man sitting while holding a bouquet of flowers. It resembles a classical birth delivery scenario. The man, assumed to be the father, is positioned in a visible state of anticipation while at the same time we can hear dramatic yet melancholic music. In the next shot we hear the nurse's steps approaching the man. She comes closer and, with a smiling face, shakes the hand of the man while saying: "Congratulations! The abortion was successful. You have just killed healthy baby that could have grown to be a beautiful boy or girl" (NVO Infocentar, 2015)¹⁷. What follows is their separation in different directions, while the camera stays on the hospital hall. In a couple of moments, the image blurs and a quotation by Mother Teresa appears on the screen: 'There are two victims in every abortion: a dead baby and a dead conscience'. The advertisement ends with the slogan of the campaign — *Choose Life: You have the Right to Choose* — and a graphic image of a child's foot. In the lower part of the frame is written the name of the producer - Government of Macedonia.

¹⁶ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wm_3Mog57LY – link to the video

¹⁷ The lines are transcript from a report made by the NVO Infocentar in 2015. The actual video on YouTube censors the part where the "you have just killed" phrase goes. On the screen stands the line "censored by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services" while a loud siren can be heard.

The video conveys some direct ideological messages that work towards meaning-production about what abortion is to signify. In the first place it connects abortion inevitably to murder. The nurse cynically and explicitly states “you have just *killed* a healthy baby...” thus identifying the two acts as the same. Furthermore, by claiming there happened an act of killing a baby, it also creates a connection between the embryo, the fetus and the baby as a person. It implies the meaning that what has just happened in the video is a monstrous murdering act of another human being that has a personhood, the innocence of a prospective child, and the vitality of a healthy, therefore, quality life. In order to alleviate the shock for the audience, the advertisement uses the illusion of a happy giving-birth-scenario that soon turns to be the dramatic story of homicide — with the help of medicine. By postulating the oppositions of ‘life’ and ‘death’ closely, the video delivers a strong moral(izng) message of the binary ‘right’ and ‘wrong’. This dichotomous representation cements the associations of the abortion with an actual act of life-taking.

For the ethical message to be further strengthened, the video ends with a message by an authoritative figure such as Mother Teresa. Her work is associated with humanitarian disposition and Christian religion (NVO Infocentar 2015, 10). Therefore, anyone seeking for abortion should be seen in opposition to these values. Mother Teresa’s message has an effect to blame the parents and inflict bad conscience. The content of the video itself places the blame particularly on the only parent visible, the father, for being an accomplice to the actual murderous act associated this way exclusively with the other parent, the mother who is understood to be in the operation theatre not visible in the film.

In that sense the advertisement aims toward closer communication with the men rather than the women in the audience. Contrary to what most of the nationalist studies have shown, the ideological messages invoke responsibility in relation to the fathers as well. Case studies on nationalism that have explored the relations of women’s reproductive rights in pro-natalist

discourses have accented the routine blame of women who sought abortion for killing the future nation. For example, Jeremy Shiffman et al. (2002) in their article *Reproductive Rights and the State in Serbia and Croatia*, examine the nationalist rhetoric in the print media developed in these two countries after the break-up of Yugoslavia. They offer an example of a Serbian patriarch who addressed women's irresponsibility for performing abortions that put at stake the whole Serbian nation (Shiffman et al. 2002, 631). Similarly, Yuval-Davis points to the case in Slovenia — another country that invested in nationalist discourses after the transition from a state-socialist to a multi-party political system. There, in 1991 the major party DEMOS explicitly stated that “women should not have the right to abort the future defenders of the nation” (in Yuval-Davis 1996, 19). Additional example is given by V. Spike Peterson (1999) referring to the Croatian president Franjo Tudjman, who declared that “women who have abortions are mortal enemies of the nation” (1999, 44). What is visible from these examples is that the main target when demonizing abortion was perpetually prescribed to the women. I do not argue that women are taken as non-responsible by the Macedonian Government campaign videos and are not implicated as the guiltier party for seeking abortion. However, I propose that there has been an interesting change here: the advertisement in question addresses and prescribes partial responsibility to men as well.

Even so, the patriarchal hegemonic scheme is still preserved. By targeting men as addressees on the question of abortion as the ultimate bearers of power in matters of family, women's agency is lowered to the minimum. The advertisement positions men to be highly influential on female bodily practices and therefore capable of taking responsibility for matters of the nation such as ‘abortion or the survival of the nation’. In so far as this is not the case in the video hospital scene, i.e. the man is not able to control women's decision, the video acquires a patronizing voice — instead of accusation. It suggests that men should learn and understand Mother Teresa's lesson: at least men should be influential and be part of the women's decisions.

At best, men should have the control over the choice for abortion. Since the nation-building is epistemologically masculine, (heterosexual) men should deal with every aspect of it, even if that includes others' bodily integrity.

Finally, the very end of the video presents the slogan “*Choose Life: You Have the Right to Choose*” which, on the line with the video, in fact leaves one with only one choice. Lee Edelman, in his article *The Future is the Kid Stuff: Queer Theory, Disidentification and the Death Drive*, drawing on Lacanian psychoanalytical theory argues that social reality is embedded in one-sided, self-evident, uncontested “figure of the child that cries out for defense” (1998, 19). He calls this “dangerously political” in the sense that the image of the child forms the “structures in which the ‘political’ itself can be thought” (ibid.). Hence, when it comes to the politics of abortion, the image of the child shapes the rhetoric that is “intended precisely to assert that the issue has only one side” (Edelman 1998, 18). Namely, how can one not choose the side of the child? How can one not choose life over death? In this sense the advertisement uses the very same conceptualization to create the “political” choice that leaves no other option than agree with the government because to choose the other side makes one a killer, a bad citizen, and a criminal undermining the social order.

The very phrase ‘*choose life*’, in line with the ‘pro-life’ position taken by the government, posits the oppositional side as ‘pro-death’ instead of ‘pro-choice’. In that way the advertisement poses the Macedonian Government as a protector of the life, which in fact every government should be, rather than as opponent to the choices one makes for her body. Therefore, the advertisement Abortion directly moralizes about abortion by the manipulation of words and authorities, and by endorsing sharp judgements on anyone considering abortion — disregarding even health reasons.

The advertisement however does not directly mention aborting prospective Macedonian citizens. That is implied by the appearance of the figure of a Christian saint as the

authoritative figure on matters of life and death — the religion that is understood to be ‘the’ faith in the imaginary community of the Macedonian nation. In this way, by not mentioning the final aim, but demonizing the act of abortion, the video fulfills the ideological goal of causing general disagreement with ending the pregnancy through abortion, which is supposed to result in lowering the numbers of performed abortions and increasing the birth rates. Whether this objective can be really achieved in this way, is not the actual concern for the promoters of the nationalist ideology — a concern beyond the scope of the current project.

3.3. The Parent Video

The video entitled *Parent* [Родител]¹⁸ is the other of the six commercials included in the program of the governmental media campaign for ‘explaining the bad consequences of the abortion’. It is 36 seconds long and it is apparently far less controversial than the above one directly targeting the moral values of the abortion. Why this is so, has probably got to do with many factors. First of all, the video does not even mention the word ‘abortion’. If it were not for the closing shots of the video, i.e. the slogan of what the campaign scripted, one could not easily make the connection with the ultimate anti-abortion and pro-natalist theme of the campaign.

The spot starts by showing a man of what someone would call ‘potent’ age, in his 30s, with chaotic and untidy appearance, sitting in a small manual dinghy, looking annoyed while trying to navigate the dinghy in the waters of Lake Ohrid. This starting image is accompanied with the Italian song “It’s Wonderful” by Paolo Conte¹⁹ and the same song continues through the whole course of the video. The camera moves slowly and shows the other men who are already on the shore, fishing near the water and staring at the first man while he manages to

¹⁸ Link to the video on YouTube -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vk_Qs2zrb2g&list=PL4gkxYAv0yyf0NWffzElq2OVV87GTsnq2&index=4

¹⁹ Link to the songs in YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QILaCLtWW9A>

get to the shore by throwing one of the fishermen in the water and punching some of the fishing equipment belonging to the other men. The fishermen seem shocked and look at the first man with disapproval of his actions. By this time we understand that the man is probably drunk and loner, and instead of doing what is expected from him to do - that is to have a proper job, maybe as some of these other men being fishermen²⁰ - he continues acting violently even toward more people found on “his” way, such as one older lady. Soon after this shot, the camera moves toward two kids playing on the swings in the playground near the water. The man from the very first shot shows up, looks in the direction of the kids, and spreading his arms in a hugging position. One of the kids, the girl, gives up the swing and starts running in direction of the man, eventually hugging him firmly. At this moment, a female voice is introduced in the video, saying ‘no matter what you do, your child will always love you’²¹. What follows is the advertisement’s end, with the slogan of the campaign — *Choose Life: You have the Right to Choose* — and a graphic image of a child’s foot. As in all of the campaign videos, the lower part of the frame displays the name of the producer - the Government of Macedonia. Meanwhile, the Paolo Conte’s song keeps on playing until the very end of the video.

As previously mentioned, if it were not for the last part where the viewer can actually see what is the purpose of the commercial, the moral message might be read differently than an attack against the act of abortion. However, by posting the primary content of the video together with the ending message of the governmental campaign, the video brings strong connections with the act of parenting itself and contrasts it to the act of abortion. In this manner, the commercial offers two options, to be a parent (no matter what kind of parent), or to be an *abortionist* that is, to comply with those who choose to perform an abortion.

²⁰ This is however implied, and the video only suggests this message rather than stating it directly. The interpretation is my personal and made by common sense.

²¹ In the literal translation it says: ‘no matter how you are, your child will always love you’.

Paradoxically, the video identifies all the non-parents as supporters of the right to abort, something well noticeable in many nationalist discourses. For example, Wendy Bracewell in 1996, in regard to the Serbian nationalism that emerged after the break-up of Yugoslavia, writes that Serbian women who rejected the role of being mothers, were seen as failures at best, and traitors of the nation at worst (1996, 28). The advertisement “Parent” appears to mobilize the same notions. The very fact that the video presents ‘the worst’ of the parents — that is the drunk, aggressive, jobless father — as still better than being no parent, testifies to the moral judgement of the concept of childless family.

Interestingly however, this moral judgement is primarily directed in the video towards the male character who is supposed to be the father. The woman once again, as in the video “Abortion”, is absent from the advertising material. Although the advertisement has the primary goal to subvert people, expectedly women, from choosing an abortion, there is no woman to whom the message should be delivered. Instead, the video emphasizes the role of the father in the matter of choosing life. He might have vices, he might be violent, but it is his obligation to create a child-full family and most likely to convince the woman to follow the same style too. And all this wrapped up with the Conte’s happy song, and the beautiful view of Lake Ohrid, should suggest that this life is wonderful. Unlike the dark hospital hall in the video entitled “Abortion” where criminal(ized) things are happening, in this video, life is beautiful — as long as one chooses to be a parent. In this sense, the video suggests that the major problem of relevance in Macedonia is the childless family attributed — through the intertextual link with the previous “Abortion” video — to the right to choose abortion, which is just another nationalist strategy. In that regard, ‘death of the nation’ rhetoric is the most prevalent one. For instance, both Serbian and Croatian nationalist discourses that emerged after the separation of Yugoslavia, were using phrases such as “destruction facing the (...) nation”, “the white plague”, “the path to disappearance”, and “threat to [the] national survival”

to mark the national issue in their newly formed countries (Shiffman et al. 2002, 629–634). Patrizia Albanese in her comparative study on reproductive rights under nationalist regimes points to the same narrative used in Post-Soviet Russia. Namely, words such as ‘demographic crisis’ and ‘threat to the national security’ were part of the daily interaction (2003, 26). Using such a strong and symbolic vocabulary, inevitably places the problem highest on the rank. This puts the problems of unemployment, addiction, and violence, in the issues with second-level importance. It is almost as it suggests that as long as one has children, they don’t have to worry about anything else; the problems might be solved by the love that assumingly children give uncontestably to their parents, or at the end of the day these ‘little’ problems can be neglected. What the video Parent also suggests is that these problems should not present an obstacle for the pursue of parenthood. In a country where an economic crisis is taking its peak, people’s main doubts for forming a family indeed might be the lack of financial means for supporting that family. The creators of the advertisements seem to be aware of the audience’s financial concerns when they unequivocally pin the jobless man as still valuable to serve the national interest.

When it comes to violence, similar ethics is applied. The violence in the video is not approved, yet the purpose of its presentation within the frame of this campaign is to convince people that violence is not the biggest problem in the community, at least not big enough to be a barrier for reproduction. In fact, violence, especially gender-based violence, significantly increased in those years in Macedonia. If one googles the terms Violence, Macedonia, and the year of 2009, we can see that the very first search titles contain the domestic violence as one of the main topics. Further, in their 2012 analysis of (gender-based) violence in the public space of Skopje, the non-governmental organization Reactor, concludes that the official figures of criminal acts of violence show increasing rates, however there is no systematic collection of reported violence toward women only (2012, 76). Nevertheless, the matter of violence,

especially men's violence against women, appropriated bigger interest and attention in Macedonia. From personal accounts I have also heard that many people felt that Macedonia is not safe for having children as it used to be. Thus, the governmental video implicitly manages to address this issue only to lay down its alleged importance, particularly when it should be singled out as a reason to avoid having children. All this, as previously mentioned, is opposed to abortion, implying again that the abortion is the worst acts of all; worse than intoxication, worse than aggressiveness, and worse than poverty. In short, for the sake of the nation, parenthood through the figure of the father is glorified as an absolute — decontextualized, fetishized — value, and abortion is vilified as a criminal act in association of the mother figure.

Finally, although the video seems to be considerably neutral when it comes to the ethnic aspect of its structure, again we see the one-sided narrative regarding the ethnicity of the assumed audience. Almost every scene in the video points to a culture and tradition associated with an ethnic Macedonian belonging. For example, the city of the Lake Ohrid — where the video is shot — is one of the most famous cities for its cultural heritage strongly correlating to the past of the ethnic Macedonian historical events. Besides, most of the remaining inhabited space around the Lake Ohrid consists of mainly mixed population at best, with many areas predominantly ethnic Albanian (see *Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia* 2002). The Lake itself is settled on the Macedonian-Albanian border. However, the producer of the video Parent chose not to shot anywhere else around the lake area, but thoughtfully in the City of Ohrid. Considering that Ohrid is an ethnic Macedonian city located in the middle of a largely multi-ethnic environment the video implicitly raises the question of the national fear of overpopulating the 'pure' Macedonians living in the symbolically important city. Interestingly enough, the Treaty that signified the end of the war conflict in 2001, was signed precisely in the City of Ohrid. Now the video Parent is displaying its national worries over the population decrease in the same city. In that way the advertisement embodies the

nationalist necessity for a spectacular presentation of the national symbols which according to McClintock are the fetishized objects through which the nationalist discourse very often takes shape (1993, 70-71). In this case, the national symbols are the fetishized objects for the building of the ethnic Macedonian nation only.

3.4. The Youth Video

The video *Youth* [Млади] is the third video I decided to use for my analysis on the Macedonian governmental anti-abortion nationalist discourse. It is one of the advertisements that is full of misinformation, direct hegemonic ideology, and eventual total confirmation of traditional gender roles.

The video is long 1 minute and 31 seconds²². It starts with a frame in which a young guy is sitting on the living room couch, holding the remote control and watching what we can hear to be, ('European') football on TV. He is being totally disinterested in the presence of his either girlfriend, or young wife, who tries to gain his attention by mingling around, when eventually she sits next to him on the couch and a soft, nurturing-like melody starts playing in the background. The girl seems exited, smiling, yet uncomfortable in a way, indecisive like before announcing some big news. And she does announce the big news. She says: "Honey, I have something to tell you". The guy replies "Tell me", although his full attention is directed toward what he sees on the TV screen. Then the girl continues with: "We are going to have a baby" but the guy doesn't seem to perceive what she is saying. Then, she repeats one more time, smiling more this time. Then the nice, soft music stops suddenly, indicating the guy realizes what is happening. His first reaction is "How do you mean we are going to have a baby?". The girl is smiling with a huge, enthusiastic smile, explaining that she has made a

²² Link to the video "Youth" on YouTube - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REvYiBY8HyE&index=3&list=PL4gkxYAv0yyf0NWffzElq2OVV87GTsnq2>

pregnancy test and it's positive. The face of the guy is not as promising as hers. He continues to name reasons against having a baby, such as not having the proper financial conditions, such as a car, an apartment, etc. Then the girl argues the opposite, saying they do have the conditions in fact since she made the whole plan; his parents will buy a car²³, her parents will buy a bed [not a flat or a house]. The guy continues naming other necessary stuff for supporting a child, like baby's food and baby's hygiene products. The counter-argument we can hear from the girl saying that when they go out they spend the same amount of money, implying they do not have to go out but can spend the same amount of money on taking care of a child instead. What follows in this game of arguments and counter-arguments is the guy's wish to travel, to 'live a life' while they are young, but the girl stops him with the description of a baby that is good-looking and has his father's facial features. Indeed, the girl clearly states that she "feels the baby will be male²⁴ and will look 'the same' as his daddy". Suddenly, the guy softens, he has a dreamy face as imagining something nice in the future, and looks more convinced by his girlfriend's/wife's argumentation. He leans on her stomach, pronouncing the words: "Love, I want you to be only mine", to which the girl returns with: "Shhhhh, it [the baby] can hear you. We are not alone anymore/from now on". The shot ends with a sweet-looking kiss — not too affectionate, but emotional enough — between the couple, and the main slogan of the campaign with the same graphic image of a child's foot and the logo of the producer in the lower part of the frame used in every other video respectively. Meanwhile, as the guy's assurance and acceptance of the new situation grows, the same soft music returns, raising in volume so that by the end of the video the same softness and harmony is set between both the viewers and the acting characters.

²³ In this moment I cannot be sure whether she thinks of a car as an automobile or a baby stroller, since she uses diminutive form of the word 'car' which in Macedonian can signify the both things.

²⁴ She uses the word 'male' since this is how it works in the Macedonian language; however, the translation of the meaning in English would be equivalent to 'boy'.

As argued before, this video encapsulates more aspects of the nationalist discourse promoting an anti-abortion ideology that also entails what V. Spike Peterson calls “heterosexim” in her article *Sexing Political Identities/Nationalism as Heterosexim* (1999, 39). According to Peterson, *heterosexism* “refers to the institutionalization and normalization of heterosexuality and the corollary exclusion of non-heterosexual identities and practices” (ibid.). It demands “normalization of (...) heterosexual desire, intimacy, and family life” (Peterson 1999, 40). Heterosexim plays a crucial role for the nationalist discourse. It involves binary division of the gender roles and hierarchy between what is considered “male” therefore masculine identity and “female” therefore feminine identity (Peterson 1999, 39). In this way heterosexim recognizes not only sexist politics but also includes essentializing multiple genders as necessarily biological features rendered into a neat male/female binary.

Peterson, however, does not address why heterosexim is the crux for the nationalist discourse. For this question Brian Keith Axel in *The Diasporic Imaginary* offers better answer. Axel states that “Nation-normative sexuality provides the sanctioned heterosexual means for reproducing the nation’s community” (Axel in Puar 2005, 135). In this sense, anything that does not converge with heterosexuality is seen as a (potential) threat to the nation since nationalism assumes heterosexuality as the only ‘natural’ way possible for citizens-production (ibid.). The video *Youth* perpetuates the same assumption. By presenting only heterosexual couple the campaign excludes any other forms of partnership as unacceptable and potentially dangerous for the nation ‘survival’ and nation-maintaining. It is a traditional scene of a heterosexual couple which not only is heterosexual but nurtures the conservative gender roles. The guy is watching football, a socially considered masculine, while the girl is acting submissive and immature with her innocent smiles and proper ‘wits’ to approach her ‘man’ submissively. However, they apparently love each other enough to fulfill the requirement of the heterosexual desire for the sake of the nation-building project. What we also see is a very

intimate moment of family planning which fulfills the rest of the heterosexist demands. In this way the State (the Macedonian Government) sends a clear message that only these life-styles are acceptable for the desirable Macedonian citizen; fixed conservative gender roles, women as mothers, men as fathers, and nothing else.

Another problematic aspect of the video, which nevertheless complies with the traditional gender setting in Macedonia, is the preference for a male baby. When saying that ‘she feels the baby is male’, the girl in the video finally manages to convince the guy to keep the baby. This ‘feeling’ of hers that fills the man with an enthusiasm for procreation and child-raising, actually presents the desire of the Macedonian Government which should become, or perhaps is, the desire of all of the Macedonians. Preferences for male children is another element of the nationalist discourse, which in this moment I prefer to call the *nationalist myth*. That is the myth that what the mothers of the nation are caring and raising are the future soldiers that will defend their country. For example, Yuval-Davis points out about the similar discourse of post-Yugoslavian Slovenia, where the major party of that period made statements against abortion arguing that the aborted ‘children’²⁵ are the future “defenders of the nation” (1996, 19). Similarly, Bracewell gives reports of the Serbian statements made after the first news on the beginning of the post-Yugoslavian wars in 1991. The Serbian narratives were that “for every soldier dead in battle in Slovenia, Serbian mothers must bear 100 more soldiers” (Bracewell 1996, 29). While this myth in the context of the post-Yugoslavian wars stood to some firmer argumentation, such as the loss of male citizens due the military aggression, in the context of Macedonia holds to a similar, but more difficult to justify, logic. Namely, after the civil armed-conflict in 2001, the Macedonian society is believed to live under the impression of the necessity to be always ready to fight against some enemy, even when these notions

²⁵ I write ‘children’ in single quotation marks since it is in my belief that a child is not that as long as it is aborted. The child becomes one after a birth is given to it, therefore calling a child after not completed pregnancy with birth delivery, only emphasizes the moral notions against the abortion.

haven't had rational reasons. The conflict was armed but incomparable to the atrocious post-Yugoslavian wars of the 1990s. The nationalism present in the country used the trauma of the ethnic tensions and the "complex and exhausting post-communist transition" (Vangeli 2011, 22) to subvert this fear and transform the scenario of needed soldiers into pro-natalist, boys-wanted babies in the video campaign.

Another, I would say important, issue with this advertising is the obvious deliberate spread of false information such as the statement that the "baby can hear", in the sense of comprehension, what these two young people are saying. However, according to Mayo Clinic the first time fetal ears develop is between week 16 to 18 in the pregnancy stages (Mayo Clinic 2015, online). At this point they don't state if the baby can hear or not, rather, it is the ending point of the development of the ears (ibid.) According to the UK Baby Center, the baby starts hearing between 23 weeks and 27 weeks (Baby Center, online). In this sense, the mistake in the video is evident; a woman that just found out she is pregnant cannot have a fetus that can hear noise — let alone comprehend the noise as meaningful parental voice. However, this mistake is not innocent, that is to say unintended by the producer of the video. The 'mistake' creates a stronger moralizing image of the fetus in relation to a human being in order to alleviate the condemnation of the possible choice for abortion. The more there is an image of strong connection between abortion and human killing in the minds of the viewers, the more easily is conveyed the judgmental position against the abortion.

Further, less theoretical but equally important, misinformation is spread. That is the notion of easy-solving financial matters. Macedonia is a country which suffered great economic recessions after its independence in 1991. Today, a time in which things are considered to be more stable than in the beginning of the millennium or right after the formation/the independence of the Macedonian State, the official unemployment rate is more than 26%, while the employment rate is around 42% (Republic of Macedonia The State Statistical Office 2016,

online). And these are only the official numbers, hidden behind the numbers of huge inactive population such as students, retired people, and people with special needs, who do not enter the statistics of unemployment. Comparing these numbers to even one European developed country shows devastating results. For example, according to Trading Economics, Germany's unemployment rate for 2016 is 4,3% (Trading Economics 2016, online). Naturally, one of the people's main concerns when it comes to planning a family is the financial status. And this dilemma is presented in the video Youth, however, just to be cleared away by solving the problem with the help of the parents of the newlyweds, as the girl in the clip suggests.

This brings a whole new dimension to the moral standards of the youth population in Macedonia. The Government, through this video, encourages them to feel financially dependent on their larger family as something that is very normal, rather than pointing on the wider problem of youth unemployment in the country. This leads to further issues in the familial relations in Macedonia such as the expectance of the younger generations of their natural right to their parents' funds. In this way, in a state of poverty they blame on their parents, rather than the conditions the state has provided for their successful careers, such as good quality education and introduction to the job market. Therefore, the little conversation on the financial issues of bearing a child, plays double role in the nationalist narrative. On the one hand, intends to show that the financial situation of one is not a reason to stop them from having children. On the other hand, it covers the wider problem of youth unemployment in Macedonia.

With a similar notion, Anastas Vangeli theorizes the process of 'antiquization' in Macedonia (2011). He refers to 'antiquization' to designate a special type of nationalist discourse in Macedonia, one that is based "on the assumption that there is a direct link between today's ethnic Macedonians and ancient Macedonians" (Vangeli 2011, 13). In his historical analysis on this process of *antiquization* he argues that one of the reasons for creating this political myth in contemporary Macedonia is the actual escape from solving bigger social

issues, such as the economic difficulties people encounter in the country (Vangeli 2011). Although my focus in on Macedonian nationalism encapsulates gendered perspective, the process of antiquization is part of that nationalism. I argue that Macedonian nationalism holds to a neo-liberal background that is rooted in patriarchal values. I will come back to this question later however. For now, it is enough mentioning it so that we can realize how the nationalist myth is created in order to eschew other important questions that could be of a bigger worry for the ‘survival of the nation’.

Apart from avoiding resolution of the bigger social issues in Macedonia, this process of ‘antiquization’ has an effect of ethnicizing in that it does not interpellate the ethnic Albanians as social subjects in the creation of the contemporary imagined community. In that sense, through this kind of historicizing of the ‘origin’ of the nation, the Albanian part of the population is absent. Their ancestry does not derive from the ancient Macedonians which implies that their place is not part of the contemporary Macedonian society that allegedly has its roots in the ‘glorious’ Macedonian past. In that way the system of ‘antiquization’ further widens the ethnic gap between the Macedonians and the rest of the ethnic group in Macedonia, particularly targeting negatively the ethnic Albanians.

Finally, the video, in a similar manner as the two previous videos, directs the anti-abortion message towards the men as well. Ironically, contrary to the first video Abortion, it is not the girl/ the woman that needs to be convinced against choosing abortion; she has already made the ‘right’ decision. Hence, it is the boy/the man, who needs to receive the governmental message. It is he in the video who primarily opposes the notion of having family at that age (age however not specified) and in their allegedly poor conditions — appealing to the force of rational arguments. It suggests that men are the possible opponents to the creation of a child-full family in Macedonia. However, there are no such studies in Macedonia that would prove this argumentation. Hence, in the absence of such studies, the message is again that men are

seen as the bearers of responsibility for keeping the natality order in the country and from keeping ‘their’ wives/girlfriends from aborting — whether the latter are in favor or not. It is a notion that further stabilizes the heteronormative gender roles in the Macedonian society by applying to men total control over the women’s bodies, even when it comes to questions that concern women the most, such as the question of abortion. In this manner, the hierarchical relations of power between the genders necessary for the heterosexist discourse are set as part of the nationalist requirements.

3.5. The Beethoven Video

The next advertisement in the line of the Macedonian governmental media campaign for ‘explaining the bad consequences of the abortion’ is titled *Beethoven* [Бетовен]. The clip²⁶ is relatively short comparing to the rest of the videos, 26 seconds long, and it does not include real actors on screen. It starts with a classical song that turns out to be the ‘Ode to Joy’ by Beethoven²⁷. On the screen we can see writing in progress in electronic form: “Father alcoholic; Mother having Syphilis and being pregnant; Six sick children;”. The next shot continues like: “If the choice had been abortion, would we have the *Ode to Joy* today?”. The third shot only presents the name: “Ludwig Van Beethoven”. The video ends with the final shot of the image of Beethoven, i.e. the slogan of the campaign — *Choose Life, You Have the Right to Choose* —, the image of the child’s foot, and a turned on volume of the most familiar sounds of the ‘Ode to Joy’.

The advertisement *Beethoven* continues the same narrative of attacking the abortion on account of deliberately neglecting other social issues. In that sense, this video, similarly like the rest of the videos, avoids issues related to scarcity, addiction and bad health system. The

²⁶YouTube link to the advertisement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEIG2ZTfpvQ&list=PL4gkxYAv0yyf0NWffzElq2OVV87GTsnq2&index=5>

²⁷YouTube link to the song - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wod-MudLNPA>

text in it intentionally mentions alcoholism and diseases, that are social issues even today, only perhaps in a different form than in the time referred to in the video. However, these social issues are mentioned only to be compared to the act of abortion. In that case, regardless of the viewer's opinion of abortion, they will perceive the aforementioned social problems as lesser than the problem of abortion.

By opposing the rest of the social issues with the issue of the abortion, the video translates the message of the 'good-and-bad' dichotomy. In that way, it helps toward creating an image of the abortion by mutual relational construction of the phenomena in question. This process can be reflected on through Saussure's theory of language, Derrida's *différance* and Butler's theory of performativity. Ferdinand de Saussure understands language as a "relational and differential conception" (Howarth 2000, 20) i.e. signs (concepts and objects) are fixed by their mutual relationship, their internal differences, rather than by some already attached reference to the objects (ibid). Drawing on Saussure, Derrida develops his notion on *différance* to allude "to the way in which meaning is never present in itself but always depends on what is absent" (Salih 2002, 36). It suggests that meaning is produced exactly through positing matters in binary oppositions (Moi 1985, 105). Judith Butler, on the other hand, is in a similar relational way that looks at the construction of the identities, or as she calls the relationship between the original vs. the copy (Butler and Salih ed. 2004, 128). She claims that in theorizing the notion of 'heterosexual vs. homosexual' as equivalent to the notion of 'original vs. copy' Butler's claim is that the original is also constituted, even more, by/through the copy. If there is no thinking of something as a copy, there cannot be something imagined as an original. The original needs the copy to affirm itself (Butler and Salih ed. 2004, 128). Following these notions, I argue that in a similar way, the video "Beethoven" constructs the general thinking on abortion in opposition to the rest of social phenomena in order to posit it as a binary in which one of the sides is the wrong one, or at least more wrong, than the other one.

Furthermore, the content of the video conveys the same nationalist meaning shared with the rest of the videos — nothing should stop you from procreation. It offers a hope for the audience; it might be that now in Macedonia people live in bad social and economic conditions but there is always the potential of a great genius to rise up. With abortion there is a risk of ‘killing’ this genius which consequently will be detrimental not only for the family of the future hers/his, but also for the whole society. In this way, the nationalist discourse converges the private with the public sphere. The family is seen to be a representative of a smaller nation. Anne McClintock argues on this matter in her article *Family Feuds: Gender, Nationalism and the Family*. McClintock claims that “nations are symbolically figured as *domestic genealogies*” (1993, 63). One of the ways in which the trope of the family is important for the nation(alism) is due to its “natural figure for sanctioning social hierarchy within a putative organic unity of interests” (ibid.). In this way the subordination of the women to men is seen as something that is natural verity which can, and should, be applied to the wider context of the nation (McClintock 1993, 64). So, when it comes to the hierarchy of the social order, the familial hierarchy can fit equivalently to the social one, since it is considered as something that is natural (ibid.). In the same logic, what affects the family is in the interest of the nation because most likely affects the nation too. So it follows, that the act of abortion affects not only the family within which frames occurs, but also the wider context of the ‘bigger family’ that is the nation. Therefore, the abortion as a choice is the wrong choice because the possible talent that can be brought to life is the one that ‘naturally’ belongs to the whole nation. This is why the bad existential conditions should not affect the choice for family planning because one is doing that as much as for the sake of the family, so too for the sake of the nation, suggests the video.

An additional aspect that should not be neglected when contextualizing this video is the ethnical and religious perspective of its content which nevertheless bears the gender angle too. Namely, the video argues its credibility based on a male, western, Christian figure that is

supposed to represent the potential for the national genius and the risks of losing it if the choice is abortion. Beethoven's cultural location is associated with Christian, patriarchal tradition and in that sense identifies the problem articulated in the video as a problem relevant only for the audience that belongs to that tradition. In that way the choice to present the figure of Beethoven and not someone else, ethnically singles out the Albanian addressee, proving again the selective nature of the nationalist discourse.

Moreover, the advertisement brings into question another problematic argumentation. This has to do with what is more familiarly called 'The Great Beethoven Fallacy' (Dawkins 2006). Richard Dawkins in his book *The God Delusion* discusses the argumentation of the pro-life proponents who use the Beethoven biographical story to oppose abortion — something that is done in the Macedonian governmental campaign as well. What Dawkins reveals is that the story behind Beethoven's familial circumstances is completely invented. Beethoven was not the 5th, or the 9th child of his parents (2006, 299), nor he was the 7th child, as the Macedonian advisement suggests. In fact, Beethoven was the eldest child, or technically speaking the second child since his first-born sibling died in infancy, something common for that time (ibid.). Further, it is not clear whether Beethoven's mother had syphilis or not, but what is known is that she died because of tuberculosis (ibid.). This information makes the claims in the video "Beethoven" untrue at best. Then logically, the question of choosing abortion after considering the familial bad health conditions cannot be applied in the case of Beethoven simply because that was not the factual situation.

What, Dawkins further points at, is the stance that the anti-abortion notion does not rises only from the suffering of the embryo or the future possible child, but rather exactly the *potential* that could rise out of the unborn child (Dawkins 2006, 298). In a similar way, as discussed previously in this section, it is this potential for the family and for the nation that is glorified by the Beethoven video's content discussed here. However, Dawkins argumentation

is that, even if we only look at the potential itself and we assume that what the pro-natalist menu offers us as reality in the case of Beethoven biography, still the anti-abortion argumentation is flawed because it is equally true to say there is a lost potential for genius in every missed chance for engaging in sexual activity (Dawkins 2006). Therefore, the video Beethoven presented as part of the Macedonian state campaign is neither the state's creative solution for convincing the audience against choosing abortion, nor it stands to a firm argumentation. We could easily follow the video's same logic if we wish, and ask the question: "If the choice, had been abortion, would we have the memory of Hitler's atrocities today?". The same moral dilemma could be set again, this time in support of the pro-choice advocates. Hence, the video's line of reasoning is flawed at best, but ideological at worst.

Finally, when it comes to the question of choice, the advertisement does another act of ideological work. It assumes that there was a choice that could be made; a choice that the mother of Beethoven made; she did not choose to abort her child. However, in circumstances in which abortion was very likely to be criminalized with capital punishment (Hunt 2010), the question rises of what kind of choice we can talk about. Similarly, in Macedonia, at this moment even more, but also at the moment of the advertisement's publishing, the abortion is/was not an easy procedure to get. Even if the Law is not an obstacle to getting to abortion, the financial aspect and the access to information is. As suggested previously, the economic position of the people in the country is not even remotely close to the general aspirations; women particularly find themselves financially dependent more than men. Second, there is no sexual education, or any type of education in Macedonia that could offer clear and detailed information on the availability of the abortion procedures in the country. Thus, in conditions of lack of necessary means to have access to abortion, the means of choosing are even fewer. Therefore, the ideology followed in the video moves only in the direction of blinding the actual facts existing in the video, and promoting a 'morally right' image that can lead toward

condemning the abortion in order to feed the nationalist pro-natalist need of the ‘people as power’ discourse (Yuval-Davis 1996) present in the country.

3.6. The Treasure Video

The advertising “Treasure” [Богатство] is a video of 47 seconds²⁸. What we see in the first shot is an older man in the focus, with a wide, rich, nice, yard in the background, settled somewhere in a peripheral location, near the base of some beautiful mountains. We can see the yard is well equipped with nice outdoor furniture, tamed green grass, and an outdoor swimming pool. The man in the focus speaks the following lines with gaze directed to the camera: “In my life I had built many buildings”. Soon after, we hear a child’s loud voice in the background, exclaiming “grandpa...!!”. The image switches to the next shot, where the man, now in movement, puts on a cooking apron, and continues the previous talk: “I used to know important people, I had lots of money...” Then we see him standing near a barbecue, dealing with what’s on in, while the speech continues: “but I wasn’t aware what my real treasure was”. The next shot shows him sitting on an outside dinner and he continues the talking by saying: “One day, when I lost all of my money at the stock market... [there is a switching point of the camera that now shows many people sitting around the table, presumably the man’s siblings, in the frame] ...I realized how rich I was”. In the next scene we see a photo-shooting of a family portrait while the voice of the man keeps on saying “The biggest treasure I have is my children”. In the ending sequences, the family portrait is taken and the slogan of the campaign — *Choose Life: You Have the Right the Choose* – shows on the screen, together with the same child’s foot and the name of the producer.

²⁸YouTube link to the advertising
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40TOaeMrJ-U&index=2&list=PL4gkxYAv0yyf0NWffzElq2OVV87GTsnq2>

The advertising Treasure follows the pattern of positioning male authoritative figure in the center embodying the right moral choices for the viewers. Like in the rest of the videos, this one renders any female characters, or characters that are supposed to represent the figure of the mother, as totally passive and absent from the main narrative. Now, not only the video addresses men, but also identifies with the masculine image appropriated in the society. It represents an elder, traditional, obviously financially good standing man, the breadwinner of the family, teaching the younger generations and the women in the audience of the right values that one should acquire and aspire to.

By presenting this image, the video stabilizes the heteronormativity necessary for the progress of the nationalist project. As mentioned before, nationalism thrives on ‘*heterosexism*’ that is normalization of the traditional, heterosexual, hierarchically opposed gender roles between men and women (Peterson 1999). However, one interesting exception of the ‘heterosexist theory’ appears in the video. The man in this case, although still hyper-masculine and the authoritative head of the family, takes on both roles in the family. For example, we don’t see his apparent wife in the video. In the family portrait it is not clear at all who’s who. We can only speculate who might be the potential spouse but eventually the video doesn’t prioritize that question. What matters is that there are many children and these are the treasure ‘we’ should seek. More human bodies are necessary for the sake of the nation-building. The point that these human bodies need to be produced by two people of opposite sexes goes without saying or visual identification of the mother in ‘the family photo’. The man even puts on the cooking apron – something typically associated with women in a conservative environment. However, I argue that this exception to the main arguments in the notion of ‘heterosexim’ does not subvert it, or contradicts it. It presents just another aspect of it.

On the one hand, it can be argued that by appropriating ‘both’ roles in the family, the man in the video does not represent any challenge to the conventional setting. In the same way,

a woman who assumes the role of a breadwinner and housewife does not challenge the gender norms. It is only what Arlie Hochschild calls ‘the second shift’ or what is also known as the ‘double burden’ (2003). The double burden has to do with the trends back at the end of the 20th century of increase in female labour on the global market, while at the same time keeping the traditional pattern of home-work or its management falling on women’s shoulders (ibid.). What Hochschild showed in her book after interviewing couples that dealt with this kind of household division of labor, is that many things were lacking in their relationships and “marriage has become a shock absorber of tensions” (Hochschild 2003, xxi). In the same logic, the man in the video *Treasure* taking the double burden by being the breadwinner and the caretaker of the housework does nothing in particular to the traditional setting and it maintains the same scheme of power relations. It also does not reverse the traditional norm, but it fixes it more in direction of men’s domination over women. The absence of the woman in the video, does not lead the viewer to think that she might be present somewhere else, for example at work. The absence is total. She is just not there, her voice does not matter, she is not the active member of the nation to whom the video’s message needs to reach. Instead, the message on anti-abortion again tries to reach the Macedonian men as the active agent that has overall control over the female body. This is supposed to be done through identification with the leading protagonist of the video.

On the other hand, it can be argued that the man in the video “*Treasure*” does not even necessarily take on ‘the second shift’. Rather, another symbolic connection arises between his role of the masculine patriarch and the nation as a masculine formation. Nir Avieli in his research titled *Grilled Nationalism: Power, Masculinity and Space in Israeli Barbeques* explores the “identification with the nation-state” through meat consumption (Avieli 2013, 301). He points out that anthropologically, so far is considered that meat preparation and consumption has high connotation when it comes to power, masculinity, potency, and territory

(ibid.). Anthropology denotes that there is ultimate showing of man's superiority over the other species in killing, cooking and eating animal's flesh (Avieli 2013, 302). Furthermore, feminist critiques show that this superiority also presents the equivalent appropriated superiority of culture over nature, conventionally translated into man over women (Avieli 2013, 304). Barbeque itself is associated with modern nationalism and space occupation (Avieli 2013, 305). In this manner, one might argue that the main protagonist of the video "Treasure" expresses this exact masculine power and occupation of the national territory through his presentation of roasting the meat on the barbeque in the video.

Whatever argument we take as valid, the point stays that the main protagonist, while being seen without his partner, and seen as cooking meat, does not challenge the gender normativity, but reinforces it in an even subtler level. *He* addresses the nation on matters that typify the female body while this body is absent. At the same time the nation identifies with his position and appropriates a 'pro-life' stance.

Furthermore, whatever argument we accept, the ethnic discrepancy is visible in this video too. In that sense, talking about the double burden or the gender division of labor, this concept can be addressed only in the frame of the ethnic Macedonian context. The video presents Macedonian family relations, totally neglecting the different setting of, for example, an Albanian family. That is a setting in which the problem of the double burden cannot be contextualized easily, since Albanian women are relevantly less present on the labor market than the Macedonian women (Angel-Urdinola 2008). That makes their job typically attached to the household labor and in that regard necessarily present in any family portrait — an image strategically omitted in the video *Treasure*. Presenting the image of an Albanian woman adhered to the housework would be a question to problematize itself, but it would be a presentation of a diverse ethnic belonging — something that none of the videos do because of the government's (as argued earlier) one-way directed pro-natalist agenda.

Another inevitably logical dilemma noticeable in the video is the remark on the financial and ‘real’ wealth of the main character. On the one hand, the man claims he had lost all of his money on the stock market, but he was left with the true treasure he has, that is his children. On the other hand, however, what we see on the video is a hypocritically vast image of material wealth belonging to the man. Paradoxically we detect two contradictions between what is considered to be rich and to have a treasure. The message of the video suggests that the material wealth is not a real one, since it can be easily lost in a minute (like for example at the stock market pointed in the video). What is real is the wealth counted in humans — the more children there are, the richer one is. Nevertheless, as mentioned before in the previous chapters, the financial state of a person, or a family, matters when it comes on making decisions on family planning. The paradox of the advertisement is that promotes values oppositional to the financial dilemma for raising a family, while at the same this promotion comes from a person who obviously has a financial stability. In fact, the main protagonist is positioned in an environment that most of the Macedonians can only dream of living in. The Gross National Income (GNI) of the country per capita is 5,150 USD in 2014, with higher inflation rates of the Gross Domestic Product (GPD) in 2015 (World Bank, online). 22,1% of the population lives in poverty, that is, “percentage of the population living below the national poverty lines” (ibid.)²⁹. Again, just for comparison, Germany’s GNI per capita is 47 590 USD for 2014 (World Bank, online). A man who averagely earns around 5000 USD yearly, cannot usually afford a house and a yard of the measures and image presented in the video. Let alone, for the many of the people who earn below the average.

Thus, the video not only brings inconsistency in its own argumentation, but also creates unreal image of the Macedonian society. This in turn, might bring frustrations that can lead

²⁹ There is no ethnic based breaking down of this figure if we are about to compare the poverty levels between ethnic Macedonians and ethnic Albanians. However, there is an indication of the poverty scales between the ethnic Roma minority in the country that has 80% of unemployment rates within its community (Mitchell 2012).

toward increased gender violence. Namely, it is implied in the video that the breadwinning role in the family belongs to the man. As mentioned earlier, one of the points of the video is that the men in the audience identify with the main protagonist. However, in a country where the unemployment rates are as high as 26% at best, men often cannot perform the role of the breadwinners. The pressure that society, and videos like these, put on men can be immensely harmful. Tithi Bhattacharya, in her article *Explaining Gender Violence in the Neoliberal Era* points out precisely on this fact (2013). She argues that there is a “correlation between poverty and gender violence” exactly because of the social pressure on men to be the breadwinners (Bhattacharya 2013, online). This “material reality” embodied in the impossibility of men to be the breadwinners, and the “deeply rooted sexist idea of the gendered division of labor”, leads toward psychological frustration that can canalize into violence (ibid.).

In this way, the video “Treasure” not only promotes a pro-natalist ideology that is already dangerous for women’s reproductive rights, but also produces legitimization for proliferating gender violence even further. We can see how the nationalist project intertwines with the economic factors and establishes suitable field for women’s oppression on several levels, or rather at the intersection of multiple structures of power.

3.7. The Arguments Video

The last advertisement for this analysis in the campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*, however, this video differs from the rest of the videos in that it explicitly states the bad consequences of the abortion and it does not present an imagined scenario that some actors follow.³⁰ It rather, shares ‘facts’ with the audience that are supposed to change the mind of the ones who (might) consider seeking an abortion.

³⁰ YouTube link to the advertisement

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yz7tdR1xYKM&list=PL4gkxYAv0yyf0NWffzElq2OVV87GTsnq2&index=1>

The video is 38 seconds long. It starts with an image of a baby and appropriate children's music. In the first shot we can hear a male voice that starts with saying the main slogan of the campaign: *Choose Life, You Have the Right to Choose*. While we see the motion image of the same baby, the male voice continues saying: "But if you believe that the violent termination of the pregnancy is the only option you have, you must be aware of the possible consequences such as infections that can cause sterility, sepsis, uterus perforation, inflammation, cervix injuries, complications due to anesthesia usage; harmful psychological consequences is another possibility". While the voice makes the monologue, in the frame we see a woman showing up. She is the mother of the child, taking care of it and breastfeeding it at one point. The advertising ends with, once again, the slogan of the campaign. This time both uttered by a male voice and written on the screen. As the rest of the advertisements, the image of a child's foot is in the frame and the producer of the advertisement.

As stated before, the video "Arguments" directly addresses the audience without trying to convey messages in a more creative and symbolic way. The video suggests that its information relies on medical factual, objective, data. Before I start analyzing the omissions the video makes when using this medical data, I would like to point out on the deliberate usage of words that contradicts the allegedly objective stance of the producer. In that sense, the usage of the phrase 'violent termination of pregnancy' instead of abortion, or just termination of pregnancy, permits taking a (pro-life) side, and permits to input a subjective notion in what is offered to be medical truth. Using the word 'violent', undoubtedly implies that the termination of pregnancy is aggressive and harmful for the fetus. Since it is the mother that undertakes the abortion, it is then she who directly harms the fetus, although it is not she the only one who is responsible. The word violent also signifies force that drifts from the natural causes (WordWeb). In that sense, violent sends the message that abortion is opposed to the natural course. Calling a procedure for termination of a pregnancy violent, or unnatural — while not

being used in medical connotation where terminology has other significances than in the colloquial speech — neglects all the other aspects of the pregnancy period and focuses only on a single point that is understood as causing deliberate damage to *someone*. The intention of this specific usage, is not only to spell a blame on the damage causer, but also to moralize the whole pregnancy, including abortion as a possible end to it. Pregnancy is seen as a holy matter while abortion is demonized to its peak. It is not only the mother to be blamed if she undertakes abortion, it is also the father, the medical staff, the pro-choice advocates, eventually the whole nation because it would appear that a woman's pregnancy is not her own but is part of the national sustainability. In that way, abortion is a violent act not only to *someone* where this someone is seen as a human being, but it is someone seen as a member of a certain nation. With other words, abortion is not only harming a baby, it is also harming a Macedonian baby.

Secondly, by using the words “*if you believe that...*”, “*then you must be aware*” of the consequences, the author implicitly points on two conclusions. First, the person who believes so is in fact wrong. In this case, the person who believes that abortion is the only solution is misguided. Second, if the person *chose* to believe that, then they should be aware of the ‘crime’ they are doing by pointing to the possible bad outcomes of undergoing abortion. Naming the complications that can be caused by performing abortion is not for the sake of informing the viewer. It is for the sake of scaring by implicating possible bodily punishments to the viewer who believes in choosing on abortion may encounter. The modal verb ‘must’ points to the authoritative voice by the narrator. With that, the voice takes on almost religious authorization; the state laws will not punish (yet) those that undergo abortion, but they might suffer the encountered consequences. For that, they should be aware of the divine justice that might take place, and should feel threatened and scared. If they are scared, then probably their belief is wrong and they should change in what they decided to believe. Therefore, the usage of this

particular phrasing is on order to frighten and convert all those who still believe that abortion is the only solution left, by putting on the mask of someone who is authorized to do so.

Finally, besides using peculiar terminology to make certain ‘implicature’ (Grice 1989), the video Arguments calculatedly omits to present important information in order to increase the effect of causing fear to the viewer, but also to ease the path of restricting abortion legally. In that regard, the narrator mentions numerous possible medical and health condition’s outcomes of getting a procedure of terminating the pregnancy. Primarily, using these medically recognized conditions and complications, the narrator again poses his ‘reliable’ voice. For a person who does not hold medical knowledge on abortion, the offered material will do the work to ideally back off any intentions of undergoing abortion. Furthermore, for someone who does not think about abortion, or is not entangled with questions around it, this video can ‘help’ to make up their mind. Even more, it can be an indisputable justification on restricting access to abortion on a legal plan.

The notion is that if the abortion can cause so many complications for the health of the female body, then banning it, or restricting it, is the reasonable step that the policy makers can, and should, do to protect women’s health. In fact, that is the main argument of many of the politicians with so called ‘pro-life’ stances. As we can see from Susan Gal’s study on *Gender in the Post-Socialist Transition: The Abortion Debate in Hungary*, similar discourses appeared in both, Hungarian post-socialist and the Macedonian post-Yugoslavian, post-socialist context. For example, when it comes to the nationalist ideology in Hungary, Gal also points out on the medical narrative taken by the politicians and the physicians, ostensibly providing statistics on the bad consequences of the abortion. They were also claiming that the anti-abortion position they occupied was for the women’s own sake (Gal 1994, 274). However, this can be done, only if important medical data is excluded for the viewer’s eyes and ears. In that sense, the video Arguments omits to give a statistical data of, for example, what is the mortality rate of abortion

procedures, or what are the medical consequences of restricting abortion. For instance, the latest statistical data on abortion-related deaths in the US is 0.73 per 100 000 reported legal abortions (CDC, online)³¹. For comparison, another report shows that death related to dental procedures rates 0 – 1.7 deaths in 100 000 procedures, or 0.6 to 1.2 marathons run deaths on 100 000 participants, or even more than four deaths among 100 000 cyclists in a large annual bicycling event (NCBI, online). Moreover, Gal shows that banning abortion in Hungary did not raise the birth rates. It only inhibited sexual activities for procreation (Gal 1994).

Also, banning abortion does not stop abortion from happening. Rather encourages illegal undertakings of abortion. And this is the case almost all around the world. An article, in the medical journal *The Lancet*, on induced abortion and the worldwide trends between 1995 – 2008 shows that in fact “the abortion rate [is] lower in subregions where more women live under liberal abortion laws ($p < 0.05$)” (Sedgh et al. 2012, online). Further, illegal abortions are always less safe than if legalized and regulated since they are performed either by not qualified staff or/and in environment that lacks medical standards (ibid.). Finally, any of the complications named in the Video Arguments can be complications resulting almost any type of surgical procedure.

Once we take into consideration the actual research literature on abortion, we see that the specific information chosen to be presented in the video Arguments is not medically fully supported arguments but arguments that can only help a certain ideological work. The ideology in this advertisement is that abortion should be banned under the umbrella of medical reasons. At the same time the nationalist’s reasons are hidden. These two parallel processes are visible through the omission of actual medical information, since if the reasons were truly medical,

³¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss6410a1.htm> - link to the report. Additionally, I am using data from the US since there is no mortality rates statistics due to abortion procedures for Macedonia. The State Statistical Office of Macedonia offers only data on how many abortions were legally performed for certain period without any specifications (*Women and men in the Republic of Macedonia*.2012. Skopje: The State Statistical Office)

banning would not have been the logical step. The fact that the reasons were not medical, but rather in order to serve the nationalist goal of ‘people as power’ discourse (Yuval-Davis 1996) proved correct in 2013 with the implementation of restrictive measures for getting access to abortion in the ‘Law for Termination of Pregnancy’ in Macedonia (Official Gazette of RM 87/2013).

4. General Tendencies

The Campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion* was described by some of the non-governmental organizations as one of the most powerful and the most expensive propaganda instrument of the Macedonian government (NVO Infocentar 2015, 3). Indeed, soon after its broadcast, abortion seemed to be in focus in public discourses. Before the campaign no one problematized the question of the abortion policies. Perhaps people did not have a lot of knowledge on these policies, or the ongoing policies were perceived as regular to them. These policies were regulated with the ‘old-abortion-law’ that was in power from the time of the Yugoslav Federation in 1972, and permitted abortion on the request of the woman (Official Gazette of Socialist Republic of Macedonia 22/1972). Once the campaign was released, many people decided to keep a so called ‘neutral’ position. Those that felt stricken the most reacted to the advertisement but the most they got was a ban on daylight broadcast of the video *Abortion* and censorship of the most explicit part where the abortion is identified with murder (Radio MOF 2013, online). The campaign obviously pulled some trigger on the abortion debate and it eventually led to normalization of the implementation of the ‘new-abortion-law’ of 2009 which permits performing abortion under certain and limited circumstances (Official Gazette of RM 87/2013).

In this chapter I will pay attention to the intentions, the consequences, and the contradiction that this media campaign has produced besides the implementation of the 2013 law for the termination of pregnancy. First I will review the main audience of the advertisements in relation to the public to which these advertisements are intended to create effects. Second, I will problematize the question of the ultimate goal of the nationalist politics, that is sustainable economic growth, and the means towards getting there through using pro-natalist policies while neglecting more viable options. Finally, I will relate those practices to the production of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell 2005) and gender hierarchies.

4.1. Target Audience vs Actual Audience

Since the advertisements in the governmental media campaign deal with the question of abortion vs. procreation, logically follows that the target group of viewers would be the population of the most potent age for reproduction. In that way the message to develop and nurture traditional family values can get to those intended to do this. However, recent analysis on the television viewership in Macedonia shows results that contradict the previous hypothesis. Namely, television in Macedonia is watched predominantly by people over 50 years of age with viewership of more than 4 hours per day (Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services 2014) People between 16 and 49 years old watch television in the average between 2 and 4 hours per day (ibid.). Moreover, the population between the ages of 16 – 29 generally watch movies or TV-series in their time spent in front of the television box. Those that follow other programmes are mainly people above 30 years old (ibid.). Certainly, this does not stop the broadcast of the advertisements for the younger population, since the campaign videos are aired mainly during the commercial breaks of any kind of programme. Yet, considering the viewership rates, it is very likely that it is the older population who comprises the main part of the actual audience for the advertisements rather than the younger ones, who are likely to encounter the problem of abortion in their life.

Having this in mind, it is questionable to what level the advertisement reached the audience entangled the most. There is no research done to check this information, therefore two options are plausible: either the ideological material did not reach its wanted target, or the information was conveyed in alternative ways. Since the anti-abortion campaign has brought the abortion debate into the focus, I refuse the first assumption and argue that the commercials reached the wanted population. In fact, this was done in even more subtler ways through the logic of generational authority.

Macedonia's main style of living arrangements is still sharing the household with the larger family. Due to economic reasons, presented in the previous chapters, many of the young people live with their parents to a significantly high age. Moreover, very often the household includes the oldest members of the family such as the grandparents. The channel through which the advertisement reach the younger population is exactly through these older members of the families. The dramatic and eye-catching content of the campaign videos are much easier to get absorbed by someone less familiar with technological effects and prone to believe uncritically to the presented information. However, this audience naïve might be, their authority in the family is important. Most of the members of a Macedonian family depend financially on their elders due to unemployment³² and in this situation of dependency they are very often obliged to submit their desires to those to whom they depend on. In a settlement like this, it is the women's voice and decisions that are heard the least. In the same way, they are the first ones to be obedient on familial matters, including their marital status and children's planning. Through the process of familial elder's authority and hierarchization, women are robbed off of any saying as long as they stay under the same roof with their larger family and are dependent on their financial support.

The same way, in which women's image is produced in the videos (voiceless or making the decision with the help of someone else), is used to address the question in matter. The female image represented in the governmental campaign's videos is promoted and encouraged to function in the actual relations of domestic power. So when women are absent from the social and familial events in the advertisements, or it is always someone else doing the decisions and presumes responsibility, it suggest they should be absent in the real-life decision makings. Unfortunately, this applies even when their own bodies are at the crux of the matter.

³² See chapter 3, 3.4, for figures.

In that sense, they do not even have to be the wanted audience of the advertisements because someone else is assumed to acquire the right for making *the choice* instead of them.

4.2. Economic Growth, Migration and Frustrations

Another contradictory stance of the Macedonian governmental demographic documents and the subsequent media campaign is the aim for ‘sustainable economic growth’ and quality human capital. The program document published by the Macedonian government, plans to implement financial and social encouragement for reproduction of larger families — through what I argued to be a nationalist discourse of policed heteronormativity, gender dichotomy, media appropriation, and denied access to some basic human rights — in order to achieve increase on economic level both for the county and its citizens. The logic followed in this goal is that if more people are reproduced, the power of the labor force increases, more commodity is produced, and the country has better chance of improving its economy by trading with this commodity. I argue that this goal is contradictory at best and false at worst. The improvement of the economy is rather the image constructed behind which deep nationalist discourse is rooted. At the same time, I do not reject the assumption of the present nationalist discourse resulting from economic-centered reasons. Nevertheless, the claim I make here is that the economic growth cannot be the ultimate objective of the national demographic politics.

As the Marxist school and its legacy have shown so far, the increase of population does not automatically bring economic development. In fact, it is more likely to bring poverty and, as Vogel argued, the emergence of the ‘industrial reserve-army’ (Vogel 1983, 32) — the unemployed working force due to saturation on the labor market. As examined and explained in the previous chapter, Macedonia is a country of immense rates of unemployment (for a

reminder, at least 26% of the active population).³³ Due to this unemployment, many and mostly young people are forced to leave the country and migrate somewhere else where the material expectancies are more promising. For example, more than 230 000 citizens legally left Macedonia in the period between 1998 and 2011; that is around 10% of the overall population of the country (Jefferson Institute 2015, BakanInsight 2013, online). Increasing the birthrates in the current situation will only produce more people that eventually end up being either the unemployed working army or will migrate in search for better career and living opportunities. Hence addressing and locating the ‘problem’ in the birth rates rather than pursuing solutions for the economic situation of the current population, does not improve the state economy, nor the government gets its aspired numbers of population.

Finally, studies show that increasing birth rates in bad economic situation leads towards multiplying possibilities of gender based violence. As mentioned before, socialist feminists argue that there is a direct correlation between scarcity and violence against women (Bhattacharya 2013, Mies 1986). The capitalist system, thriving on patriarchal values, brings frustrations to men who cannot perform their role of breadwinner (Bhattacharya 2013). In a society with high unemployment rates, this ‘duty’ of men is unlikely to be fulfilled in the domain of the patriarchal expectancies. This in turn results mainly in domestic and partner violence. Bhattacharya offers examples of the extend of ‘intimate partner violence’ flourish due to the financial stress caused after the 2008 economic crisis (see Bhattacharya 2013, online). The rationale for appearance and justification of such events, according to Bhattacharya, lie in the “combination of material reality and ideological expectations about gender” (2013, online). In that sense, as long as the goal of the Macedonian Government is to

³³ There is no systematic information on the unemployment rates in regard to ethnic affiliation, however there is data showing the highest rates of unemployment to be within the Roma population (see footnote 29 in chapter 3)

acquire economic growth through pro-natalist demographic politics, the only thing that will increase is the gender based violence.

4.3. Hegemonic Masculinity³⁴

The final product that emerges from the nationalist project articulated in the videos by the Macedonian Government is a specific form of toxic masculinity, which in Raewyn Connell's words is called 'hegemonic masculinity' (1987, 183). Connell develops the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a constructed ordering of the social and power relations in which this form of ideal masculinity is produced in relation to 'various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women' (ibid.); it always tends toward global subordination of these other forms of masculinities and femininities to it. It is hegemonic in Gramscian terms i.e. it is based on indirect, not openly forced, social ascendancy; it is always heterosexual, closely intertwined with the institution of marriage (Connell 1987). However, this hegemonic masculinity does not necessarily converge with the real image or presentations of men (Connell 1987; Connell 2005). It is rather the image produced and to be desired by certain discursive patterns or ideologies through the instrumentalization of institutions such as the media (ibid.). I argue that the media campaign that is part of the demographic agenda of the Macedonian Government reproduces this hegemonic masculinity as the major value in the production of the 'nation' in the context of 'rebuilding' for the country in the wake of the Yugoslav wars. Further, this hegemonic masculinity is one of the pillars on which the ethnic Macedonian nationalism leans its ideology.

Noticeable in the media material analyzed in chapter 3, is the relative absence of the female characters, or in the cases of their presence is visible a construction of 'emphasized

³⁴ Connell (1987) in *Gender and Power*. p.183.

femininity' (see Connell 1987). It is the 'emphasized femininity' that is constructed in relation to the hegemonic masculinity in order to serve the general subordination of women to men (ibid.). According to Connell, the emphasized femininity can be somehow hegemonic among other forms of feminine constructions, but it can never reach the level of normativity and the power of hegemonic masculinity among men because it is always produced in the service of subordination (Connell 1987, 18–187). The power relationship within the group of women is mainly visible on more intimate levels such as the relationship mother-daughter, claims Connell (1987, 187). Considering the previous sub-chapter on the calculated audience of the Macedonian media campaign, this generational relationship of power among women in the family confirms the claim over the influence that elder members of the family in Macedonian context have over the younger ones. So even if the audience of the campaign is the older women and men, both the construction of the hegemonic masculinity and the emphasized femininity help towards subordination of the younger female members in the families. Through this shaping of masculinity and femininity the female bodies are submitted under the control by the heterosexual men and the older women in the family, and since the hegemonic masculinity prevails in any case, ultimately it is men produced through these hegemonic compositions that govern with the reproductive functions of the female body.

Having in mind that the nation is always contemplated in familial frames, as a bigger family that emerges in the public domain (McClintock 1993; Mihej 2011), it follows that female bodies are typified as subordinated on a national level as well. This exact image is institutionalized through the media campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion*; women are represented in the frame of emphasized femininity with all the stereotypes this femininity draws on — they have already submitted their decisions and desires about their bodies to the hegemonic decision-maker. Men are also presented in their stereotypical role of the hegemonic masculine; the aggressive one in the video *Parent*, the rich white one in

Treasure, the in-front-of-the-TV-watching-football one in Youth, the genius one in Beethoven, and the responsible father in Abortion. The only video where there is no man, is Arguments where nevertheless the figure of the most emphasized femininity is mentioned — the carrying mother that chooses not to abort. All these presentations in the media material serve the heterosexist, pro-natalist and ethnicist aspects of the nationalist discourse reiterated by the Macedonian Government. Only supported by these assemblages can the appeal to nationalism claim its nation-building to be legitimate.

Nevertheless, the ideology that embraces these forms of masculinities distributes them toxic for not only they subordinate women, but they try to wash off men's anxieties in disillusioned ineffective ways. For instance, one critique that arises on the Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity is its 'over-socialized view of the male subject' (2005, 842). In this sense, the male subject is considered as always gaining power from the construction of hegemonic masculinity, without in fact taking into consideration how this construction affects men in individual and psychological level. As argued before, very often men feel frustrated by the given role to them of performing this type of masculinity. As a result, counterproductive phenomena appear such as violence and self-destructiveness. Ideological it might be, holding to these figures and values of femininity and masculinity is not healthy, nor for the family, or for the nation, or for the sustainable economic growth and the development of the human capital.

5. Conclusion

This thesis was looking at the events happening prior to the introduction of the law for termination of pregnancy in 2013. This law was the main pretext for the media analysis conducted in this project and is entitled to be the culmination of the media campaign as part of the production and the implementation of the Macedonian demographic policy. The urgently passed and brought in force 2013 law has restricted the access to abortion to a significant level that unjustly perforates the rights acknowledged to the human body.

Few organizations and individuals protested the content of the law, as well the legal urgency which the law was brought on force with. Their main argumentation was that the official reason for the law endorsement, namely protection of the health of the woman, was not the accurate objective of the law. This claim was supported through the exhibited facts that speak of the relation between the limitations of the abortion and women's health. As acknowledged before in this thesis, the restrictive measures on the legal access to abortion only increase the risks for the health of the women. Hence what was the most likely reason for the introduction of the 2013 law for termination of pregnancy? And how come that only few people were protesting even though the law affects a significant proportion of the Macedonian population.

The main argument in this research project has been that the Macedonian political authorities appropriated the media space by direct communication through media campaigns for the purpose of normalizing the introduction of restrictive measures on the access to legal abortion. The measures undertaken with the new law for termination of pregnancy are part of the pro-natalist and nationalist discourse employed by the Macedonian Government. With the analysis was emphasized the gendered aspect of this discourse and the strategies of gendering used for the sake of the nationalist ideology. In that sense, through the media representation of a heteronormative model of the two genders, hierarchization and essentializing of the gender

roles that put the formation of the masculinity on the pedestal, the Macedonian Government paved the way for the introduction and the endorsement of a law that constrains women's reproductive rights, particularly the access to abortion.

This pro-natalist ideology is ethnically selective though. Restricting the access to legal abortion aims to target only the ethnic Macedonian population. I have argued that an application of the 'power as people' (Yuval-Davis 1996) discourse is persistent when it comes to the treatment towards the women with Macedonian ethnic belonging. They have been encouraged morally and legally to give birth to more children due to the lowering of the natality numbers. Moreover, the media campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion* went further into demonizing abortion and moralizing of the 'right' values for the family planners. Because of that women will have to face complicated bureaucratic and psychologically-disturbing processes in order to undergo abortion (if allowed) once they want to stop the pregnancy. The partially dined access to abortion is considered by the Macedonian officials to be the method to increase the birth rates. This consideration is taken without any credible premises based on research that analyzes the proportionality between the abortion inaccessibility and the natality rates.

On the other hand, the demographic strategy that predicts 'educative trainings on family planning', which very likely include the use of contraceptive methods and lowering the birth rates, targets the rest of the ethnic groups in which predominates the Albanian group. Furthermore, the ethnic Albanian women have been financially discouraged from giving birth by being appointed as not eligible for the financial support the government offers for three of more children. In this case I have argued that the Malthusian discourse (Yuval-Davis 1996) is set on the stage by making efforts to prevent the increase of the 'undesired' part of the population. The media campaign also articulates the same discourse by including material that involves or is directed only to the ethnic Macedonian population. Although indirectly visible

in the media campaign, the Malthusian discourse establishes the discouragement of the conception and the birth-giving among the remaining ethnic groups in the country.

The media appropriation has played a big role in this ethnically divided nationalist ideology. It has been the most important ground on which the notion-shaping of the general public was performed. Without the governmental media campaigns, the introduction of the demographically driven abortion law would not have been so easily possible. As previously stated the media campaign *Explaining the Bad Consequences of the Abortion* has been directed only toward the ethnic Macedonians while excluding other ethnicities. The campaign had contributed to ‘awakening’ of the nationalist sentiment within the Macedonians, and to establishing a firmer conventional understanding of the female body and the gender division of roles. It is perhaps for this reason that only few opposed the new abortion law without significant achievements in their demands.

Besides the ways of conducting this media appropriation, this thesis has pointed out in brief on the possible effects and consequences of the media representations and the meaning-production about the abortion and the gender roles. Without looking at the audience reception and strictly problematizing from theoretical point of view, it has been argued that the media campaign works in direction of producing hegemonic masculinity, economic frustrations, and unrealistic demographic goals. In that sense, it was emphasized that the increase of the population will not uncontestably improve the economic sustainable growth which ultimately was the alleged objective of the Macedonian demographic maker. In the current economic and political situation, it would rather prove to be otherwise. Further, the media presentation of the economic settlements and the domestic gendered division of labor could backfire into generating economic frustrations and gender based violence. Finally, the media campaign neglects diverse and different agency absolutely while promoting hegemonic forms of masculinity that are necessarily heteronormative and dominating in terms of power relations.

As pointed above, this project was theorizing merely from a discursive analytical point of view. Nevertheless, it merged the gap between the nationalism studies, gender studies and media studies in Macedonia, and it had deconstructed the relations between the appropriation of the media space in the country and the current nationalist discourse, from a gender perspective. This research could be extended into looking at the audience perception of the governmental media campaigns in relation to the campaign intentions. It would be also fruitful for a future academic research on this topic to explore the consequences of the introduction of the 2013 law for termination of pregnancy.

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