GENDERED NATIONALISM IN PUBLIC EDUCATION IN RURAL ARMENIA

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

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ABSTRACT

The war in Nagorno-Karabakh in 2020 exacerbated nationalist sentiments in Armenian politics as well as in the social, cultural, and public educational domains. The latter in Armenia, designed and implemented by those in political power, serves for the ideological reproduction of oppressive power relations. This thesis explores the ways in which right-wing nationalist political discourses are reiterated in public education practices. It examines gendered nationalist discourses prevalent in rural Armenian education through an analysis of school public events dedicated to national days. It argues that these after-school activities, designed to construct and maintain national identity, perpetuate gendered hierarchies and expectations. The research unpacks the ways in which gendered nationalist discourses are generated and introduced to students. The study is based on the methods of participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and discourse analysis. It provides an analysis of the narratives in educational public events and reflects on teachers' roles in shaping everyday school practices. The thesis draws parallels between political rhetoric, social and cultural practices, as well as narratives used in the educational space. It scrutinizes the question in the broader context of post-Soviet transitions, and in light of the local politics of militarization and war. The research examines the intersection of gender, nationalism, and militarism by exposing discursive constructs that perpetuate gender inequality in the education space in rural Armenia. It contributes to the understanding of the role of everyday practices in schools in terms of shaping national and gender identities within Armenian education, by locating local experiences within a broader geopolitical context.

Key words: gender, nationalism, militarism, public education, Armenia.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

RA: Republic of Armenia

ESCS Ministry: Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports

NK: Nagorno-Karabakh

SSR: Soviet Socialist Republic

MoD: Ministry of Defence

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

EU: European Union

US: United States

WWII: World War II

INTRODUCTION

Why do you teach them about gender?
Teach them about our national heroes.

Those words were addressed to my colleague and me in one of the Armenian villages where we implemented after-school education programs for middle and high school students in 2021. In short, our program, provided by a local Yerevan[1]-based organization, focused on civic education in rural Armenian schools. Through various activities such as debating, implementing community projects, and holding elections for student representatives, we covered topics that included social and environmental justice, democracy, and gender issues. Our session on gender issues and the following activity by the students, which was designed to raise awareness on gender equality, caused anger and dissatisfaction on the part of several men from the village. Afterwards, the mayor invited us to meet with these men in his office, some of whom were employees of the municipality; therefore, they had a degree of power and authority in the village. The meeting was overwhelming, to say the least. They claimed that we taught children about "homosexuality", the "third sex", and other "inappropriate" topics.

I grew up in the neighboring village and was not a total outsider to the village culture, even if they might have seen me more of an outsider. I was well aware of the possible consequences of covering any "inappropriate" topic, as they put it. All we did was a reading and discussion session on Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *We Should All Be Feminists* (2014). In fact, the men in the municipality felt threatened by the use of the word *gender*. This was when they made the comment cited above. They accused us of holding anti-national activities and spoiling future generations. The discussion soon became very personal, and I was advised by these men to get married and have children so that I would have other things to worry about. Though we had

[1] The capital of Armenia.

been implementing these programs in Armenian villages for several years already, this incident only took place when nationalist sentiment in the country rose following the large-scale war in the Nagorno-Karabakh region between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 2020.

The interaction with the male local authorities was reflective of the widespread understandings of gender as a dangerous ideology against the nation. Their statement implies that learning about gender (read: "homosexuality") opposes 'national values', therefore it is a threat to national identity. Furthermore, the concept of gender equality was implicated as a "foreign" agenda. They strongly believed that school had only one mission: to teach children about national history and to nurture patriotic feelings. They also had a certain understanding of what makes a "proper" teacher figure. Asking me if I was married or if I had children implied that I was not entitled to 'educating future generations' since I had not accomplished my 'primary mission' as a woman. The logical link between teaching and motherhood is built on the belief that educating the nation is a form of mothering. These men felt threatened by two 'childless women' who were discussing gender issues in their village. They, holding positions in the local municipality, saw themselves as the 'fathers' of the village (read: "home"). They saw their confrontation as a rightful act of protecting their "home" organized by heteronormative patriarchal gender relations of power, which is by definition against and over the sexual other ("third sex", as they put it) (Shirinyan, 2020).

The topic of my thesis is shaped by this and other experiences at rural Armenian public schools where I worked for 8 years after graduating from the Armenian State Pedagogical University in 2013. Since I implemented extracurricular programs, I mainly encountered after-school activities. Among these activities, public events devoted to days of national importance prevailed. These events are considered part of the education process and are taken seriously in many of the schools with which I had a chance to work. Thus, they take up considerable space

in the everyday life of schools and are telling of the values the education system is to maintain in contemporary Armenia.

Research Aim and Argument

In my research, I look at school public events as a means of reproducing particular ideologies and imagery about nationhood and national identity prevalent in social and political domains. In doing so, I seek to identify gendered nationalist discourses in the narratives and visual elements of these events. I argue that these after-school activities, designed to construct and maintain national identity, perpetuate gendered expectations in society. My aim is to uncover the ways in which gendered nationalist discourses are generated and introduced to and through students. For this, I scrutinize the content and the visual elements of the events, as well as reflect on teachers' roles in these processes. In the following sections of this introduction, I discuss the social-political environment to locate my research within it. Further, I introduce the methodology of the research and reflect upon its limitations. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the thesis structure and content.

Socio-Political Background

Though Armenians "had a clearly articulated and strong sense of national identity" by 1988 (Panossian, 2006, p. 227), nationalist agendas became more prevalent in the late 1980s as the era of the Soviet Union was coming to an end. The last years of the Soviet Union fueled hope in the Autonomous Region of Nagorno-Karabakh (NK)[2] to unite with Armenia (Figure 1) (Panossian, 1994). These political developments played a decisive role in the spread of nationalism in the Soviet Union (Ibid). In 1988, the People's Deputies of the NK Region voted to separate from the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and to join the Armenian SSR

[2] Nagorno-Karabakh region has been an area of tension between Armenia and Azerbaijan for over a century. Though being populated by mostly Armenians, in 1923 it was included within Azerbaijani SSR as an autonomous region (Zamanov, 2020).

(Ibid). Three years later a referendum on independence took place in the NK Region, where 99.98% percent of the voters voted for the Nagorno-Karabakh Region's independence from the Azerbaijan SSR. The rise of national movements in the NK region and then in Armenia and Azerbaijan (Yamskov, 1991) created fertile ground for Armenia to become the first post-Soviet country in the region to declare its independence in 1991. Soon, peaceful social movements were accompanied by ethnic cleansing in both countries and in the NK region. Between 1988 and 1994, 700.000 Azeries were displaced from Armenia and NK region, and 350.000 Armenians from Azerbaijan (Walsh, 2021, p. 427). These processes grew into a large-scale war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in Nagorno-Karabakh in 1992 and ended with a ceasefire agreement in 1994. Armenia gained control over the NK and several other Azerbaijani regions. Since then, there has been no war-no peace situation with continuous escalations and casualties on the border until the second large-scale war broke out in the region in 2020.

Figure 1 The map of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh
Source: Nations Online Project

Similarly to any other armed conflict, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is highly gendered. A more visible gendered aspect of the conflict is that it took the lives of mostly male combatants since they made up the majority of the armed forces in both countries and in the NK region (Walsh, 2021, p. 427).[3] Due to forced displacement, people from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Nagorno-Karabakh had to navigate different social-economic realities and gender norms (Ibid). Particularly, women who fled from the multicultural city of the Azerbaijani capital, Baku to the post-war NK region experienced restrictions of freedom, partly due to the more traditional gender norms prevalent in the region (Shahnazarian and Zimer, 2014, cited in Walsh, 2021). Even when they settled in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia, refugee women faced marginalization and exclusion from the local community because of their distinct 'morality', values, and work ethics (Ghazaryan, 2020).

Among refugee and local women, the lives and behavior of the widows of the NK war were subject to a heightened scrutiny (Shahnazarian and Zimer, 2020). They experienced isolation, marginalization, and social control over their lives and sexual choices attached to the figures of "war widow" (Ibid). In order to maintain a respected position in society they were expected to sacrifice further by performing according to patriarchal norms in society (Ibid). The same expectations applied to the mothers of fallen soldiers in the NK 2nd war. A less discussed gender dimension of the NK conflict is its impact on queer people's lives (Zamanov, 2020). The militarization processes informed by the conflict created a "homophobic and hostile environment" for the queer communities in Armenia and Azerbaijan (Ibid, pp. 60-62). Queer people either try to escape military service to avoid the violence and harassment toward queer men in military settings, or if they join the army, they hide their sexualities to "become full citizens" (Ibid). Thus, along with the psychological and economic hardship caused by war,

[3] In the 1st NK war approximately 30.000 people were killed from both sides (Walsh, 2021, p. 426).

women of different backgrounds and queer people faced the scrutiny of patriarchal social norms.

The Karabakh conflict has been omnipresent in local politics. Ironically, the conflict served as a "safe space" for the right-wing nationalist political elite whenever they saw heteronormative patriarchal norms endangered. They have instrumentalized the notion of 'external threat' to maintain their power and to silence social movements of democracy, gender equality, and social and environmental justice. These struggles have cost thousands of lives over more than 30 years of the conflict. Geopolitical configurations and the politics of war in the country shaped the masculinized political and feminized social landscape in the first years of independence. The former military authorities took political power, reconfiguring politics and culture on terms of militaristic ideologies and practices. Parallel with this process of militarization, in the late 1990s, Armenian politics was also undergoing a criminalization process. In 1999, a terrorist attack took place at the National Assembly which took the lives of 6 prominent politicians from the opposition and another 2 were injured (Panossian, 2006, p. 241). Moreover, after independence, the quota system was removed, therefore the number of women in parliament decreased from 121 (before independence) to 8 (after independence) (Ishkanian, 2003, p. 487). Thus, the post-war militarization and criminalization of politics narrowed down the space for female actors in this domain by leaving them with the (only) *choice* of entering the newly emerging civil society sector. However, the civil society sector has also experienced policing informed by nationalist notions (Jilozyan, 2017). Among them, women's organizations and human rights organizations were especially targeted. I unpack this question in more detail in Chapter 1.

The constant escalations at the borders have exacerbated nationalist discourses over recent years, foregrounding gendered arguments for "protecting the nation" nationality through physical power and violence. Gendered discourses of nationalism informed the government's

politics of militarization, which became prevalent following the 2016 escalation, the biggest of its kind since the 1st NK war.[4] The government introduced the *Nation Army* concept which, in short, suggested that each Armenian citizen must contribute to the empowerment of the "national army" directly or indirectly. Though the new government, which came to power in 2018 in the wake of the social movement known as the *Velvet Revolution* (Ishkanian, 2018), did not explicitly promote the *Nation Army* concept, it continued the militaristic politics of war. Two years later, the 2nd large-scale war broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the NK region. These developments reinforced masculinist culture in various domains thus causing women's further exclusion and oppression. I provide a detailed analysis of the *Nation Army* concept in Chapter 2. In light of this recent socio-political background, analyzing gender issues in intersection with nationalism and militarism will give us a better understanding of the practices of gender segregation in contemporary Armenian society. This I aim to do through observing the public education domain, which, I argue, is a prominent device for ideological reproduction.

Public Education in Armenia

The education system in Armenia also underwent major changes amidst the post-Soviet transitions. The reforms initiated by the Ministry of Education and mediated by international organizations aimed at the democratization and globalization of public education (Terzian, 2010). Meanwhile, the vacuum caused by the removal of socialist ideologies from education content was eventually filled with the national curriculum (Ibid). Thus, Armenian education parallel to globalization and democratization reforms underwent nationalization processes.

[4] In local narratives, it is known as a 4-day war. It resulted in the deaths of over 200 military personnel from both sides and fatalities among civilians (Wash, 2021; Shahnazarian and Zimer, 2020).

As was the case in the Soviet period, education in independent Armenia is centralized. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (ESCS Ministry) is responsible for designing the content of public education and ensuring its implementation through state schools in the whole country. According to the Statistical Committee of the Republic of Armenia, 1354 schools out of a total of 1402 were public schools in the 2020-21 academic year and none of the 48 private schools are located in rural areas (Armstat.am, 2021). Thus, the only source of primary, secondary, and very often high school education is available through public schools in Armenian villages. Furthermore, the latter has limited access to alternative educational domains due to the lack of transportation and communication with the cities. With this in mind, I unpack gendered nationalist education practices by looking at schools in rural Armenia, where the monopoly of education belongs to those in political power. Despite the political configuration of public education in the country, I acknowledge the agency of teachers as the first-hand implementers of it. Teachers have a greater influence on shaping the format and the content of school public events. Therefore, I look at the education processes as political as well as personal practices informed by the teachers' views and experiences. Along with the implications of nationalist and militarist politics in education, I unpack teachers' roles in it.

Research Overview and Methodology

This thesis examines gendered nationalism in rural Armenian education by analyzing school public events devoted to days of national importance. In my research, I applied the methods of ethnography, including participant observation and semi-structured interviews, and discourse analysis of ideological investments of language use in the data I gathered.

Participant Observation

Participant observation in ethnographic field research consists of two major components; the researchers' direct involvement in a social setting and observation of everyday experiences in

it, and the systematic recording of field notes during the observation (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 1). While Robert Emerson et al. approach ethnography "as a way to understand and describe social worlds", they notice that these social worlds are "interpreted worlds" (Ibid, p. 2). With this in mind, I do not suggest that my data collected through participant observation provides an objective view of social reality. Rather, I look at it as a construction/interpretation of reality that is mediated by the researcher's and the research participants' distinct subjectivities.

I conducted participant observations in Armavir and Aragatsotn provinces of Armenia from late April to mid-June of 2022. Overall, 6 schools from 5 villages were involved: Aragatsavan and Arteni villages from the Aragatsotn province; and Shenik, Dalarik, and Myasnikyan villages from the Armavir province (Figure 2). I observed 1 event at each school and received access to the video recording of one event held in the Arteni 1st school earlier that year.[5] I was invited to attend an event in one more school, however, due to not getting written consent from the school principal, I did not include it in my analysis. In all other cases, I collected written consent (Appendix 1) from the principals who gave me permission to attend the events, take notes, record the events, and take photos though for my personal reference only. The consent forms were prepared in Armenian and English. The principals were provided with a copy of the document.

[5] The video recording was posted on the school's Facebook page with public access on March 16, 2022. The link was shared with me by one of the Arteni school teachers.

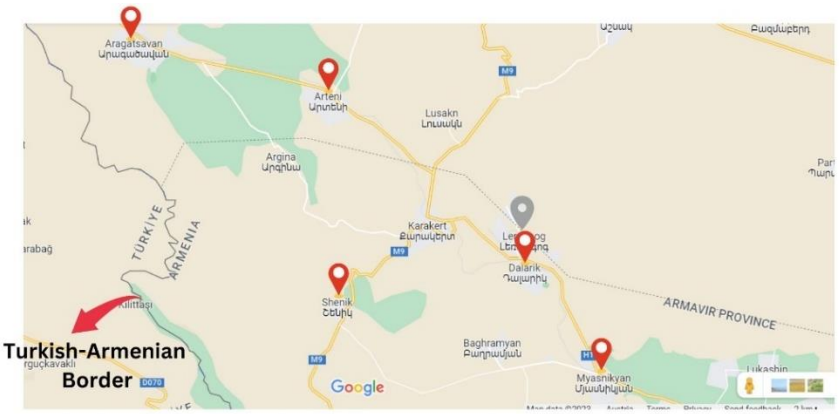

Figure 2 The villages involved in the project.
Source: Google Maps

My choice of villages is informed by two reasons. First, I already had connections with the schools in these communities and was aware of the established tradition of celebrating/commemorating days of national importance. Second, these villages, located close to the Turkish-Armenian border, are reflective to some extent of the realities in the periphery and are suitable for the geographical and social focus of my research. At the same time, their distance from the capital Yerevan (up to 90 km) makes them relatively accessible compared to other rural areas of Armenia. Thus, given the limited time frame of the research, they made a perfect sample for its purposes.

I covered 7 events devoted to days of national importance: the Day of the Army (January 28),[6] the Armenian Genocide (April 24),[7] the Victory in the "Great Patriotic War"[8] (May 9), Armenian prominent poet Yeghishe Charents' 125th anniversary, a well-known local composer Komitas, and the 1st Republic of Armenia (May 28). During the observations, I took field notes to record not only the content of the events but also social interactions and the reactions of the participants. I also sought to record non-linguistic attributes of the events, such as visual

[6] Accessed through a video recording.
[7] The term Armenian Genocide refers to the massacre and deportation of ethnic Armenians by the Ottoman regime in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Dadrian, 1995).
[8] This framing of World War II was used by the Soviet regime in an attempt to nationalize the war. I unpack this question in Chapter 3 where I discuss the respective event.

materials (posters, uniforms), performances, and stage design. In addition, I received the scripts of some events. It is noteworthy that my fieldnotes as my active interpretations of the events were of descriptive character (Emerson et al., 1995, p. 9), and hence were influenced by my views and positionality. Inevitably, this also shaped my analysis of the events.

Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to observing events, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the school teachers who organized the events. My aim was to understand and center the "meaning of the members" about the observed events (Emerson et al., 1995). This led to such questions as how the content of the events was designed and delivered, how the roles were divided, and what the teachers saw as the event's main message. I prepared an interview guide which helped me to address the central topics for the research (Appendix 3). At the same time, following Weiss's guidelines, I left enough space for the interviewees to shape the interview process (Weiss, 1994, pp. 48-49) and to have time for follow-up questions in response to new ideas, and unexpected reasoning. I viewed interviewing as a "research partnership" between me and the interviewees (Ibid, p. 65-66) where I positioned myself as a learner. This allowed me to not only learn about the teachers' interpretation of the events but also about their teaching and personal experiences in general and grasp the link between the two.

I interviewed teachers from all the villages mentioned, except for Shenik where the event was the students' initiative. Due to ethical reasons, I refrained from including underage participants in my research. The public event in the Myasnikyan village was interregional, so the school invited 13 other schools to join with their performances. I interviewed 2 teachers from Lernagog and Yervandashat villages from the Armavir province, who took part in the Myasnikyan event. As was the case with the events, the interviews were recorded with the written consent of the teachers (Appendix 2). Despite the teachers' written and verbal consent to record the interviews,

I always informed them that I can stop the recording anytime upon their request. Prior to the interviews, I also offered them to skip any question which they did not want to address. Altogether, I conducted 7 interviews with the teachers.

Discourse Analysis

For analyzing the collected materials, I applied the method of discourse analysis. James Paul Gee describes discourses as the integration of language and non-language "stuff". In other words, discourse is "language in action" (Gee, 1999, p. 11). Accordingly, discourse analysis examines "language and texts as sites in which social meanings are created and reproduced, and social identities are formed" (Tonkiss, 1998, p. 246). The main material of analysis are discourses in political rhetoric in school public events embedded in institutions of 'non-language'. I build my analysis on Fran Tonkiss' argument that language is not a "neutral medium of communicating information" but "a domain in which our knowledge of the social world is actively shaped" (Ibid). Thus, I look at political rhetoric and school practices as tools of social reality construction through discourses.

Me As An Insider and Outsider

I applied a feminist approach in my research by taking a self-reflexive position. For Lorraine Nencel reflexivity in feminist research works on two levels; on the epistemological – how we should learn about knowledge – and on the methodological – how we should produce this knowledge (Nencel, 2014, p. 76). Here I apply reflexivity on the methodological level by discussing my connection with the field of my research and my positionality. I grew up in a working-class family in Dalarik village, Armavir province. After graduating from the Pedagogical University in 2013, I went back to my village where I started working with 11 schools from Armavir and Aragatsotn provinces. The five villages in my research were among them. This is when I built relationships with the schools. I knew all the principals prior to the

research, some of the teachers interviewed, and the students who took part in the events. Thanks to these connections, I gained access to some events. Initially, I contacted all 11 schools and could reach an agreement with 6 of them. Some schools did not have any events planned for the period of my field work, and some did not follow up on my request. In general, the school staff were very supportive throughout the research process.

In my research, I navigated between my position as an insider and outsider in these communities. My previous involvement in these villages as a representative of a well-known local organization located in the center of Yerevan gave me the position of an outsider. My studies at a Europe-based institution also made me an outsider in their eyes. Nevertheless, since I have been based in one of the villages for a while, spent most of my time in the villages, and had personal relationships with some teachers, I could be perceived as an insider as well. Therefore, the participant teachers and principals showed their willingness to support my project, for which I am grateful.

I also navigated between the changing hierarchies with the principals and teachers. While the principals and teachers with many years of experience sometimes would perceive me as one of their students, there was a "reverse power relations" (to borrow Farhana Sultana's interpretation, 2007, p. 379) between me and the younger teachers. In my interactions with the teachers who started their careers not long ago, I noticed that they sometimes viewed me as one of their peers. However, my privilege of studying at a Western university shifted power dynamics. With this in mind, I applied reflexivity to reach authentic interactions with the research participants.

Despite my shared background in the research field and with the participants, I do not position myself as a member of the communities, nor do I suggest that my lived experiences are similar to those observed during my research. I am aware of the distance in time and space that

distinguishes my life from those in the present. As Sultana puts it, going back to the 'field' is not the same as going back to 'home' (Sultana, 2007, p. 377). I also acknowledge the gap between my positionality as a researcher and my identity as an 'insider'. I agree with Emerson's point that the researcher "never becomes a member in the same sense that those who are "naturally" in the setting are members", nor can they be fully neutral and detached from the field (Emerson et al., 1995, pp. 4-5). In addition, Judith Stacey argues that the researcher "cannot (and should not) escape tasks of interpretation, evaluation, and judgment" (Stacey, 1988, p. 24). Therefore, I suggest that my analysis is of interpretative character informed by my background as a working-class woman from rural Armenia, and my positionality as a feminist researcher.

Limitations

Going back to epistemological reflexivity (Nencel, 2014), it is important to discuss the limitations of this project. While I realize that nationalist, militarist gendered practices and discourses in various domains of life, including education, have distinct implications on different gender and sexual identities, my analysis remains within a binary division of gender and sexuality. It mainly focuses on the experiences and representations of men and women in social, political, cultural, and educational spaces. Since gender identities in education content and public events are based on this binary division, touching upon the representation (and the absence thereof) of queer identities in this context requires a different approach which is beyond the scope of this project. Therefore, this thesis is not representative of all gender and sexual identities. However, it provides a valuable account in terms of understanding the construction of male and female identities through nationalist narratives.

Another limitation of this research is its scale. The research covers only 5 villages in 2 provinces out of 11 provinces of Armenia. Furthermore, their choice is motivated by my lived experience.

Consequently, the results do not represent rural Armenian education in general. Rather, it is a case study providing insight into the education practices in the 5 villages chosen. Moreover, these villages, despite shared backgrounds and similar experiences, also have distinct practices. Nevertheless, my thesis establishes links with the larger domains of influences such as standardized education content and national political propaganda. Therefore, this research can be considered a valuable contribution to the understanding of gendered practices and discourses of nationalism in the education domain.

Chapter Overview

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the existing scholarship on the intersection of gender relations and nationalism, setting the theoretical framework for the research. The chapter is divided into four sections. The first section discusses various approaches to conceptualizing nation and nationalisms, highlighting the changes of nationalist studies from Enlightenment philosophers to contemporary scholars. The second section focuses on feminist contributions to nationalism studies with a focus on the intersection of gender, nationalism, and militarism. The third section explores the literature examining nation-state building processes in post-Soviet Armenia and the events of the gendered transitions following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The fourth section narrows down the scope of the discussion to the scholarship studying gendered nationalist discourses within the public education system in Armenia. This chapter argues that the scarce research on gendered nationalism in Armenian education is limited to the analysis of the contents of textbooks and education policies, hence it is not reflective of school everyday practices.

Chapter 2 explores the complex relationships between gender, nationalism, and militarism in the construction of Armenian national identity. The chapter examines how militarist discourses are utilized in public events in rural Armenian schools, shaping the construction of male and

female identities through education practices. For this, I first discuss militarist practices and discourses by looking at the institution of compulsory military service and the *Nation-Army* concept. Then, I analyze a school event celebrating the Day of the Army to show the implications of militarist politics in school everyday practices. I argue that this event reiterates gendered nationalist and militarist narratives prevalent in politics by perpetuating traditional meanings of femininity and masculinity.

Chapter 3 focuses on the construction of the "Armenian woman" within nationalist practices and narratives. I explore this meaning formation in three domains: social-political, cultural, and educational. The chapter begins with discussing the exclusionary practices of nationalist movements toward women throughout the first years of independence of Armenia and later in the context of anti-gender movements. Then, I illustrate the construction of the "Armenian woman" as ‘mother’ in the cultural domain by reflecting on the imagery of the Mother Armenia statue. The last section examines the limited representation of women in school public events. This section explores how the exclusionary practices prevalent in social-political domains are reflected in education practices. It argues that the reductionist imagery of the "Armenian woman" as a mother is reiterated through the event narratives.

Chapter 4 examines the role of teachers in maintaining traditional gender relations within the Armenian education system. It emphasizes the dominant presence of female teachers and the gendered division of labor within the field of education. The personal experiences and beliefs of teachers and their influence on teaching practices are discussed based on the interviews with the participant teachers. The chapter aims to shed light on teachers' agency in maintaining and subverting the dominant gendered nationalist narratives and imagery in school events and the impact of their personal beliefs and experiences on education practices.

CHAPTER 1

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the relevant scholarship which examines the intersection of gender and nationalism. I carve out the theoretical framework underlying my research. This review aims to contribute to understandings of gendered nationalism in post-Soviet Armenia, with an emphasis on the education domain. It consists of four sections. First, I discuss various approaches to conceptualizing nations and nationalisms. Second, I introduce feminist contributions to nationalism studies by reviewing theories on the intersection of gender, nationalism, and militarism. In the third section, I focus on literature examining nation-state-building processes in post-Soviet Armenia, and gendered transitions following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the last section, I narrow down my discussion to the scholarship uncovering gendered nationalist discourses within the Armenian education system. I argue that while the education content in Armenia has been examined through the lens of gender and nationalism, lived experiences are often overlooked in these analyses.

1.2 Nations and Nationalism

There exists a large body of literature on nationalism studies. However, only in the past few decades have scholars centered the intersections of gender and nationalism in their analyses. The first discourses around nation and nationality within the social sciences can be traced back to the Enlightenment period, when philosophers, such as Kant, Hegel, Rousseau, and Voltaire addressed these categories in the context of sovereignty, citizenship, and political community. However, these approaches were more directed toward the celebration of national diversities rather than analyzing nations and nationalism as phenomena with certain historical and

sociological roots (Cox, 2021). Nineteenth-century Europe's colonial politics resulted in the further evolution of nationalism studies within colonial contexts in Western scholarship. Well-known is the conceptualization of nationalism as a "bourgeois ideology" by Marx and Engles, which later was criticized for its reductionist character (Ibid). Another German philosopher, Weber, analyzed nationalism in the context of the connection between nation and state (Gerth, Mills, 1949). Thus, with the emergence of nation-states, the focus on studying nations and nationalities was shifted to studying nationalism as a product of modernity.

Much of the late 20th and early 21st-century literature on nationalism focuses on the distinctiveness of nationalism in the former colonies. More specifically, Benedict Anderson defined nationalism as a product of European modernity by coining the concept "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991). He suggests that nations are imagined because their members never see or know each other in reality, yet they bear a certain image of a community in their minds (Ibid, p. 6). He argues that despite prevalent inequalities on the ground, 'imagined communities' are perceived as a domain of 'horizontal comradeship' (Ibid, p. 7). Indian scholar Partha Chatterjee objected to Anderson's notion of imagined communities as a product of European modernity. Instead, he argues that anticolonial nationalism in Asia and Africa was not appropriated from the West but was created in the colonial world (Chatterjee, 1991). Gayatri Spivak's definition of nationalism offers a more fluid interconnection between nationalism and colonialism. She argues that nationalism is a "reverse or displaced legitimation of colonialism" which tends to reproduce colonial violence (Spivak, 1999, p. 62). In this thesis I analyze nationalism as a source of state oppression in a post-Soviet context which is also a post-colonial space, therefore, I find Spivak's framing relevant to my work.

1.3 Gender and Nationalism

Discourses centering on the intersections of gender and nationalism have evolved since the 1980s in post-colonial contexts (Yuval-Davis and Anthias, 1989; Jayawardena, 1986; Yuval-Davis, 1997; McClintock 1993; Enloe, 2000, Puri, 2003, Altınay, 2004). Though nations are reproduced biologically, culturally, and symbolically by women, they have been excluded from the hegemonic theories of nationalism (Yuval-Davis, 1997, p. 2). Many feminist scholars have addressed this question since the late 20th century by bringing into discussion the category of gender and the role of women in nationalist studies. They discussed the intersection of nationalism, gender, sexuality, race, and class by arguing that the construction of nationalism takes place through the language of gender, which in turn entails the assignment of distinct roles, positions, and expectations based on one's gender (McClintock, 1995; Puri, 2003; Nagel, 2010).

Particularly, Jyoti Puri points out that despite diverse types of nationalisms across time and location, nationalist ideologies are always intertwined with the general understanding of femininity and masculinity (Puri, 2003, pp. 131-138). The mutually constitutive relationship between nationalism and masculinity/femininity contributes to the construction and reiteration of gender differences, which in turn excludes any gender and sexual identity beyond a binary understanding. Thus, the desirable national subject is imagined within the lines of the heterosexual norm, hence biological productivity. This analogy refers to the familial construct as the main guarantor of national reproduction. Anne McClintock argues that the 'family' metaphor within nationalist discourses provides "a single genesis narrative for national history" (McClintock, 1995, p. 357). It also legitimizes various forms of hierarchies which are practiced in family settings, as well as in larger societal domains (Ibid, p. 358). McClintock points out that women are not given access to the same rights and resources as men in any nation (Ibid, p. 353). Thus, the subordination of women appears as a natural phenomenon in families hence in

society. In chapter 3 on constructing the "Armenian woman", I discuss the implications of nationalism in shaping women's lived experiences following the post-Soviet transition.

Some feminist scholars added another layer to the discussion of gender and nationalism by viewing it in relation to militarism (Enloe, 2000; Altinay, 2004). Cynthia Enloe uncovers the various ways in which militarization affects women, both as active participants in military forces and as civilians living in militarized societies (Enloe, 2000). She examines how notions of masculinity and femininity are constructed and deployed to reinforce militarism, whether through the glorification of military heroism and masculinity or the expectation of women's roles as supportive and nurturing figures within militarized societies (Ibid). In addition, Ayşe Altınay illustrates the centrality of military service in constructing national identity, citizenship, and masculinity in the context of Turkey (Altınay, 2004). In her discussion of militarization practices in education, Altınay examines how state education and military service are perceived as the "two fronts" of state-building (Ibid, p. 138). She argues that by blending the military domain with education, the understanding of citizenship is "reduced to the willingness to die for one's country" (Ibid, p. 139). I observe similar tendencies in Armenia by drawing links between the militarizing state politics and educational practices. In Chapter 2, I look at the concept of the *Nation-Army* developed and promoted by the local political elite.

1.4 Gendered Nationalism in Post-Soviet Armenia

Compared to post-colonial contexts, post-Soviet nationalism, being a comparatively new phenomenon, is less examined within the literature. However, there is a growing body of literature on this subject, which addresses three main geographical directions: post-Socialist countries in Eastern and Central Europe, The South Caucasus, as well as North and Central Asia. My research builds on the bulk of literature which addresses post-Soviet nation-building

processes in the South Caucasus (Schwartz and Panossian ed., 1994; Panossian, 2006, Iskanian, 2003, 2007; Berglund, 2020; Militz and Schur, 2016).

The conceptualization of gendered nationalism within the post-Soviet context requires greater scrutiny in light of anti-gender movements emerging in different parts of the world since the early 2000s. Anti-gender movements are the social mobilizations against the "gender ideology", which refers to women's and LGBTQI rights activism, and the "scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender" (Paternotte, Kuhar, 2018, p. 8). In post-Soviet countries, anti-gender movements are highly informed by nationalist sentiments which present gender as a danger to national traditions and identity (Hovhannisyan, 2019). Ani Jilozyan's research on gender politics in Armenia provides a detailed account of anti-gender grassroots movements and their ultra-nationalist agendas (Jilozyan, 2017). Jilozyan draws links between anti-gender movements and dominant religious and nationalist narratives regarding gender expectations in the 'traditional Armenian family' setting (Ibid, pp. 45-46). She also discusses the role of militarization in fueling anti-gender notions in defense of 'traditional gender roles' as a guarantor for maintaining the army, hence national security (Ibid, pp. 46-47). In the following paragraphs, I focus on the literature addressing nation-state-building processes in post-Soviet Armenia.

The existing literature on post-Soviet nationalism in Armenia covers three main aspects. The first group of scholars addresses nation-state building processes in post-Soviet Armenia from a historical, political, and religious perspective (Schwartz and Panossian, 1994; Burchardt and Hovhannisyan, 2016). For instance, Razmik Panossian provides a political analysis of Armenian nationalism from the late 1980s to the early 2000s. He claims that after the 1st Nagorno-Karabakh war (1992 - 1994), nationalist ideologies were instrumentalized for political purposes (Panossian, 2006, p. 225). Both those in political power as well as the opposition built their electoral campaigns on nationalist ideologies and slogans in the first presidential elections

since the war, which took place in 1996 (Ibid). Though both the leading political party and the opposition emphasized socio-economic issues in their pre-election programs, they built their campaigns on nationalist terminology and imagery. Both parties accused each other of being anti-national and anti-Armenian at their core (Ibid). Further, Panossian observes that in the early 2000s, in light of the weakening of the "external threat" after the war, nationalism within Armenian politics became less tangible (Panossian, 2006, p. 243). However, he also suggests that another crisis or war could rekindle nationalist politics again (Ibid). I analyze this question by observing current nationalist politics following the second war in NK in 2020 through the lens of public education.

The second aspect is gendered transitions in post-Soviet contexts in the process of nation-state building (Ishkanian, 2003, 2007). More specifically, Armine Ishkanian addresses the gendered character of post-Soviet transitions, focusing on Central Asia and the Caucasus (Ishkanian, 2003, 2007). Ishkanian illustrates gendered processes in politics, the economy, and civil society, which followed the independence of Armenia in 1991. She points out that due to these transitions, women were excluded from Armenian politics and the labor market to a significant extent.[9] This process, she argues, led women to occupy the civil society sector with the aim of contributing to democratic state-building through establishing non-governmental organizations (NGOs) since the late 1990s (Ishkanian, 2003, p. 487). Ishkanian discusses how these developments, which were (and still are) being mediated by the West and the United States (at the financial and policy levels), caused backlashes against civil society actors, particularly their anti-domestic violence initiatives (Ishkanian, 2007). She observes that civil society agendas were seen as a threat to the 'Armenian traditional family' and national identity coming from the West and the US (Ibid). Another scholar, Sevan Beukian, contributes to understandings of

[9] Before independence, 121 of 219 members were women in the Armenian parliament. After independence, when the quota system was introduced, the number of female parliament members decreased to 8 (Ishkanian, 2003, p. 487).

gendered nationalist discourses in the cultural domain by revealing the gendered role division in public and private spaces in independent Armenia (Beukian, 2014).

These accounts help us understand the practices of exclusion in local politics and the masculinization of political and cultural domains. However, they address only the experiences of women already located in the center, who would have had access to politics given their socio-economic and educational background if given the chance. Therefore, the experiences of women in the peripheries, such as in rural areas, are not much discussed in this context. My research aims to address this gap. In Chapter 3, I build my analysis on this social-political background, trying to unpack the geopolitical factors which influenced gender-related discourses and practices in the country, and how those are reflected in the educational environment.

1.5 Gendered Nationalism in Educational Content

The third relatively new field of scholarship addresses gender and nationalism in the education system in post-Soviet Armenia (and other post-socialist countries). Though women dominate the Armenian education system as teachers and principals,[10] they are barely present in the education content. This aspect has been covered by several scholars who analyze the content of public education through the lens of gender (Tsaturyan, 2013, Silova, 2016, Kojoyan, Aghakhanyan, 2020; Palandjian, Silova, Mun, Zholdoshalieva, 2018, Palandjian 2022). Iveta Silova examines whether and to what extent Armenian public education curricula and textbooks promote the principles of gender equality (Silova, 2016). Ani Kojoyan and Inna Aghakhanyan unpack gendered content in English textbooks for the 3rd grade by illustrating the representation of traditional gender roles in families and social life. Though their work does not address

[10] Women make up 90 % of teachers in public schools (ampop.am, 2021).

nationalism as a category of analysis, it contributes to the integration of gender in education analysis.

Ruzanna Tsaturyan's research on educational content provides a substantial analysis of the role division in familial settings based on age and gender throughout primary school textbooks (Tsaturyna, 2013). Tsaturyan notices that public education materials are designed as primary sources to introduce children to such concepts as 'fatherland', 'home', 'family', 'nation', etc. In doing so, these materials promote fixed images of male and female characters, as well as young and elderly people, Tsaturyan claims (Tsaturyan, 2013, p. 23). In her analysis, she focuses on visual and textual representations of male and female characters. She observes that in most of the examined textbooks, images depicting male characters dominate the visual representation of female characters. Sometimes, male characters appear throughout the pages twice as much as female characters (Ibid, p. 15-16). Moreover, this discrepancy of representation is not only about quantity but also quality. For example, in the topic presenting various Armenian historical characters, actors in literature, sports, art, and science, female actors are missing. Tsaturyan also critically analyzes the characteristics, situations, activities, roles, and expectations attributed to both genders. She argues that female characters are depicted as modest, accountable, and quiet, and are involved in such activities as cooking, cleaning, and carrying predominantly support roles; whereas, male characters appear as cheeky, adventurous, engaged in creative and fun activities (Ibid, pp. 18-19). Tsaturyan identifies the same pattern when it comes to the family setting and division of labor. The author finds it problematic that in the images and texts depicting families, women are predominantly represented performing activities of the caring mothers, who usually take care of children and do the housework, while men are depicted engaging in activities of (wage-earning) working fathers who mostly appear in more relaxed positions at home, suggesting that after a working day, unlike their wife, they deserve to rest (Ibid). Tsaturyan also unpacks the role division in

terms of age, noticing that while children are expected to show respect towards adults, elderly people are portrayed as passive members of the family (therefore society) (Ibid).

The question of gender and age-based hierarchies in familial settings is also addressed by McClintock (McClintock, 1993), albeit in a different context. McClintock's piece on gender, nationalism, and family discusses how the hierarchical structure of family relations reinforces other types of subordination in society (McClintock, 1993, p. 64). McClintock argues that the familial setting, where children are subordinated to adults and women to men, naturalizes other forms of subordination in the contexts of "national family", global "family of nations", and the colony, where "black children are ruled over by white fathers" (Ibid). Thus, the national family provides a metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as organic. In Chapters 2 and 3, I discuss the representation of a national family within educational public events by identifying gendered expectations in this domain.

In addition, Garine Palandjian et al reveal gendered nationalist discourses in primary school literary textbooks in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Latvia (Palandjian, Silova, Mun, Zholdoshalieva, 2018). They provide a fresh perspective on the topic by scrutinizing the question in intersection with nationalism. Their comparative analysis of gendered nationalist discourses utilized in textbooks in several post-Soviet and post-Socialist countries is substantial in terms of identifying some common practices and patterns of building a nationalist narrative in these newly established nation-states. The authors discuss how textbooks construct a gendered division of roles, labor, and space. They point out that throughout the pages of the textbooks, women are constructed as reproducers of the nation in nurturing and serving roles. They predominantly appear in private spaces and family settings involved in domestic work; whereas men are depicted as leaders, heroes, and protectors of the nation (and land) who mostly occupy public spaces and positions (pp. 173-174). Even when women are depicted in professional roles, those are limited to nurturing professions, such as nurses and teachers (Ibid,

p. 80). The issue with such labor division is not that nurturing jobs are less valuable, but that they are less valued because they are performed predominantly by women (Apple, 1987).

In such depictions, one can identify the construction of women as biological, social, and cultural reproducers of the nation – as stated in Yuval-Davis's and Anthias' argument (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, 1989). While they argue that there is no unitary category of women, they also suggest 5 ways in which women tend to engage in state and ethnic/national processes:

> a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivity; b) as reproducers of boundaries of ethnic/national groups, c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences- as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction, and transformation of ethnic/national categories; e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles (Yuval-Davis, Anthias, 1989, p. 7).

I build my analysis of school public events on the theory of Yuval-Davis and Anthias by drawing parallels between the content of the textbooks examined by Palandjian et al and the dominant narratives of the events. By doing so, I do not attempt to reduce the representation of women in rural Armenian national processes by locating them within existing theory. On the contrary, I aim to contribute to the existing literature by bringing into discussion the processes of constructing masculinities and femininities within the rural Armenian education context.

The question of women's representation in the Armenian public education domain has been addressed also in the context of the visibility of local female authors in high school literature curricula. Hasmik Khalapyan illustrates the absence of female authors and the misrepresentation of female characters in the literature textbooks of grades 10-12 (Khalapyan, 2015). She observes that in all three grades where the content of the textbooks is divided into chapters regarding various literary periods and authors, no single female character is presented as an individual chapter (p. 12). Given the fact that Armenian history is rich with female authors and activists who immensely contributed to the national liberation movements and who are

known for their feminist ideologies, Khalapyan criticizes their erasure from the curricula of national education (p. 3). Instead, women as literary characters are presented through the writings of male authors. Khalapyan not only questions the exclusion of female authors but also the negligence of women's question in the context of the 19th-century literary movement when it was of profound importance in literary processes. With this regard, Victoria Rowe's book about Armenian women's writings in 1880-1922 provides valuable evidence about the role of female writers in Armenian literature in this period. Rowe introduces 6 prominent female writers. She points out that while in modernist English and Russian literature, many female authors would borrow male or gender-neutral pseudonyms to not be identified as women authors, in the Armenian context this was never the case. Rowe explains this with a higher sense of freedom that woman authors enjoyed in Armenian literary production (Rowe, 2003, p. 17-18). Yet, these authors remain invisible in the contemporary knowledge production process.

In conclusion, the analysis of gender and nationalism in the education system in contemporary Armenia reveals that school textbooks perpetuate patriarchal gender norms by promoting the imagery of a 'traditional family'. In addition, the literature also points out a significant underrepresentation/misrepresentation of women in terms of the educational content and the visibility of female authors in literature curricula. My thesis contributes to the existing literature by looking at the mechanisms of reinforcing these patterns in everyday practices in schools.

1.6 Gender and Nationalism in Everyday Practices in Schools

In my analysis of public events as a form of everyday practices in education, my point of departure is the theories that examine institutional education as a domain of social reality construction. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann reveal the role of institutional education in the social construction of reality (Berger, Luckmann, 1966). They claim that through the institutionalization of the social world, objective social reality is constructed by humans and

transmitted to the next generation. This is learned as objective truth and internalized as subjective reality in the process of socialization (pp. 78, 84). The internalization of objective social reality and sub-worlds very often takes place through rituals or material symbols. Different meanings and identities are created and maintained through annual celebrations and representative ceremonies (pp. 158-59). In this configuration, schools are discussed as institutions of secondary socialization where the transmission of 'objective reality' takes place. However, in their approach, there is not much focus on public schools as the manufacturers of that reality. I observe the construction of identities of a 'soldier' and a 'mother' through the practices of celebrations at schools in Chapters 2, and 3.

Later, scholars such as Norbert Elias (1991), David Newman and Anssi Paasi (1998), and Ernest Gellner (2006) analyzed the political functions of state education from the perspective of various disciplines. For instance, Elias argues that in all nation-states, public education institutions contribute to the deepening of national feeling to a considerable extent (Elias, 1991). In addition, Newman and Paasi articulate the ways in which education textbooks reinforce national boundaries through the "pedagogy of space" (1998). Through this concept, they examine education and media as means of ideological construction of the state (Newman and Paasi, 1998, p. 196). Silova et al build their analysis of post-Soviet textbooks on this theoretical framework (Silova, Mead, Palandjian, 2014). They conclude that in post-Soviet countries, the conceptualization of physical space as territory remains the crucial element of national identity construction (p. 122). I reflect on the representation of national territory in the context of public events in Chapters 2, and 3. With this purpose, I look at the places which are mentioned in the narratives, and at the visual representation of them. Further research conducted by Shelley Terzian reflects on the public education reforms starting as early as the first years of the Soviet regime (Terzian, 2010). This research very well articulates the political agendas of public education in Soviet times, as well as in post-Soviet Armenia. With this in mind, I put my

analysis of education practices in a wider political and geopolitical context. I reflect on the implications of political configurations on teachers' experiences as the direct implementers of state education in Chapter 4.

The most recent research by Palandjian expands the field of gendered education studies by reflecting on the educator's role in the construction of national identity through everyday practices (Palandjian, 2022). Palandjian's analysis brings into discussion another aspect that influences education content: the teacher's agency. According to Palandjian, students' socialization is mediated not only through textbooks but also through teachers' pedagogical practices and approaches (Palandjian, 2022, pp. 65-69). Her research focuses on the experiences of the teachers in bordering villages of Armenia, where the conflict with Azerbaijan influences differently than in the central regions of the country. Palandjian notices that people living in these villages see themselves as the "keepers of the border" (Ibid, p. 107). Through her interviews with teachers, she illustrates alternative approaches that teachers take in their teaching practices. In my analysis, I also emphasize teachers' role in shaping the education environment.

Everyday practices of constructing and reproducing nationhood in the education space are not limited to classroom interactions. In addition, public celebrations and commemorations of days of national importance regularly taking place at schools create another space for fueling national identity and feelings. These events are organized by teachers with the participation of the students almost every month. They cover such historical events as the Declaration of Independence, the formation of the army, the victory in the "Great Patriotic War", the "Liberation of Shushi",[11] and the Armenian Genocide, among others. Some of the events are

[11] I use quotation marks here to emphasize the double meaning of the day on different sides of the border. While this day is marked as the 'liberation' day in the Armenian nationalist narratives, and the calendar of holidays, in the Azerbaijani context the same event is named an 'occupation'.

mandatory since they are delegated by the ESCS Ministry, while others stem from the initiative of the teachers and sometimes of the students. Though these events are central to public education agendas, they have not been examined within local scholarship yet. My research aims to fill this gap by revealing gendered nationalist discourses promoted through school public events. In my analysis of these events, I take as my point of departure McClintock's argument that "national collectivity is experienced preeminently through spectacle" (McClintock, 1993, p. 70). In addition, Fox and Miller-Idris in their discussion of "everyday nationalism" suggest that nationhood is produced through the "ritual enactment of symbols" (Fox, Miller-Idriss, 2008, pp. 537-83). In school public events, I observe the tendencies of constructing gender and national identities through spectacle and enactment. I examine these events as an articulation of gendered nationalism informed by teachers' personal views and beliefs along with institutional practices.

I view school everyday practices of reinforcing nationalist ideologies and feelings through the concepts of "banal nationalism" and "embodied nationalism". The concept of "banal nationalism" coined by Michael Billig (1995) refers to the ideological habits which enable the reproduction of national belonging through banal, everyday practices (p. 6). In addition, feminist scholarship conceptualized nationalism through emotional and embodied practices (Enloe, 2000; Mayer, 2004; Militz and Schurr, 2016). Particularly, Elisabeth Militz and Carolin Schurr discuss nationalist everyday practices as a bodily encounter that includes or excludes "differently marked bodies into or from a national community" in the context of Azerbaijan (Militz and Schurr, 2016, p. 61). In their account, they suggest analyzing these practices of national belonging through the concept of "affective nationalism". In my analysis of national celebration and commemoration events, I apply this concept in the discussion of the national dances performed by the students in Chapters 3.

In addition, Tamar Mayer unpacks the embodied aspect of nationalism by looking at the practices of controlling and targeting women's bodies as the reproducers of the national identity (Mayer, 2004). She argues that in this analogy, women's bodies become a "battleground" between the men of two nations (Mayer, 2004, p. 157). She illustrates how rape against women is used during the war as a means of "ethnic genocide" in the context of the war in former Yugoslavia (Ibid, p. 159). Furthermore, Enloe talks about the different forms of military rape as an institution of organized violence (Enloe, 2000, p. 108-152). In Chapter 3 where I analyze the event commemorating the Armenian Genocide, I observe how rape, being one of the major weapons of the genocide against Ottoman Armenian women (Aleksanyan, 2023), is represented through the meaning-making process. I also identify how the notion of rape is indexed in a political speech by the Armenian Prime Minister to emphasize the threat against the nation in Chapter 2.

1.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, by examining various approaches to conceptualizing nations and nationalisms, feminist scholarship on nationalism studies, nation-state building processes in post-Soviet Armenia, and gendered nationalist discourses within the Armenian education content and everyday practices, this Chapter laid out the theoretical framework grounding my research. I carved out the concepts and theories useful for my analysis. Through these theories, I conceptualized the ways in which gendered nationalist ideologies and practices are utilized in the rural Armenian education space ultimately perpetuating gender hierarchies and exclusion. Understanding the practices of inclusion and exclusion in the education domain is essential in identifying the patterns of social reality construction. This Chapter has highlighted the need to consider everyday experiences at schools for a better understanding of the role of education in manufacturing social reality. My research contributes to the local discourse on the intersection

of gender and nationalism and provides insights into the specific context of rural-Armenian education.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTRUCTING ARMENIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: GENDER, NATIONALISM, AND MILITARISM

2.1 Introduction

Militarism has always been a prominent device for the emergence and implications of nationalist agendas. On the one hand, militarism serves as fertile ground for nationalist ideological reproduction. On the other hand, nationalist spirit and love of country are used to gain support for the militarist affair, as Puri puts it (Puri, 2004, p. 3). In the context of Turkey, for instance, Altınay, citing a British General, calls military service "the greatest engine for the manufacture of a particular type of human intellect and body" (Altınay, 2004, p. 62). In contrast to men's direct participation in military affairs at the "battlefront", women are subordinately allocated to the "peaceful" space of the "home front" (Khromeychuk, 2020, p. 141). According to Anthias' and Yuval-Davis' account, women are mostly expected to contribute to the national and military struggle by supporting and nurturing men (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1989, p. 10). These scholars provide insight into the complex theoretical relationships between gender, nationalism, and militarism, which are the focus of this chapter.

In the chapter, I discuss how militarist discourses are utilized in public events in rural Armenian schools. I examine the construction of male and female identities in the public education domain through militarist ideologies disseminated by the local political elite. I argue that public events in rural Armenian schools reproduce dominant militarist agendas, thus imposing gendered expectations from the early years of students' lives. Moreover, they normalize the state of war in the eyes of the young generation. I first provide a brief overview of the Armenian national army and its place in constructing national identity and citizenship. Situated within this context,

I analyze one of the recent concepts introduced and implemented by the Ministry of Defense in Armenia (MoD), the concept of the *Nation-Army*. Finally, I draw parallels between the *Nation-Army* concept and the militarist content of school events. For my study, I look at the songs, texts, performances, and symbols used in these events.

2.2 The National Army: Foundation and Celebration

The first year of the large-scale war in Nagorno-Karabakh (1992) is now seen to mark the foundation of the Armed Forces of Armenia. However, January 28 was nominated as the Day of the Army and marked as a national holiday only 10 years after the formation of the independent, Armenia in 2001. It came to replace the Day of the Defender of the Fatherland, which had been celebrated in the Soviet Union in honor of the Red Army. Khromeychuk elucidates a similar process of nationalizing Soviet celebrations in the post-Soviet Ukrainian context as a result of dominant nationalist agendas (Khromeychuk, 2020, p. 141). Thus, given the circumstances that brought the Armed Forces of Armenia into existence, the national army was seen as one of the signifiers of independence.

Today, the Day of the Army (January 28) is a non-working day in Armenia and is celebrated by the state government, as well as by public schools, universities, and private organizations. In addition, the TV channels broadcast concerts of military songs or contemporary films devoted to the First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1988–1994). The most famous of these films are *Do Not Be Afraid* (Aram Shahbazyan, 2007) and *The Line* (Mher Mkrtchyan, 2016). Since their production, the films have been screened by Armenian public and private TV channels not only on the Day of the Army but also on such national holidays as the Day of Independence (September 21) and the "Liberation of Shushi" (May 9). Both films construct Armenian masculinity in relation to military service and war stories. In both cases, the main characters are young men in their early 20s who become 'real men' only after becoming involved in the

Nagorno- Karabakh war. It is noteworthy that these characters die as ‘heroes’ at the end of the films. Such representations of Armenian manhood in local media products reiterate a militarized image of masculinity and the narrative of unconditional self-sacrifice for the homeland. Comparatively, the main female characters in both films are located on the ‘home front’, listening to the news from the battlefront and (passively) waiting for their loved ones to return home. The posters of the films clearly illustrate the differing representations of men and women in the films (Figures 2.1, 2.2).

Figure 2.1 The Line, 2016

Source: Wikipedia

Figure 2.2 Do Not Be Afraid, 2007

Source: hayfilms.do.am

Armenian manhood is attached to military service not only discursively, as illustrated above, but also through state policies. In Armenia, as in many other societies, military service is seen as a compulsory way of becoming a man and a desirable citizen (Altınay, 2004, p. 68; Gill, 1997, p. 527). The national law on Military Service and the Status of Military Serviceman

(15.11.2017) assigns military service to all able-bodied male citizens after turning 18.[12] There is also a document ratified by the state which provides a long list of mental, physical, and psychological conditions which are not compatible with military service.[13] The assessment of eligibility for military service starts from adolescence when boys are required to undergo annual military medical observations. Based on the records of these observations, the male bodies are assessed as eligible or ineligible for military service by medical institutions (Ibid). Here, there is a dilemma regarding the notions of eligibility and ineligibility. On the one hand, being deemed ineligible allows male citizens to bypass compulsory military service; on the other hand, it labels their bodies "disabled" in the context of Armenian citizenship. However, young men and their parents often prefer the second option, being aware of the risks of military service. According to the local news agency Infocom,[14] for instance, more than 2000 deaths of military servants have been recorded in the period 1995–2021 in conditions of non-war (Baghdasaryan, 2021).[15] This statistic is supported by official sources, such as the MoD of Armenia, and non-governmental organizations, such as Peace Dialogue and Safe Soldiers. For comparison, the last two organizations reported about 531 deaths in the Armenian Military Forces in the period 2010–2017 caused by violations of the ceasefire, as well as by internal factors such as murder, suicide, violation of safety rules, health issues, etc.[16] This statistic goes some way to explaining the common distrust towards the army as an institution, not to mention the last war in NK which took thousands of lives.[17] Thus, often the label of "ineligible" is thus a more preferred status for men over 18.

[12] The law of the Republic of Armenia on Military Service and the Status of Military Serviceman, Article 5.
[13] Decision about establishing the list of the illnesses which define the level of eligibility of a citizen or a serviceman for military service, as well as about establishing the conditions of military service for a citizen or a serviceman incompatible with their health condition, (RA Government, 2018).
[14] The cases of deaths of Armenian military servicemen from 1998 to 2021, (infocom.com, 2021).
[15] This number does not include casualties caused by the Second war in NK in 2020.
[16] Sources: peacedialogue.am, safesoldiers.am.
[17] The official number of war victims from the Second War from the Armenian side is 3.825 (azatutyun.am, 2021).

Despite the damaged image of the army in Armenian society, as outlined above, state propaganda deems the necessity of military service for becoming a real (male) Armenian. As in the case of Turkey (Altinay, 2004), boys are prepared for their role as soldiers from an early age, although this preparation remains at a symbolic level (for example, wearing a military uniform and singing patriotic songs at kindergarten and school events). The mandatory military preparation classes at middle and high school do not provide practical skills for military service itself. With this in mind, in 2021, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport of Armenia (ESCS Ministry) initiated a reform of the program on this subject following the recent war in Nagorno-Karabakh.[18] Thus, while military service is deemed a constitutive part of Armenian male citizenship, it has been and remains one of the least safe institutions in the country. Therefore, narratives of Armenian manhood always go hand-in-hand with the notion of self-sacrifice (Matevosyan, 2012), which tends to normalize deaths in military service in times of war and non-war. I unpack the mechanisms and main ideologies underpinning the state propaganda regarding military service and Armenian national identity in the following section, in which I discuss the *Nation-Army* concept. These narratives are widely utilized in educational settings, which I examine in my analysis of school events by unpacking their role in constructing young citizens.

2.3 The *Nation-Army* Concept

In this section, I scrutinize the ideology of the *Nation-Army* (in Armenian *Azg-Banak*) concept by drawing upon a speech made by the Minister of Defense (MoD) of Armenia, Vigen Sargsyan (Nation-Army: Collective Monograph, pp. 15-18). In October 2016, following the large-scale escalation in Nagorno-Karabakh, Sargsyan proposed the concept of the Nation-Army to support the new program of 'military reform'. In short, the 'reform' offered two alternatives to

[18] Source: escs.am

compulsory military service. The first, *"Yes em"* ("I am"), provides soldiers with the opportunity to serve for three years instead of two (with a modified schedule). In this case, they receive a 35.000 AMD (65 EUR) monthly honorarium and a 5 million AMD (9.300 EUR) award at the end of service, which they can use only for three purposes: tuition expenses, business, or buying an apartment (Abrahamyan, 2017). In contrast, regular mandatory military service, though takes 2 years, does not provide financial benefits and is stricter with its schedule. Though the MoD argued that this program puts people of various social backgrounds in equal positions, it is evident that the main targets are socially vulnerable individuals. The prospect of financial compensation for military service will obviously be more relevant for those in financial need. Thus, the program targets socially underprivileged citizens in exchange for financial compensation. The second program, *"Pativ unem"* ("I have the honor"), provides soldiers with the opportunity to combine higher education with military education. The fellows of this program are allowed to serve in the army in a higher position after graduating from university (Ibid). This is the only way to get a deferment from military service in order to access higher education. With the promise of uninterrupted higher education and a military career, it reserves higher positions in the military for those with access to higher education. Thus, the program 'honors' (some) bodies while relegating others to the margins. The two programs thus articulate the classed nature of military service. Indeed, Altınay illustrates a similar regulation in the Turkish military system, which advantages those soldiers (or officers) who have more material resources, better connections, or higher education (Altınay, 2004, p. 75).

The program of the *Nation-Army* packaged as a 'reform' of the Armenian military forces was, in fact, directed to the militarization of the nation by fostering the concept of lifelong military service for each Armenian citizen. By doing so, the concept attempts to occupy those citizens who are not directly associated with military service. Since physical occupation is not applicable, the Minister applied the tool of discursive occupation in his introduction to the

concept. He targeted every other sphere—such as medicine, education, art, and business—to construct national subjects as proper citizens through "soldiering" on the home front (Altinay, 2004, p. 68).

In the following paragraphs, I discuss how discursive occupation takes place through the Minister's speech. I reveal the mechanisms of identity construction through the categories of 'action', 'representation', and 'identification' (Fairclough, 2003, p. 27). In identifying the non-linguistic components of his speech, which contribute to certain identity constructions, I focus on intertextuality and the assumptions deployed by the text. Though many other components have been used to promote this concept, such as billboard posters (Figures 2.3, 2.4) and other visual materials, most of which illustrate and reproduce the ideology articulated in the Minister's speech. As such, I argue that this speech was critical in foregrounding the concept and its discursive strategies.

Figures 2.3, 2.4: "Nation-Army | Assigned and conscripted for the common purpose.", Yerevan
Photo credits: Hrant Galstyan, personal archive.

The Minister began his speech by addressing the military staff, "generals, officers, and special civilian servicemen", and then used the pronoun "we" (our) representing himself as one of them. In the next sentence, the "we" pronoun was used to refer to the 'nation': "We have discovered our national identity", which he linked to the identity of warriors: "and not only declared

independence but also succeeded in defending it in a cruel and unequal but all the more heroic, war" (p. 1). However, he built up the identity of the warrior on the notion of "compelled choice", presenting the war as an unavoidable reality: "It is not us who have made this choice, but we were rather compelled to make it" (ibid). Here, he developed an intertextual relationship with orthodox narratives about the Armenian nation, which was depicted as a "peaceful nation" that was constantly being attacked and involved in wars against their will. This notion is also articulated in the following lines of a well-known Armenian poem:

We were peaceful like our mountains,
You invaded us like ferocious winds
We confronted you like our mountains,
You growled fiercely like ferocious winds,
But we are eternal like our mountains,
You will perish like ferocious winds.
(Shiraz, 1974)

Not only is this poem taught at schools as mandatory reading, but also is often referred to in public narratives. For example, Ararat Mirzoyan, the then-President of the National Assembly, posted it on his official Facebook page[19] on July 13, 2020, when ordinal clashes were occurring on the border with Azerbaijan.[20] This example demonstrates how Armenian national identity is *represented* by state officials as "warriors who are peaceful by nature". The Minister did this through the *action* of narrating historical events and presenting them as shared social practices. In doing so, he *identified* himself with the "nation-warrior" while "Armenia" appeared, as a result of "heroic war", as a "monumental canvas", detached from the state. I will return to the representation of the country later in the chapter.

Through recounting a historical narrative, the Minister continued the construction of Armenian national identity by linking it to the notion of resistance. Here, the social practices of economic hardship were intertwined with experiences on the battlefield:

[19] Facebook.com/Ararat.Mirzoyan.MFA, posted on July 13th, 2020.
[20] Armenian-Azerbaijani clashes leave several dead (dw.com, 14/07/2020).

> With lightning speed life got us accustomed to things we had deemed impossible, such as digging trenches, communicating via self-made transceivers, obtaining weapons, burying friends, waiting in line for bread for a food coupon, and burning firewood in apartment buildings (p. 1).

This is another example of an attempt to construct national identity through military practices. By doing so, the Minister prepared the ground for the introduction of the concept of the "Nation-Army". He presented the army as a matter of paternal relationship, the *offspring of the nation*, not that of state power:

> The Armenian Army is genuinely from the bosom of its people [...] The Nation–Army is the family where the father trains and makes his son stronger from the very day of his birth, while the mother sends her son off to the army with a strong feeling of longing but also with determination (p. 2).

In the first sentence, the heterosexual family is represented as the "producer of soldiers", where not only the notion of the sexes as "opposite" is naturalized through distinct social responsibilities (Cameron, 2014, p. 6), but more prominently, that of the ultimate objective of procreation: soldiers are to die for the 'cause' of the nation. This statement perpetuates the misogynistic division of labor in the family based on the sexes by attributing value to physical strength, hence differentiating the national identity of the warrior, the father, and son are thus seen as more valuable than the nurturing mother. Thus, in this discourse, the only domain for women to gain and realize an acceptable national identity is through a twofold sacrifice: sacrificing themselves as mothers by giving birth to and educating their children as future soldiers to be sacrificed for the nation. Even though women in Armenia contributed to military affairs in the Soviet period (Civilitas Foundation, 2017), as well as after independence (Osyan et al, 2014, p. 3), state propaganda depicts them as exclusively nurturers and mothers in the context of nation building. As Beukian puts it, motherhood is an integral part of femininity within Armenian nationalist discourse (Beukian, 2014, p. 249).

As in the opening of the speech, in highlighting the role of the family as "the unit of the nation", the idea of the state (country) is obscured once again. Such representation of the army centers the idea of familial/national collectivity (for the good of the army as a national domain) and leaves in the margins the role of the state as the number one security guarantor of the military forces (as a state institution). The latter was proved to be fragile for the reasons revealed above (National Army: Foundation and Celebration), as well as because of the exposure of corruption within the military forces after intense clashes in NK in 2016 (Pambukhchyan, 2018). In this construct, it is evident how the meaning-making process is facilitated by language in action (Gee, 1999, p. 11). The reality of how we understand our collective belonging is built through constructing the material world (e.g., 'economic hardship'), and identities and relationships (the identity of the warrior/soldier and mother who procreates the army).

In the second part of the speech, the identity of the "nation-warrior" is complemented by the concept of the *Nation-Army*. The Minister, therefore, attempted to institutionalize the domain of war by 'giving back' the army to the nation, or rather by conflating the two through the militarization of the nation. Here, there was a shift in the genre of speech, from narration to governance. Fairclough defines the genre of governance as one that comes about through the recontextualization of social practices by appropriating elements of one social practice within another (Fairclough, 2003, p. 32). The Minister claimed that the nation is the army itself and vice versa (p. 2). Thus, he portrayed civilian and military practices as intertwined. To support his argument, he drew upon numerical data: "Just think about it, every fortieth citizen, from newborn infants to the elderly, wears uniform" (p. 1). In this narrative, the Minister as a 'social agent', has his own 'causal power' to conceptualize the relationship between the social and military domains. Fairclough points out that although agents are socially constrained, their 'causal powers' are not reduced "to the causal powers of social structures and practices" (Fairclough, 2003, p. 22). I would add to this point that agents reduce social practices through

their ‘causal powers’. In this speech, for instance, the Minister reduces certain social practices—hence identities—by implying his ‘causal power’ as an agent.

Various identities are also “enacted through language” (Gee, 1999, p. 13) through the promotion of the neoliberal notion of self-governance. I argue that the *Nation-Army* concept aims to construct a self-governed national identity, which is responsible for maintaining the army: “The Nation-Army is the country where there is no military and civilians, but rather citizens wearing uniform and defenders of homeland in civilian clothing” (p. 2). This notion aims to not only physically occupy the bodies (and identities) that are legally assigned to military service, but also to discursively occupy those identities which are not accessible for physical appropriation. In doing so, the Minister promoted the idea of lifelong military service:

> The Nation-Army is the army, the indissoluble connection to which neither starts nor terminates with compulsory military service. [...] The Nation-Army is the school and the military unit, which are logical continuations of each other (p. 2).

To justify the notion of lifelong military service, he used various metaphors to represent the relationship between the nation and the army as that of fathers and sons:

> The Nation-Army is the businessman […] who bakes the bread with more grams than prescribed in order [that] the soldier be full […] and he himself might proudly give it to his children to taste, explaining that it is delicious and wholesome because it is for the army. [...] It is the commander who does not differentiate between his son and his soldier (p. 3).

These attempts to conflate military practices and the private domain of the family not only reiterate the notion of personal responsibility but also diminish boundaries between the public and the private by colonizing and economizing the ‘family’. Furthermore, these metaphors depict the nation as a family, which in the Armenian context is assumed to be based on a sacrifice from both sides: parents and children.

Along with the neoliberal notions of self-responsibility and self-governance, the Minister built the ideology of the Nation-Army on the terms of capitalist productivity and continuity:

> For those pensioners to never be a burden, we must take steps to enable Armenian officers to enhance their knowledge and skills during service, in order to prepare them for the transition to civilian life, instilling the traditions of military discipline, patriotism, professionalism, and good courtesy in the economy, industry, science, and education, thus reinforcing the impregnability of our state (p. 2).

This statement expects former military servants to remain productive, hence desired citizens for the state, through continuous contributions to the state-building process, otherwise they are labeled "burdens". In this context, the state appears as a 'receiver' of personal contributions, whereas in the context of building and maintaining the army, the 'giver' is the nation, not the state. This sentiment is also articulated in the following sentence: "This implies using what the army has created and shaped to serve the purposes of the society and state and strengthening the Armed Forces via the achievements in the civilian life" (p. 2). While the achievements of the army should be directed to society and the state, the civilian domain alone is positioned as responsible for "strengthening the Armed Forces". Not only does such a formulation alienate the army from the state, but also it attaches the army to civilian life, the initial meaning of which is the opposite of the military. It is worth mentioning that the contradiction of the two domains is not in the linguistic engine but in the social. Thus, the Minister propagates the militarization of society by trying to appropriate the civil domain by the military and to associate the army with the nation. This he does by promoting the ideas of neoliberal self-responsibility and capitalist productivity.

In his final remarks, the Minister returned to the pronoun "we", once again identifying himself with the collective national identity. From this position, he referred to the notion of 'choice': "The greatest paradox is that we cannot choose between adopting or not the Nation-Army concept" (p. 4). From the name "one of us", he reiterated the inevitability of becoming a *Nation-Army,* as mentioned in the context of constructing the "nation-warrior". The notion of 'no-choice' implies that "we" do not choose the war, even if "we" intend to make the military a compulsory way of being. Finally, this sentiment of 'no choice' in an intertextual relationship

can be read as 'no choice' of peace. It suggests viewing the question of national security (and peace) in the context of the historical past, rather than questioning current geopolitics and the role of the state, thus preparing the nation for a war that they did not choose. It is noteworthy that the war became a reality 4 years after the proposal and launching of the *Nation-Army* program. In the aftermath of the 2nd NK war, nationalist and militarist agendas have intensified substantially. In the next section, I explicate one such example: the militarist content within the school events which I observed.

2.4 Preparing "Future Soldiers" and "Future Mothers"

In the early 2000s, my school in Dalarik village—which is also one of the villages where I conducted field research—was renamed in the name of a soldier from the village, Hovhannes Hovhannisyan, who died during military service in 1999. Before, the school had carried the name of an Armenian contemporary writer, Derenik Demirchyan. After this change, the school started organizing events devoted to Hovhannes, mainly for his birthday. The narratives of these events portrayed Hovhannes as a devoted patriot who sacrificed his life for the fatherland. I took part in one of these events when I was in middle school. In addition to these events, a mural featuring Hovhannes in military uniform was installed on the entrance wall of the school. This was my first memory of military presence at school. A similar practice took place in the neighboring village of Myasnikyan, which was also part of my research. When I was at school, there was not yet a practice of celebrating the Day of the Army; however, over time, it became a part of the school events agenda. Since 2013, when I returned to the region after completing my studies and started working in my, and neighboring villages very closely I observed the ever-growing military presence at schools in the form of posters, quotes, images of fallen soldiers and other well-known military figures, and most importantly, public events.

The association between the military and education is well-articulated in the above-discussed speech of the Minster of Defense. As Altınay argues, "the making of citizens and the making of soldiers can be seen as mutually dependent activities […] while education and defense develop as mutually dependent discourses" (Altınay, 2004, p. 124). In this section, I examine how this dependency is reflected in the domain of Armenian public education by looking at events in rural schools – specifically the celebration of the Day of the Army – which took place in Arteni secondary school in January 2022. Since this event took place earlier than I started my fieldwork, my analysis is based on the video recording of the event provided by a teacher who participated in my research. While it was fortunate that I could gain access to this material, it is worth noting that my analysis is limited to my experience of watching the event on the screen instead of attending it in person.

The event took place in the school's event hall. There were 23 students on stage, almost all wearing military uniforms (except for one girl who was wearing the national dress).[21] One of the male students had an automatic rifle in his hand (supposedly a demonstrative one). In the video, only the first 2-3 rows of the audience are visible, but the applause implies that the hall was full. At the beginning of the event, the camera captured the posters and the images posted on the wall behind the students. Here, we can identify an iconic picture taken of the battlefield during the 2020 NK war. This picture became one of the symbols of the war and is widespread in online media (Figure 2.5).

[21] This dress is also called a *taraz*. Different regions of Armenia are associated with various designs of the national traditional clothing. The student at the event was wearing a long red dress which nowadays women wear when performing national dances. With its design, it was closer to the Taraz of Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh.

Figure 2.5 Albert Hovhannisyan, NK war, 2020
Source: RA Ministry of Defense

Other images of soldiers from Arteni village fallen in the war were displayed next to it. There was also a drawing of the *Dedo and Babo* statue, one of the symbols of NK (also known as Artsakh), and a painting of the flag and an armed eagle combined. In the background of these posters, there was a huge mural of Mount Ararat[22] and a church (Khor Virap Church in the Ararat province). Mount Ararat and Nagorno-Karabakh are also present in primary school textbooks as symbols of re-imagined borders (Silova et al., 2014, pp. 18-19). Though they are located beyond the political borders of Armenia, in local narratives they represent the "symbolic landscape" of the country, to borrow Meining's term (Meining, 1979, cited in Silova et al., 2014). In political geography and comparative education, borders have been conceptualized as "social, political and discursive constructs", while the symbols and the landscapes as "geographies of the mind" and "autobiographies of groups of people" (Silova et al., 2014). The images representing the recent war displayed in the background of the ever-present mural of

[22] Ararat Mountain is one of the prominent national symbols in Armenia. In local narratives, it symbolizes the struggle under the Ottoman Empire and the "lost fatherland" (Silova et. al, 2014).

Ararat discursively link the (inevitable) events of the present to the nation's historical past, which in local narratives is conceptualized as a history of national struggle (Panosian, 2002). Such visual representation is a reference to the image of the "nation-warrior", which I discussed in the context of the concept of *Nation-Army*.

There were several references in the event to the nation's historical past in terms of visual representation and content. Even though the army is a product of the state, the event was more focused on narratives of the "historic fatherland" than on the present Armenian state. This tendency was reflected, for instance, in the texts and song lyrics which described a vision of going back to 'historic Armenia'. For example, one of the songs sung by a younger group of participants[23] contained the following lines in its chorus:

> Armenian troop and warrior, may God help you,
> The pride and the pillar of the Armenians
> Have a good journey to Mush, Sasun.[24]

The notion of 'winning back' the lost fatherland was also articulated in the closing speech by one of the students:

> My glorious vision is that the next generation will celebrate the day of our army on the slopes of Ararat 30 years later and will remember the legendary heroes who built the army. And again – glory to [the] Armenian invincible army.

This tendency of focusing on the historic past of the nation instead of the role of the state in maintaining security and peace in the present echoes the speech of the Minster of Defense, Vigen Sargsyan (which I argued can be seen as a form of state propaganda). Comparatively, such content contributes to the representation of the army as the offspring of the nation, hence of the national family. McClintock argues that in nationalist ideologies, the family image is

[23] Except for the main group of performers, who were standing on stage during the whole event, there was also a younger group of students, aged about 12-13, who appeared on the stage several times, sang national patriotic songs and performed a national dance at the end of the event.

[24] These are cities in contemporary Eastern Turkey that used to be populated by Armenians (also Kurds and other national minorities) before the displacement and massacre of Ottoman Armenians. These places are frequently referred to in the narratives about 'historic Armenia' or 'Western Armenia'.

often used to deem the patriarchal hierarchy of the family natural, thereby legitimizing exclusion in non-familial settings (McClintock, 1993, p. 64). Promoted by political power and reiterated through everyday experiences, the notion of the "national family" comes to replace the state as an institution by blurring the boundaries of responsibility between the two.

Echoing the logic of the Minister's speech, throughout the school event, I observed that the parabolic relationship between the army and the family was repeatedly drawn as a natural phenomenon, where the parents (overwhelmingly mothers) appeared as (proud) 'producers of soldiers.' The event acknowledged exclusively male experiences in the military, and women were mentioned only as mothers and sisters of the soldiers but never as daughters of the mothers. Comparatively, men were depicted as defenders of their mothers and sisters, not the state regime nor the state borders (but of the fatherland). It comes as no surprise that such division implies specific characteristics in relation to men and women in Armenian society by attributing bravery, strength, and purpose to men while patience, caring, and vulnerability to women. One of the prominent texts in Armenian narratives articulating this message is the national anthem, which was played at the very beginning of the event:

Here is a flag for you my brother,
That I have sewed
Over the sleepless nights,
And bathed in my tears (Nalbandyan, 1861).[25]

Not only is the woman in the song put in a passive position, but she also appears in such activities as sewing and crying, which are considered feminine (Gordon, 2004).

Further examples from the event demonstrate the gendered nature of these familial narratives. In the below extract from a song that was sung by a teenage boy, we see mothers (and sisters)

[25] The national anthem of Armenia is based on the poem of an Armenian writer, Mikayel Nalbandyan, called *The Song of An Italian Girl*. The song was arranged by Barsegh Kanachyan and adopted as the national anthem of the first republic of Armenia, 1918-1920. In 1991, after some modification, the same song was recognized as the national anthem of Armenia after independence.

at the 'home front' waiting for their soldier to come back after military service or from the war front:

I am coming back, I am home, dear mom, open the door,
God heard your prayers,
Your soldier is coming home my sweet sister,
We both have one home and one fatherland.
[…]
The Armenian army and I are your guardian and defender.

By framing military service as a defense of family members rather than a duty imposed by the state, these narratives reiterate the political project of locating the army within the family and the war within the home, thus distancing them from the state and politics. The Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan's speech to the military troops before they joined the NK war in 2020 was iconic in this regard:[26]

> I want you to know … that you will be standing for the defense of your children, your loved ones, your wives, your parents, of your threshold and your hearth[27] […] You will be standing in front of the bedrooms of your children, in front of your own bedrooms, in front of the schools of your children, because you are going there (to the front) to defend the fatherland... You are going there to defend your bedrooms so that you do not have to defend your bedrooms in front of your (real) bedrooms (Pashinyan, 2020, 3:00 – 3:50).

Such rhetoric penetrates the private space of the home to once again promote the notion of personal responsibility, as opposed to the role of state politics. Moreover, it saturates the idea of personal responsibility by narrowing down the private space from 'homes' to 'bedrooms'. The 'bedroom' in this context is the 'sacred' space that should be protected as part of the pledge of honor. The symbolism attached to the bedrooms can be read as a reference to rape as a threat against women (read: wives), hence the nation. Thus, the Prime Minister, by 'advocating for respectability' to borrow George Mosse's term (Mosse, 1985), urges Armenian men to protect the 'honor' of their families. The metaphor of 'bedrooms' is also a reference to the notion of

[26] The video recording of the speech is published on A1+ local news outlet's YouTube channel (3:00 - 3:50), October 16, 2020.
[27] Hearth, in Armenian *ojakh*, means home and family.

'peaceful sleep' frequently utilized in literary texts and songs. There is thus a direct intertextual relationship between the rhetoric of the Prime Minister and the messages voiced on stage at the Arteni school. For example, it can be identified in this extract from a song called *The Song of the Soldier* sung by one of the event participants.

May my mother sleep peacefully,
I will give even my life,
I am on the border,
I am praying for you.

These lines once again portray soldiering and war as a defense of the mother (and family).

This division of roles and responsibilities along gendered lines also promotes the idea of self-sacrifice for the fatherland, hence for the family and loved ones. The vow of 'dying for the fatherland' is circulated from the official text of the military oath (which was read during the event by one of the students) to patriotic songs and poems. Here, the national anthem again provides one of many such examples:

Death is the same everywhere,
A man dies but once,
Blessed is the one who dies
For the freedom of his nation.
(Nalbandyan, 1861)

The last performance that I discuss in the following paragraph demonstrates the above points: it illustrates the construction of the "nation-warrior" identity in the context of the historical past, of the army as a national/familial domain, and the gendered division of labor in nationalist and militarist discourses. There is a well-known Armenian poem called *Lullaby Song* (today also known as *Come My Nightingale*) that was written by a famous Armenian writer, Raphael Patkanian (1830–1892), 166 years ago. Later an unknown author wrote lullaby music for it, and it turned into a popular song.[28] Several contemporary artists have also recorded the song with

[28] The exact date of the music is not known. However, the song was already included in the *Collection of the Armenian Folklore Songs* published by Levon Yeghiazaryan (Paris: 1900).

their interpretations. Among these are a duet by the popular rock singer of Armenian descent, Serj Tankian (from the band System of a Down), and Larisa Ryan Hovhannisyan (the founder of Teach for Armenia foundation). To further elucidate the social-cultural significance of the song for Armenians, it is worth mentioning that Tankian and Ryan Hovhannisyan's interpretation became the soundtrack of the movie *1915*, which was released on the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The use of the song at the Arteni school event was saturated with symbolism. The recording started playing as a teenage girl with a baby doll in her hands walked toward the center of the stage. The scene suggested that she was the mother who was putting the baby to sleep with the lullaby, *Come My Nightingale.* In the song, the mother[29] calls various birds to sing for her son:

Come my nightingale, leave the garden,
Tell poems for my boy to fall into slumber,
He is crying, do not come, nightingale,
My son doesn't want to become a bishop.
(Patkanian, 1857)[30]

The singer then asks the turtledove and the skylark to sing for her son, however, the baby keeps crying until the hawk comes with the military song:

Leave your hunt, come, brave hawk,
Your song may be what my son wants,
When the hawk came, my son hushed,
And fell into slumber with the songs of war.

Not only does the song (or at least its common interpretation) signify the role of the mother as the main nurturer and caregiver for the children (read: future soldiers), but it also suggests that Armenian children should prepare for war from as early as the crib. This message was revealed in the performance very vividly. While the song recording was playing, the teenage girl on stage put a military uniform on her baby doll and covered him with the Armenian flag. Such an

[29] Even though the text is written by a male writer, its implication over the years had portrayed the character singing the lullaby as a mother.
[30] Translated by Armenuhi Sahakyan, 2017. Accessed in https://lyricstranslate.com/.

enactment can be read as a visual reference to the memorial services of the fallen soldiers, whose coffins are usually covered with the national flag as a gesture of honor. In this and other acts, we see how the identities of a soldier and a mother are constructed through a celebration (Berger, Luckman, pp. 158-59). Thus, the event strongly echoes the narratives of state propaganda that construct Armenian female identity as mothers (of soldiers) and male identity as soldiers by reiterating the notion of self-sacrifice from both sides.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the intersection of gender and nationalism in militarist discourses within Armenian politics and education. I explored this question on three levels: state policy, state propaganda, and the implications in the space of public education. By bringing together my findings in these domains, I argue that gendered nationalist discourses in the Armenian military context can be identified in the education environment to a substantial extent. This is not to suggest that the ideologies promoted in an educational setting are a pure reproduction of political agendas. Rather, state officials often build their rhetoric in intertextual relationships with the orthodox narratives used in popular culture (e.g., patriotic songs) and textbooks. Nevertheless, the political and social domains construct Armenian national identity based on the notion of a 'national struggle', where men's experiences as warriors on the 'battle front' are valued more than the female experiences on the 'home front'. Consequently, male national identity is attached to strength, while female identity appears passive and vulnerable. In terms of physical space and social responsibilities, men (mainly those from the working and lower middle class) are given the borders of the fatherland to protect (even at the cost of their own lives), whereas women appear in the home to give birth and nurture future soldiers for the nation. Thus, I argue that militarist nationalist discourses in Armenian society provide a fertile

ground for maintaining male power – by sacrificing the lives deemed less valuable – and female subordination – by occupying their bodies for national reproduction.

CHAPTER 3

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE "ARMENIAN WOMAN"

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I analyzed the construction of Armenian masculinity and male identity through nationalist and militarist discourses. Here, I look at the construction of the "Armenian woman" within nationalist narratives. By doing so, I do not suggest that "Armenian woman" is a unitary category, rather I attempt to look at the processes, narratives, and patterns of universalizing this category. Despite the distinct identifications, experiences, geographies, class backgrounds, and sexualities, the dominant local discourses around Armenian womanhood are constructed and reproduced within a specific historical context. As is the case of constructing Armenian manhood, here as well the discourses are heavily grounded on notions of 'national struggle'. However, nationalist agendas impose distinct roles and expectations on national subjects depending on their gender. As Puri puts it, nationalism has dissimilar implications for men and women (Puri, 2003, p. 137).

In Chapter 1, I discussed theories which examine the construction of femininity and masculinity through gendered nationalist discourses. Here, I focus on the construction of femininity in the Armenian context. Several scholars have touched upon the question of women's representation and experiences within nationalist narratives and nation-state-building processes. For instance, Beukian unpacks the factors that construct femininity as motherhood in late and post-Soviet Armenia. She views this question in light of the Armenian history of struggle, including the memory of the Armenian Genocide and the 1st Nagorno-Karabakh war. Beukian argues that in Armenia the concept of motherhood, being shaped through "a distinct history of national struggle and genocide", differs from other nations (Beukian, 2014, p. 249). Being an Armenian

mother means "sacrificing, caring, and nurturing" for the family and the nation (Ibid). Though Beukian's analysis contributes to understanding the construction of Armenian femininity within the cultural domain, it fails to address social-political transitions following independence and war, that immensely influenced women's experiences in Armenia. In other words, Beukian focuses on the representation of Armenian womanhood while neglecting lived experiences. In this chapter, I address this gap in the discussions on Armenian femininity. Dilanyan's writing on gender and sexuality in the context of armed conflicts suggests another layer to understandings of the question. She argues that external threats and the image of the enemy are used in conflicting countries to govern sexualities (Dilanyan et al.). In Armenian society, the "reproduction of traditional masculinity and heterosexuality are presented as the civilian equivalent of protecting the borders", whereas 'non-normative' sexualities are seen as a threat to national security (Ibid, pp. 10-12). Thus, both analyses of Armenian nationalism unpack the construction of national identity in tight relation to 'proper' (read: heteronormative) masculinity, and femininity.

However, in these discussions, aspects such as the socio-political environment and geopolitical configurations, though central to understanding the bigger picture, are not taken into account. Instead, by locating the research question in the context of memory of the Armenian Genocide and national struggle, these scholars risk remaining within the lines of the same historical context which shaped common understandings of Armenian femininity and masculinity. This is not to suggest that historical aspects need to be dismissed: on the contrary, I would suggest that reference to those historic events, which immensely shaped national identity, is necessary. Nevertheless, I argue that it is crucial to locate them in present configurations, observe them in meaning-making processes and critically analyze their implications *today*. Bearing this in mind, in the *Nationalism as a Practice of Exclusion* sections, I first reflect on how nationalist agendas shaped women's experiences in contemporary Armenia. Next, I turn to the cultural domain to

look at several examples of the construction of Armenian womanhood through national iconography. In the last section, I observe whether and how the dominant imagery around Armenian femininity is reproduced at rural school events that commemorate/celebrate days of national importance. By doing so, I locate and observe the narratives of historic events and the national struggle in the meaning-making process, aiming to carve out its implications in the present.

3.2 Nationalism as a Practice of Exclusion

> *Despite the centrality of their contribution to many nationalist struggles, it is often the case that feminist nationalists find themselves once again under the thumb of institutionalized patriarchy once national independence is won.*
> (Nagel, 1998, p. 253)

Many scholars unpacked nationalism as a practice of exclusion. In the above quote, Nagel suggests that nationalist practices exclude women regardless of their input in the nation-state-building processes. In addition, McClintock argues that women are seen as "symbolic bearers of the nation but are denied any direct relation to national agency" (McClintock, 1993, p. 63). In the context of Armenia, Beukian also observes a similar phenomenon of pushing women back to the role of "home-carers, housewives and mothers" after they contributed to the independence movement and NK war as protestors and soldiers (Beukian, 2014, p. 248).

Some scholars have touched upon women's participation in war and independence movement in Armenia in the early 1990s (Shahnazaryan, 2016; Osyan et al., 2014; Kasbarian, 2001). There is limited data available regarding the number of women who participated in the 1st Nagorno-Karabakh war. While women were not conscripted into the Armenian military, many volunteered to serve in non-combat roles, such as nurses, doctors, and support staff (Shahnazaryan, 2016). Some also fought on the front lines alongside their male counterparts. Kasbarian's account of women's participation in the 1st NK war is remarkable. It is based on

the testimonies of female combatants of the NK war recorded in the early 1990s, when the war and independence movement were still ongoing. As he was given access to the battlefield as a journalist at the time, Kasbarian observed women's participation in war in 'support roles' – such as food suppliers, secretaries, health care assistants - as well as in the frontline as combatants (Kasbarian, 2001, pp. 85-94). The testimonies of female combatants suggest that the shift from 'support roles' to direct involvement in the military affair for them was more than the reproduction of traditional nationalism. On the contrary, the battlefield became a space for them to challenge the traditional gender role division within a nationalist setting (Ibid). It is noteworthy that according to Kasbarian's account, the boundaries between traditional gender roles were blurred specifically through women's direct involvement in warfare, whereas 'supporting' roles were still seen as less valuable and subordinate to the battlefield contribution. However, as Kasbarian puts it, this momentum of the 'change of the order' did not last long. He argues that the "fetishized, monolithic, 'ungrateful'" nationalism failed to acknowledge women's contribution to nation-state building and to recognize them as political subjects (Ibid, p. 94). I find it problematic that the author does not question the institution of nationalism per se, assuming that a non-monolithic or "grateful" form of nationalism might exist. I agree with McClintock's statement that "all nationalisms are gendered, all are invented, and all are dangerous" (McClintock, 1993, p. 61). Nevertheless, Kasbarian's account of women's participation in the 1st NK war, and their later exclusion from political processes, is a valuable contribution to understanding the politics of inclusion and exclusion in the early stage of nation-state building processes.

As I illustrated in the Introduction and in Chapter 1, not only women were being excluded from nationalist politics but also women's organization's agendas were being targeted by nationalist groups as anti-national. Voskanyan's research on perceptions about women's organizations identifies several "dangers" attributed to feminism by the research participants and within the

analyzed media materials (Voskanyan, 2015). In short, according to some respondents, feminists are seen as "foreign agents" who aim to corrupt Armenian families by propagating ‘homosexuality’ and women’s freedom of choice and control over their bodies. This ideology, according to the respondents, is against motherhood which in turn decreases the birth rate (Ibid). More recent research on a similar topic conducted by the Women’s Resource Center of Armenia echoes these findings. The latter reports 60 % of men and 40 % of women think that the issues addressed by women’s organizations are artificial, therefore the backlashes against them are “well deserved” (Shahnazaryan, Hovhannisyan, 2019). In this environment, feminist initiatives often are discredited as “European propaganda” and “fake agendas”.

The backlashes against women’s organizations and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs) funded by the West were influenced by the Russian presence in the region to some extent. After the Soviet Union collapsed, Russian right-wing political power, intending to maintain its dominance in the region, fostered anti-EU and anti-US notions to prevent the growing influence of the West and the US (Khalatyan, Manusyan, Margaryan, 2020). It is worth noting that the origins of the term "foreign agents" with regard to local women’s organizations and other human rights NGOs can be traced in Russian politics. In 2012, the Russian State Duma passed a bill regulating the activities of foreign-funded Russian NGOs (Popkova, 2016). The new regulations required that these NGOs register as "foreign agents", or be fined up to 3 million Rubles (Ibid, p. 3067). Though the Armenian government did not follow Russia’s example by introducing a similar legislative project, the term "foreign agents" was widely applied in local political and social domains intending to police the initiatives of the local NGOs (Pambukhchyan, 2021, pp. 26-27). Thus, on the one hand, women were excluded from politics and left with the only choice of contributing to civil society development; on the other hand, their efforts here were shut down through gradually increasing

backlashes, which are known today as anti-gender movements. I introduced these movements in more detail in Chapter 1.

The rise of nationalism in post-war Armenia became a fertile ground for anti-gender movements to evolve. Several groups and organizations were formed in the 2000s aiming to foster 'national values' and to protect Armenian nationhood. The most visible in the media were *Mek Azg* (One Nation), *Louys* (Light), *Kamq* (Will) organizations, and the initiative called *VETO* (Grigoryan, 2021, p. 9). They all share a common interest in preventing the emergence of 'European values' in Armenia and protecting 'Armenianhood'. The Armenian Apostolic Church also plays a significant role in fostering these notions, mostly by taking a conservative stance in defense of 'Armenian spiritual identity' (Barseghyan, 2021, p. 32). A new wave of backlashes against the gender equality agendas was generated when the new government of Armenia initiated the ratification of the Convention of Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (Istanbul Convention) and the Convention on Protection of Children Against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) (Barseghyan, 2021, p. 31). In both cases, media resources owned by the former two presidents' families were used to promote false narratives against the ratification of these conventions. In these narratives, it was argued that the laws attempt to promote homosexuality, destroy traditional families, and encourage non-traditional gender roles and sexual affairs, which in turn endangers the state (Ibid, pp. 32-33). Even though hundreds of cases of domestic violence are reported by the Armenian Investigation Committee annually (Israyelyan, 2020),[31] gender issues remain a taboo topic to address in social as well as legal, and political domains.

Though women's participation was welcomed in the war and independence movement, once the mission of nation-state building was accomplished, women were excluded from politics and

[31] In 2018, 519 cases were reported versus 458 in 2017.

decision-making processes. Ironically, the civil society domain which was 'given' to women activists in return proved to be not a safe space either. Eventually, women's organizations were targeted for their supposedly 'anti-national' agendas. It is worth reiterating once again that these processes were not taking place in isolation from the rest of the world, but rather to some extent they were the reflection of the conflict evolving around the East-West dichotomy.

3.3 Constructing Mother Armenia

When you drive toward the main street of the city of Yerevan, Mashtots Avenue, as you pass through the tunnel into the city center, the first thing which catches your eye is a 167 ft tall statue of a woman holding a sword. She is the iconic statue known as *Mayr Hayastan* (in English Mother Armenia). The statue is located atop a hill and is visible from different spots in downtown Yerevan (Figure 3.1).

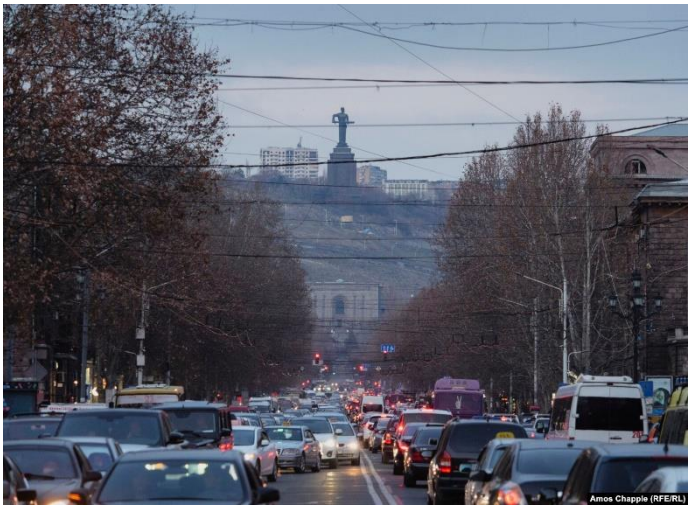

Figure 3.1 The view of Mother Armenia statue from Mashtots Avenue | Source: RadioFreeEurope, RadioLiberty

Figure 3.2 The statue of Josef Stalin (1950-1962) | Source: RadioFreeEurope, RadioLiberty

Emphasizing its significance in terms of visibility, the statue was erected in place of the statue of Josef Stalin in 1967 (Figure 3.2). As the sculptor Ara Harutyunyan puts it, the statue was meant to "represent the power of motherhood and the Armenian motherland" (Chapple, 2021).

Though the statue is a popular representation of the "Armenian woman" and Armenia, the name Genya Muradian – who posed as a model for the statue – is hardly known. In this context, Thornham's account of women's absence in their own images is particularly pertinent. By citing Pollock, she points out that "paintings of women are not portraits since the portrait 'documents an individual's presence'", whereas these paintings obliterate the 'presence and individuality' of women (Thornham, 2007, p. 29). Genya Muradyan was only 17 when she modeled for this statue; her individuality was obscured by the symbol of motherhood.

Motherhood is attached to other Armenian women, such as Sosse Vardanian,[32] who is referred to as Sosse Mayrig in the Armenian narrative (*'mayrig'* in Armenian means 'mother'). Sosse appears in pictures armed as a warrior yet represented as *'mayrig'*, not as Sosse Vardanian, with her last name (Figure 3.3). Another picture of *'Hayastan Mayrik'* (in English Armenia Mother) comes into existence through a patriotic movie created in Soviet Armenia, *The Song of the Old Days* (1982) (Figure 3.4). Here Hayastan Mayrik is a woman named Hayastan[33] who loses her sons in World War II (referred to as "The Great Patriotic War" in the movie, *Hayrenakan Mets Paterazm* in Armenian). All three images are well-known symbols of the Armenian woman (read: mother). Through such well-known real or symbolic national female characters, Armenian womanhood is "fixed into the image" of mother, to borrow Thornham's phrase.

[32] Sosse Vardanyan was a liberation movement militia in the 20th century.
[33] *Hayastan* is an Armenian female name meaning Armenia.

Figure 3.3 Sosse Vardanyan
Source: @JournalHayastan on Twitter

Figure 3.4 Hayastan Mayrik, The Song of Old Days, 1982 | Source: Screenshot from Youtube

The continuity of fixing the Armenian woman to images of mothers is reflected in this recent illustration posted on EVN Report online magazine's webpage (Figure 3.5). The article accompanied by this image is about today's complex geopolitical situation over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It states, *For Armenians, the time for introspection is now*.[34] The girl (who can be identified as a schoolgirl) in the image looks at the picture of Mother Armenia, however, for the viewer, it is apparent that the latter represents a mirror, where the girl is gazing at her reflection. This picture not only signals the figure's 'self-absorption', to use Thornham's term (Thornham, 2007, p. 31), but also turns her reflection into the image of Mother Armenia. Not being able to return the photographer's gaze, she is trapped in the frozen reflection of herself as the mother of the nation (ibid, p. 33).

[34] Gaidz Minassian, For Armenians, the Time for Retrospection is Now, EVN Report, 2022, https://evnreport.com.

Figure 3.5 Illustration for the article "For Armenians the time for retrospection is now" Source: EVN Report

The character of Mother Armenia is very much present in various narratives and contexts. Even if there is not any direct reference to the character or the statue itself, it is still utilized as a symbol of various aspects of Armenianness. Thus, Mother Armenia, by becoming its own simulation over time, to use Baudrillard's term (cited in Thornham, 2007, p. 46-47), does not reflect reality anymore. The alienation from reality can be traced in several phases. First, the model of the statue, Genya Muradyan, is obscured from the character of Mother Armenia that she was supposedly representing. Next, the Mother Armenia statue is used as a symbol in various contexts to embody a wide range of meanings, starting from 'Armenian motherhood' to national struggle or 'collective retrospection'. Ultimately, the original meaning of the image cannot be identified anymore, let alone the original source of the image, the model for the statue. In his discussion of the concept of simulation, Baudrillard describes a similar phenomenon of removing the 'real' from the image to the extent when it does not have any reference to the original meaning anymore (cited in Thornham, 2007, p. 46).

These examples, on the one hand, have a substantial role in constructing Armenian womanhood; and on the other hand, are reflective of widespread imagery that represents women in Armenian society. In my discussion of school public events, I argue that the patterns of

women's representation (or their absence) in the domain of mass culture, can be observed also in the educational space.

3.4 Girls on the Stage, Women Out of the Content

Among all the topics that are usually covered through school public events, the interviewed teachers mainly recalled three categories of events being more common for their school. The first group of events covers days of national importance, such as the Day of Independence, the Day of the Army, the establishment of the first Armenian Republic, liberation movements, day of victory in the "Great Patriotic War". The second category of events is devoted to prominent figures known for their input in national history. Among them, male literary authors of the late 19th and 20th centuries and military leaders of the liberation movements of the same period were frequently mentioned. In the third category are the events devoted to commemoration days. In this category the topic of the Genocide was central. It is worth mentioning that the victims of the two wars in Nagorno-Karabakh (in the 1990s and 2020) are often remembered and honored again in the context of the Armenian Genocide. The fourth category of events is devoted to 8 March and 7 April.[35] Though the 8th of March is celebrated as a symbolic date of the women's rights movement worldwide, in the context of school events, it is mainly conflated with the 7th of April, referred to as the 'Day of Motherhood and Beauty'. Thus, the only occasion when women are centered in these events is through highlighting their roles as mothers and symbols of beauty.

In this section, I focus on the events covering the Armenian Genocide, the Day of the Armenian First Republic, and the Day of Victory in "The Great Patriotic War". I also discuss two events devoted to two Armenian prominent figures.

[35] The 7th of April is the Feast of Annunciation according to the Armenian Apostolic Church calendar. Since 1995, this day has been marked by the Armenian Church as the 'Day of Motherhood and Beauty'.

Armenian Genocide

I cannot recall when I first learned about the Armenian Genocide as a child, but I remember that it was much earlier than when the topic was covered in our history class. Nor can I recall the sources through which this topic was first introduced to me; it almost seems as if I was born with this knowledge. The fact that my primary understanding of the topic was heavily built on commonly shared narratives within Armenian society suggests that the media plays a key role in its dissemination. Another channel through which stories of the Armenian Genocide are transmitted between generations is the family stories about our shared past. Abrams suggests that personal memories are always mediated by the memories produced and maintained in families, communities, and public representations within a wider context (Abrams, 2010, p. 79). Thus, memories are not simply an individual phenomenon but are in a tight relationship with socially shared experiences that construct collective memories. At school public events devoted to the Armenian Genocide, one can identify narratives coming from different domains, including but not limited to textbooks. Therefore, I argue that the patterns of constructing the "Armenian woman" through the narratives of genocide reflect the prevalent imagery of the genocide in various domains meant for reconstructing the past.

The fact that discussions of Armenian identity inevitably intersect with the collective memory of genocide suggests that it is central to national identity construction. However, as Arlene Avakian argues, despite all the effort and energy that were invested in constructing the collective past through memory of the genocide, many crucial questions were left in the margins of knowledge production (Avakian, 2010, p. 207). For instance, Avakian suggests that scholarship examining the Armenian genocide dismisses its gendered aspect, particularly the influence of the genocide on constructing masculinity and femininity in post-genocide generations remains under-scrutinized (Ibid). A more recent study on the Armenian Genocide by Anna Aleksanyan, argues that the perpetrators of the genocide chose a “gendered path of

destruction" by targeting the 'Armenian traditional family structure' (Aleksanyan, 2023, p. 11). Sexual violence against Armenian women was weaponized against the 'traditional family', hence the nation (Ibid). My discussion of school public events contributes to this discussion by looking at the gendered representation of the genocide as a means of collective memory construction. However, my research, limited to the method of participant observation, does not cover the historical aspect of the question. Therefore, it remains a discussion about the representation of the Armenian Genocide, not the genocide itself as a historical event.

The commemoration day of the Armenian Genocide is the 24th of April. It was on this date that the Ottoman Interior Ministry order the arrest of all Armenian political and community leaders suspected of nationalist sentiments who would later become victims of massive deportation and killing (Dadrian, 1995). When referring to these events, the school textbooks identify only male actors who were targeted by the Ottoman regime, while other the victims of the genocide are collectively presented as 'women, elderly people, and children'. This approach was reflected in the genocide commemoration events in Aragatsavan and Shenik villages. The event in Aragatsavan school, for instance, started with a group dance performance by girls only. The students wore similar black dresses that fully covered their bodies and legs. The performance was an enactment of a massacre where girls, one by one, fell to the ground. This act can be read in an intertextual relationship with the stories of genocide where women predominantly appear as victims of rape (Aleksanyan, 2023). Toward the end of the performance, the girls got up again. In this enactment, the meaning of collective victimization as well as rebirth and recreation of the nation is implied through female bodies. In this and other group performances of national dances we see how the nation "takes shape through bodily encounters and joyful as well as painful affections" (Militz, Schurr, 2015, p. 54). This was the only act representing women throughout the whole event at the Aragatsavan school, while in the Shenik school women were absent from the narratives. Women in this representation appeared as a collective

character of a mother who was expected to contribute to national recreation (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). In all other instances, girls were given the task of narrating male stories related to the genocide and other historic events.

The organizer of the Aragatsavan school event, Anahit Shahbazyan, who was the teacher of Armenian language and literature, explained the performance during our interview:

> So, there [in the performance] the girls represented the mother – the Armenian mother – who lost her child and family, but still found the strength to overcome that situation and continue [living] and bringing up the generations.

Such representation of women echoes the tendencies observed in the textbooks as I discussed in Chapter 1. Unlike women, male figures were depicted as individuals known by their names and positions in literary and historiographical sources. In the Aragatsavan school, there were three role plays representing male characters only, therefore performed by boys only. One of the plays represented the Armenian liberation movement militias[36] of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The second performance was about those political and intellectual leaders who became victims of the order released on 24 April. In this performance the acting characters were two well-known Armenian writers, Ruben Sevak and Daniel Varuzhan[37] who discussed the future of the nation amid the oppressions that the Ottoman Armenians were facing.

> *Student 1* - What will the next generation think about us, will they want to read our writings?
>
> *Student 2* - If they do not want to let them not read but at least they should remember that there have been Armenian men before them named Ruben, Grigor, Daniel, Atom, who loved their successors without even knowing them. Will we have successors, Ruben?
>
> *Student 1* - What a stupid question, Daniel. Many of them [the successors] will be named Daniel, Grigor, Atom, Ruben not in our honor, no, but just because they are going to be born as Armenians.

[36] In Armenian history sources, they are referred to as *fedayees*.
[37] Both authors were arrested and killed by the Ottoman regime.

The imaginary dialogue reiterates the widespread perception that the continuity of the family line, hence the nation, is seen in male successors (Tsaturyan, 2017, p. 8). Thus, while women are represented as reproducers of the nation, it is believed that the male generations genetically continue the nation.

Another instance when a female character was mentioned in these events was through the lyrics of a popular Armenian nationalist song, *Gini Lits* (Pour the Wine). This song was performed in the context of the Armenian radical revanchist initiative, Nemesis.[38] In short, the operation aimed to identify and kill Turkish Officials responsible for the Armenian Genocide. The story of the murder of Talat Pasha[39] by Soghomon Tehlirian[40] as part of this operation is well known in popular culture and literary texts. In 3 out of 6 events that I attended, there was a reference to this specific case through role plays. The center of the performances was the trial of Tehlirian in a Berlin court, where he was exonerated. In two cases, the role plays were accompanied by the song *Gini Lits,* which glorifies Tehlirian for his bravery and celebrates the death of Talat (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). In various sources, the lyrics of the song slightly differ. One has the following lines:

…They put the dog Talaat into the pit,
They brought the news to **his streetwalker mother**…

One can also come across the following version of these lines:

…They put the dog Talaat into the pit,
They brought the news to **his old mother**…

In both cases, the first version was performed by the students. Though the word 'streetwalker' was replaced with a pause in the song, it could be read as a swear word. Here we see another

[38] Nemesis operation was formed by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). In some sources, Nemesis is referred to as the first Armenian terrorist organization (Bogosian, 2015).
[39] The Interior Minister of the Ottoman Empire and one of the main organizers of the pogroms of the Ottoman Armenians.
[40] Tehlirian was an Ottoman Armenian fedayee, a member of the ARF and Nemesis operation. Tehlirian found and killed Talat Pasha in 1921 in Berlin, Germany (Ibid).

example of referencing the woman in her role as a mother, being dishonored for her son's crime (Ibid). In the Aragatsavan school, the students went on and presented other Armenian male figures involved in the Nemesis operation. Meanwhile, we saw a slide show with the portraits of these people. Thus, women's stories of the genocide were absent in the narratives, hence in the visual representation.

The Establishment of the 1st Armenian Republic

Women's representation was also limited to their role as mothers in the context of other historical events. One example was the event devoted to the first and short-lived Armenian republic,[41] which was organized in the Arteni 2nd school (Figure 3.6). The opening and the closing scenes of the event illustrate how masculinity and femininity are constructed through nationalist discourses. In the first scene, we saw a table on stage with a bottle of wine and several glasses. A group of teenage boys approached the table. One by one they, cited the following lines from a famous folk song:

...Hold your glasses above your heads, a sacred toast for our land…
…Hold your glasses close to your hearts, compatriots, a toast for you…
…Hold your glasses above your heads, generations, another toast for you…

The act of saying a toast and drinking alcohol is predominantly a male domain in Armenian traditional gatherings (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). Except for being gendered, this phenomenon also reflects power differences based on one's age and status. In the exchange of toasts, generally more space and weight are granted to the hosts, and among them to the oldest male figure in the family. Thus, this spectacle (to use McClintock's term, 1993) depicted the heads of the families, hence the nation, by attributing them with masculinity through the act of drinking. In this event as well, girls were not involved in role plays. Instead, they performed a dance and recited patriotic writings by mostly male authors. In these writings, Armenia

[41] The first Armenian republic was established in 1918 and ceased from existing in 1920 by joining the Soviet Union.

appeared as an “infinite tenderness of a mother” or a “father’s advice”. Not only does such a depiction of the country reinforce a heteronormative image of a family with gendered hierarchies, but it also attributes specific features to femininity and masculinity (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). I discussed similar tendencies of constructing Armenian masculinity and femininity through the family metaphor in Chapters 1, and 2.

Figure 3.6 Arteni 2nd school’s auditorium
Photo taken during the fieldwork.

The closing scene of this event was iconic in terms of constructing masculinity and femininity along the lines of nationalist notions. A popular patriotic song recording played at the end called *Yelir y Zen* (Aux Arms). The song began with the following line:

Aux arm, Armenian soldier...

With this line, a teenage boy in camouflage walked to the center of the stage with a military march. Several other boys joined him for the second line of the song:

On foot, Armenian men...

Girls joined the boys at the center of the stage for the third line citing the following:

On foot, Armenian mothers.

This was an emotionally saturated performance because of the combination of the dynamic rhythm of the song, the enactment of the students, and the symbolism attached to it. Among the audience, I was also emotionally moved during this performance; I was reminded of my former student who was killed in the 2nd NK war. In this final scene, one can identify the same pattern of binary division of gender roles and construction of masculinity and femininity respectively through soldiering and mothering (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming).

The Day of Victory

The next event that I discuss in this section was devoted to the Day of Victory. This national holiday is a Soviet legacy and is devoted to the 'victory' in World War II. In local narratives and in the school event, WWII is referred to as the "Great Patriotic War". It is noteworthy that the concept of the "Great Patriotic War" is a product of Soviet propaganda that attempts to nationalize the war (Zhurzhenko, 2015, cited in Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). In general, this event can be viewed as a reproduction of Soviet propaganda not only because of its framing but also because of its rhetoric. Nevertheless, the emphasis of the event was on the Armenian contribution to the victory. It was held in Armenian and Russian languages and was built on images and narratives of war that tend to romanticize it (Ibid). For example, there was a scene where a boy in camouflage played a guitar and sang a song about war. In other scenes, girls with old fashion dresses performed dances to Russian songs from Soviet times. One of the songs was a well-known song called *Katyusha*. Here as well, women were depicted in the 'home front' where their only confrontation with war was through listening to the news on the radio; as if the war never travels 'home', not to mention the negligence of women's experiences of war. Women were also depicted waiting for their (male) loved ones' return from the war front. This was articulated through a Russian poem *Zhdi Menja* (Wait for Me). This poem was written during WWII by Konstantin Semyonov who participated in the war. The author urges his lover

to wait for his return. Though the poem was written by a male author and addressed to his female lover, it was enunciated by a female student at the event (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). Later I learned from an interview with one of the event organizers that this was the initiative of the student; she would have preferred the poem to be presented by a male student. In this example, we see how the common practices of role division on the stage are challenged by a student (Ibid).

Unlike the events covering local historical episodes, this event did not have many references to motherhood (with some insignificant exceptions). Instead, women in the plays and texts appeared as lovers of warriors. This 'deviation' from common tendencies was more present in the scenes, texts, and songs presented in the Russian language. Though WWII is used in local discourses to fuel nationalist notions, it is still perceived as a foreign event given its distance in time and space. In this school event, another aspect of distancing the "Great Patriotic War" from the local practices is its medium; the Russian language. The media materials and the design of the stage with old items reminded me of nostalgia for Soviet reality. Thus, the event was more reflective of the country's Soviet past than of the national struggle. Probably, this is why its imagery differed from the rest of the observed events in terms of women's representation. In that regard, it also did not reflect women's portrayal in the Soviet Armenian movie *The Song of Old Days* discussed in Chapter 3. An exception was the episode where the students gave speeches about the 'liberation of Shushi'[42] in the 1st Nagorno-Karabakh war and its loss in the 2nd war. In these speeches, built on notions of 'national struggle', mothers and wives of the 'fallen heroes' were mentioned.

Events Devoted to Prominent Figures

[42] In the national calendar of holidays, the 9th of May is marked as the Day of Victory in the "Great Patriotic War", and as the "Liberation Day of Shushi". However, after Armenia lost control over Shushi city in Nagorno-Karabakh in the 2020 war, there is less emphasis on the second meaning of this day.

One of the events celebrated the 125th birthday of an Armenian prominent writer and political activist, Yeghishe Charents.[43] This topic was delegated by the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports of Armenia, and was covered by many schools in the country. I attended the event at Myasnikyan school, Armavir Province. It was initiated by Myasnikyan school with the participation of 13 other schools from the region. Each school was given up to 5 minutes to present an act devoted to Charents. The focus of the performed pieces was on the author's writings about the fatherland, love, and mothers. While the main character in the performances was Charents, women appeared in the plays as the 'muse and inspiration' of the writer. At the opening act of the event, Charents traveled around Europe as he was delegated by the local politicians to spread the ideas of socialism. In this scene, he enjoyed the 'beauty of the European cities and women'. In his conversation with his colleague writer, he expressed his excitement by saying:

> Each poet should see these cities and the women [living here]... I am not someone who can promote socialism, I better look for muses.

Meanwhile, several girls who depicted European women passed by Charents and received his flirtatious reaction. His colleague suggested they visit museums first, then go and find a 'muse' for him. In this play, we see two intellectual and adventurous men who travel the world and educate themselves, while women are depicted as the objects of their satisfaction and joy (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming).

In general, the objectification of women was central to this event. There were several dance performances to the songs written based on Charents' poems, all were performed by girls. The most popular song accompanied by a dance was based on a well-known poem, *I Love My Sweet Armenia's…(Yes Im Anush Hayastani).* This poem is taught at schools and students are required

[43] Yeghishe Charents or Yeghishe Soghomonyan (1897-1937) is a well-known Armenian writer, born in Ottoman Empire. His writings are included in the school curricula of Armenian Literature.

to know it by heart. It is safe to say that if there is only one poem of Charents that one knows by heart, it is this poem. The first lines of the poem are as follows:

> My sweet Armenia's sun-flavored word — I love,
> Our old lyre's melody from its wretched weeping strings — I love,
> The vivacious fragrance of the blood-like flowers and the roses,
> And the graceful dance of Nayirian girls — I love.[44]
> (Charents, 1920-21)

Three schools presented dances to this song performed by girls only. The component of the 'graceful dance of Nayirian girls' was central to those acts (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). However, one of the performances differed in its approach. The dance began with the moves that could be identified as the 'graceful dance of the Nairian girls', which soon transformed into a more dynamic dance (Ibid). The slow and swingy moves were replaced with more confident and sharp ones. The music also changed. The instructor of this dance was sitting next to me during the event. From our conversation, I learned that she is not a schoolteacher, but she provides after-school dance classes in the village. In this case, we see how the common practices of stage performances at schools are reshaped by an external actor. However, school events rarely are planned in collaboration with other community actors. They mostly remain within the school walls.

Another dance was performed to the song written based on the poem, *A Girl Like a Lampshade.* The song/poem cites the following lines:

> A Girl like a lampshade – with the Virgin Mary's eyes,
> Tubercular, transparent, a body in a dream,
> A Girl – blue, agate, milky, enchanting,
> A Girl like a lampshade …[45]
> (Charents, 1916-17)

[44] Translated by an Armenian writer and translator Samvel Mkrtchyan. I made slight modifications to his translation. Source: https://samvelmkrtchyan.com.
[45] The translation source: atelim.com.

In this portrayal, girl/woman is depicted as an innocent and pure creature with 'the eyes of the Virgin Mary', a vulnerable body, and the shape of a 'lampshade'. This and other works of the writer were applied in different forms without critically analyzing their content and without locating them in the present. As was the case in the above-discussed events, here as well, girls did most of the work on the stage, by performing dances, singing, and reading poems. Yet women appeared throughout the event in a subordinate position, as the muses of the writer. I will discuss another event devoted to a prominent national figure, in the Chapter 4.

3.5 Conclusion

In my discussion of school events, I observed similar patterns of women's representation in or exclusion from the national narratives reflected in the school textbooks and national iconography illustrated in previous chapters of my thesis. I argued that while in educational events girls are assigned most of the work on stage, women are either obscured from the event narratives or are 'fixed into the images' of mothers and muses of the male actors. Consequently, the everyday practices of school events impose certain images of masculinity and femininity on students. Having the overwhelming focus on male figures and men's stories as heroes, political activists, and intellectuals, on the one hand, and attributing subordinate roles to women, on the other hand, school events reiterate the common practices of inclusion and exclusion in society. The closing speech of one of the school principals summarizes my point:

> Why did we win the war in the 90s without having phones and all the conditions that we have today? Because Armenian mothers have brought up lions. Dear mothers, and dear teachers today we have a great deal to accomplish, to bring up Armenian lions again. [...] I want to tell our beloved boys of the 12th grade, I am sure that you will become lion men, and defend the borders properly. I wish you good luck! I want the boys to come to the front. Usually in Armenian dances, if you have noticed, women are in the back line making slight moves, while men dance in a manly and militaristic way. Today boys were pushed to the back line,[46] but I believe that time will arrive when boys come to the front line. Girls will do their work dancing gently and clapping, while boys

[46] She is talking about the national dance performed by the whole group at the end of the event.

> will dance with a military spirit and will prepare themselves to defend their home, hearth, fatherland, school, church, belief, language, and all the sacred things. Thank you once again!

This speech implies that the traditional gender roles which assign the 'front line' (read: battlefront) to men and the 'back line' (read: home front) to women are challenged in the school setting. Her call for boys to reclaim the 'front line' can be read as an urge to maintain the traditional role division along the gender line. In the next chapter, I examine how schoolteachers deal with this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHERS AS GATEKEEPERS OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

4.1 Introduction

> *Your pedagogical education is a great asset for you as future brides and future mothers. People know that the "products" of the pedagogical university are best for marriage.*

The above are the words of Ms. Hovhannisyan, the Head of the Pedagogy Department in the Armenian State Pedagogical University of Khachatur Abovyan where I did my BA and MA in the field of Social Pedagogy. These words were addressed to me and my coursemates several times during her classes. This statement, by someone who oversees the preparation of educators in the country's biggest and most famous pedagogical university, reflects the general perception of a teacher's role. Starting from primary school, we learn to address our primary school teachers as second mothers. In general, a teacher's job is seen as a feminine job in Armenian society not only because of its presumed caring and nurturing character, but also due to it being a low-wage job in the local labor market. Apple articulates the interconnectedness of these two factors in his book, *Teachers and Texts*. He points out that nurturing jobs are seen as less skilled and hence less valued in the labor market, simply because they are performed by women (Apple, 1989, p. 57). Thus, teaching as a prominent tool of social and cultural reproduction of the nation is dominated by women.

The feminization of the education sector in Armenia can also be identified in statistical data. Female teachers make up 99,5 % of teachers in primary school, and 89 % in middle and high school (Armstat, 2022), while the gender ratio of male and female professionals in the higher education sector is more balanced. Moreover, the higher the position in the sphere of the

sciences, the bigger the number of male professionals. While female and male professors in higher education make respectively 54% and 46% of staff, male PhD graduates lead in this position by making up 77% (Ibid). Thus, teaching is gendered when it comes to the division of labor and positions. Though public education is implemented predominantly by female professionals, it remains exclusionary toward female figures and experiences. In this chapter, I discuss teachers' roles in promoting gendered nationalist agendas through public education. I examine how teachers navigate their positions as passive transmitters of standardized education content on the one hand, and as active agents who shape everyday experiences at schools on the other. First, I provide a brief overview of post-Soviet processes that influenced the public education sector. Then, I reflect on 7 semi-structured interviews with the teachers who organized events that I observed during my research. In my analysis of these interviews, I argue that teachers' personal beliefs and values shape their experiences as educators.

As I illustrated in the Introduction, in post-Soviet Armenia public education underwent several reforms. These reforms implied teacher training, as well as revision of the educational legislation, curriculum, and textbooks (Terzian, 2010, p. 46). However, they did not meet teachers' needs for professional adjustment to the new social reality. Teachers were introduced to the new methods of teaching, but they were not given reasons as to why the Soviet methods - which were heavily based on memorization of the 'ready' knowledge - were no longer relevant (Khachatryan et al, 2007). Thus, the reforms of teacher-centered education, a post-Soviet legacy, were not teacher-centered enough, therefore were not reflected in teaching practices sufficiently. In addition, Silova observes that the national policies on gender equality, which include the component of education, are not applied to education content properly (Silova, 2015). Her gender analysis of Armenian education states that "the principles of gender equality have not been translated into education standards, curricula, textbooks in all subjects and all levels of the education system" (Ibid, p. 3).

According to education legislation, whilst teachers are responsible for covering the official standardized curriculum, they are still given some freedom in terms of teaching methods and approaches. However, Palandjian observes that they barely use this freedom in their teaching practices with some exceptions (Palandjian, 2022, p. 66). Yet teachers' personal experiences, values, and approaches are central to shaping everyday classroom experiences. Even though the list of topics is delegated by the state institutions, teachers' views on these topics influence teaching and learning practices. In my analysis of teachers' roles in promoting gendered nationalist discourses through school events, my point of departure is Nias's point that teachers invest their personal values and beliefs in their teaching practices (Nias, 1989, 1993, 1996, cited in Zembylas, 2003, p. 216). According to Nias, many teachers reflect their personal identity in their work by crossing the boundaries between their personal and professional lives (Ibid). In addition, Zembylas argues that not only teaching practices are shaped by the teacher's identity, but also the latter is influenced by the cultural and political constructs of teachers' selves (Zembylas, 2003, p. 227). I discuss how teachers negotiate between their personal identities and socially constructed identities as teachers in my analysis of the interviews.

Palandjian's research on rethinking borders and identities in Armenian education introduces stories of teachers in border villages who challenge the orthodox history narratives included in textbooks (Palandjian, 2022). These stories evolve around the topic of constructing the image of the enemy in the face of Azeris and Turks. Some of these teachers and their families used to live with Azeris and had personal connections until the war broke out between the two post-Soviet states. Therefore, teachers' stories, mostly based on their personal experiences, often do not align with the mainstream understandings of the enemy. Instead, they illustrate practices of co-living with Azeris as 'ordinary people'. The experience of living in border villages of Armenia equipped them with various perspectives on war and peace and the borders (Palandjian, 2022). These experiences, in turn, shaped their teaching practices differently from

those which mainly rely on the narratives provided by the textbooks. Unlike these examples illustrated in Palandjian's account, the villages where I conducted my research, due to their location, in the Ararat valley did not have a shared past with Azeris. Instead, these villages were mostly populated by the successors of the genocide survivors who escaped to Armenia from the Ottoman Empire at the beginning of the 20th century. Thus, the image of Turks is constructed through the stories of survival instead of the narratives of co-living. Here, I am referring to the events commemorating the Armenian Genocide.

In this section, however, my focus is on the teachers' wider experiences reflected in educational practices, not the ones related to the image of the enemy. In my analysis of the interviews, I explain how teachers' personal experiences and beliefs are translated into their pedagogical practices. Originally, these interviews were designed to provide more insights into the event-organizing processes. As I conducted the interviews, however, my conversations with teachers highlighted another aspect that I did not take into consideration when designing my research. Therefore, by letting my fieldwork experiences shape my writing, I am focusing on this topic to acknowledge teachers' agency in maintaining gendered nationalist narratives in public education.

4.2 Teaching is Personal

During the interviews with teachers, we discussed the events organized at schools in general and focused more on the events that I attended for my research. I asked about the procedure for choosing topics and hosting events at schools. There does not exist a fixed list of topics to be covered in school public events. However, in the schools where I conducted my research, there was a tradition of celebrating or commemorating certain days. In Chapter 3, I provided the most common categories of the events based on teachers' responses. Several teachers mentioned that the most popular topics for the events in their schools are focused on patriotism. Some schools

go beyond these common practices of public events and introduce such topics as celebrating Autumn, learning about ethics, or healthy lifestyle. Occasionally, the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (ESCS Ministry) or the regional governments delegate schools to implement events on certain topics.[47] More commonly, however, the school principals or vice principals suggest the topics and ensure that most teachers are involved in the process of planning public activities at schools.[48] Sometimes, public events are the independent initiatives of the teachers, but rarely of the students. All the interviewed teachers mentioned that their school has at least one public event implemented each month during the academic year. Though they are given some freedom in terms of choosing the topics, they rarely go beyond the common practices.

The students, being the main actors who perform in those events, generally do not have a say in the choice of topics. Moreover, according to teachers' accounts, they barely contribute to the content of the events. All the interviewed teachers mentioned that the students might have raised some small suggestions regarding the performed pieces, but the overall script was designed by the teachers, sometimes in consultancy with their colleagues. Thus, in this picture, the students are put in the position of passive receivers and transmitters of knowledge. This approach reflects the teacher-centered approach typical to the pedagogy of the Soviet period. It was introduced by the Stalin regime in 1934 and was aimed at establishing centralized education through a standardized curriculum and traditional teaching methodology. It was mainly based on memorization and reproduction of 'ready knowledge' by the students (Terzian, 2010, p. 38). Although Stalin's successors tried to replace this approach with more democratic practices, the Armenian education system has never been flexible and responsive to the changing reality

[47] For example, in 2022 during my research the ESCS Ministry encouraged state public schools to deliver public events devoted to the Armenian prominent writer Yeghishe Charents on his 125th birthday.
[48] Educational events are more popular in primary school. In middle and high school, the lead teachers of each class are responsible for performing relevant events within the above-mentioned categories. It is more common though among the teachers of humanities.

(Khachatryan et al., 2007, p. 21). Moreover, changes normally reach the rural areas slowly. Given the fact that the school staff turnover is very low in Armenia, many working teachers either gained their pedagogical qualification during the Soviet period or at least studied at Soviet public schools.[49] Further, pedagogical education is not undergoing any rapid changes (Khachatryan et al., 2007, p. 54). Traditional teacher-centered educational approaches are often maintained and reproduced by teachers through classroom practices and public activities, regardless of education reforms reflected in policy documents and curricula. Anahit Shahbazyan, the Aragatsavan teacher of Armenian language and literature, articulated this point:

> Before there was more respect toward older generations, and their word found more acceptance among youngsters, whereas now children have more rights, and they utilize these rights more frequently and perceive these rights not correctly.

In this quote, the notion of 'respect toward the older generations' as opposed to 'children's rights' can be read as a reference to an age-based hierarchy practiced in traditional pedagogy.

There are also critical views toward traditional approaches among teachers. For instance, Tsovinar Davtyan, the Armenian language and literature teacher at the Lernagog school, admitted that many students are not interested in education, especially in higher grades because the old teaching methods and approaches are ineffective for the new generation. My conversation with Tsovinar was very insightful in terms of understanding the major issues in current public education. 24 years of experience in teaching allowed Tsovinar to reflect on the challenges from a teacher's perspective. She touched upon systemic issues such as the low wages in education and the resulting teachers' lack of motivation, which are reflected in students' interest and engagement in educational practices. In particular, Tsovinar observed that boys in late middle and high school get alienated from school, not only in terms of their

[49] In the 2012-13 academic year, 40% of schoolteachers in Armenia were above 50 (Khachatryan et al, 2013).

academic performance but also of their participation in school social activities, such as public events:

> Yes, this happens mainly with boys, more rarely among girls. Probably girls feel more responsible to show better performance at school because it is a shame for girls to not study well at school, while for boys it is vice versa, studying is a shame.

Therefore, from teenage years, boys start avoiding the classroom and after-school activities. Tsovinar explained this with reference to the influence of the outer world where successful businessmen or politicians are known for their asocial behavior and background (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). Because of these examples, she maintained, students tend to not believe in education and social practices offered by schools.

Almost all teachers spoke about the challenges of involving male students in school activities. Furthermore, they noted that this tendency is informed not only by the images of various male figures in politics and society, but also by the expectations that senior male students impose on the younger ones regarding acceptable forms of behavior. According to Tsovinar, the acceptable form of behavior promoted by the older generation of male students does not encourage academic success or input in social activities. Anahit Shabazyan from the Aragatsavan school noted that:

> We live in a reality where we see people gaining higher positions or creating material goods without succeeding in education and through dubious means... Having these cases in front of them, students very often say: "Why do we need to study if other people manage to succeed without that? We also can do so". Moreover, younger students more frequently copy the behavior of those in higher grades who do not show interest in education.

In this analogy, it is apparent that in a school setting certain expectations evolve regarding masculine forms of behavior which implicate high social and material status in relation to manhood yet underestimating the role of education and social contribution. Whereas female students are expected to show higher performance in education and more input in social life at

school. Satenik Hayrapetyan, the mathematics teacher at Dalarik school, also discussed this tendency:

> When I look at the picture of our school, most of the students with high academic performance are girls. And I assume that in the near future, we will only have girls [meaning women] in our parliament or the ministries... I do not know what the boys are going to do then.

The low level of interest among boys in school public events makes teachers adjust the content being delivered in a way to encourage boys' participation or simply focus on male students. Several teachers shared examples in this regard. Anahit Shahbazyan from the Aragatsavan school, in order to promote boys' participation in the event devoted to the Armenian Genocide, included role plays with male characters only. This way, she made sure that boys were involved through the performances. While such a distribution of roles somehow balanced the participation of male and female students in the event, to use her words, it also excluded girls, hence women's stories from the role plays (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming):

> Though girls wanted it [to have parts in the role plays], they were saying that they could put on a mustache or a hat to play a man's role... but since the performance was about the Armenian writers or the fedayee movement, I preferred the boys. Moreover, boys generally avoided [participating in the event], while girls were more active and already had many speeches, songs, and dances.

Choosing boys for role plays over girls and men's stories and narratives over those by women, is presented as a 'natural' decision:

> I could have given roles to girls. For example, I could have added the fedayee Sose Mayrik,[50] the wife of Aghbyur Serob,[51] in the role play, but I tried to include more boys.

Thus, on the one hand, we can see that the reproduction of man-centered education content and, on the other, the teacher's personal beliefs and preferences turn the classroom and after-school activities into a space for promoting men's stories as national subjects.

[50] See more about Sose Mayrik or Sose Vardanyan in Chapter 3.
[51] Aghbyur Serob or Serob Vardanian was an Armenian military commander in the late 19th century (1864 – 1899). Together with his spouse Sose Vardanian, he was involved in the national liberation movement against the Ottoman Empire.

Teachers' personal views are also reflected in the events when it comes to gender stereotypes. This was apparent at the event in Dalarik school devoted to an Armenian priest and musicologist Komitas.[52] This event was delivered by the students of the 5th grade and was organized by their lead teacher, Satenik Hayrapetyan. In terms of the role division between the students, it seemed comparatively gender-neutral (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). Though Satenik recalled that working with boys in the event preparation took more time and effort than with girls, boys showed more willingness to participate compared to those in higher grades. Probably at earlier ages, boys do not face as much pressure with regard to performing proper masculinity and therefore are freer to take part in school activities (Ibid). Despite male and female students participating equally in the event, role division on the stage often reflected gender biases. In one instance, students presented a performance called *Busabarev* (Salut to Nature). In the performance, the characters represented different parts of a tree: the root, the trunk, the leaf, and the flower. Boys were given the roles of the root and the trunk of the tree, while girls represented the leaves and the flower (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). Later, in the interview, Satenik brought up this performance when I asked about the role division between the students:

> *Lilit* – When dividing the roles did you consider some roles to be more appropriate for boys, and others for girls?
> *Satenik* – Yes, for example, in Busabarev performance, I was thinking that the root of the tree must be a boy, I do not know why [laughing]… That is how I distributed the roles; I gave to the boys the [roles of] root and the trunk... And I saw the flower to be a girl, and the leaf too.
> […]
> *Lilit* – Why did you decide so?
> *Satenik* – Yeah... Probably that was because of my upbringing, I was brought up learning that at home [meaning in the family] the root should be the man. This was the case in our home, my father was our everything, the one who took care of us... Just as is the case in the Armenian family... Whereas the flower and the leaf are tender beings [laughing]… like girls.

[52] Komitas or Soghomon Soghomonyan (1869-1935) is known for collecting and arranging old Armenian folk songs. He is considered the founder of the Armenian national school of music.

Satenik remembered another case of dividing the acts of the event based on students' gender. She gave the song of *Harvest* to a girl, assuming that it must be performed by coquetry. Harvesting in this context can be seen as a metaphor for biological reproduction that requires 'the right mode of coquetry'; that is why it is represented as a 'naturally' feminine act in the performance. However, Satenik had a different view on a military song called *Zar Znga*. She assigned this song to the whole group on purpose, including boys and girls, implying that girls can be equal to boys in military affairs (Hakobyan, 2023, forthcoming). This act can be interpreted as the result of Satenik's critical approach to common practices. During the interview, she was open to reflecting on her experience and analyzing her choices. Her approach could also be read as a response to the recent public discourses on women's involvement in military affairs as a product of the militarization processes in the country.[53] This example articulates how women are expected to negotiate between traditional gender roles which impose on them a certain kind of femininity, and the new position of the 'proper national subject' informed by the militarization processes.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the scene where several boys said toasts with wine at the Arteni 2nd school's event devoted to the establishment of the 1st Armenian Republic. Marine Hovsepyan, the social pedagogue of the school and the organizer of that event, explained this scene:

> Well, in our reality those who say toasts are the boys, the men, the fathers. Today boys take the oath.[54] The rest was about the fatherland in general, so I did not make much division [between boys and girls].

While the toasts or the oaths were assigned to the boys, girls were again given the parts which implied the recreation of the nation. There is a popular Armenian poem called *We Are Few*, but *We Are Called Armenians* by Paruyr Sevak.[55] Marine included this poem in the event and

[53] Cabinet approves new voluntary military service option for women (armenpress.am, 2023).
[54] Referring to the Oath of Enlistment in the military.
[55] Paruyr Sevak or Paruyr Ghazaryan was a well-known Armenian writer (1924-1971).

assigned it to a female student since she associated it with motherhood. I explain this association suggested by Marine with the final lines of the poem:

> See we do not put ourselves above anyone,
> But we know ourselves, we are called Armenians
> And why should we not feel pride in that
> We are, we shall be, and become many.
> (Sevak, 1961)

Especially the last line of the poem often is utilized in public discourses to articulate the urge for the reproduction of the Armenian nation. It may have been this implied meaning that made the teacher associate it with motherhood.

In some cases, teachers explained the division of the speeches with their tone. For example, Narine Nikolyan from the Arteni 1st school mentioned that when dividing the acts between the students they assigned the 'calmer' parts to the girls, and more 'vocal' parts to the boys. Other teachers also shared similar examples. Thus, roles assigned to the girls reflected teachers' understanding of womanhood and femininity to a considerable extent. Not only did they consciously or subconsciously impose on female students the acts associated with motherhood, but they also reflected their views on femininity in the division of speeches.

The role division on the stage also reflected another hierarchy between the students based on their academic success and performing skills. Several teachers mentioned that they chose the event participants and distributed the acts between them based on their overall performance at school and their learning capacities. Therefore, the participants with higher academic achievement are generally given more space on the stage. Since the format of most events was based on the memorization of texts, singing, dancing, and performing skills, there was not much room left for the realization of diverse interests and talents. Even when some teachers tried overcoming these common practices by focusing on the involvement of 'not popular' students, they were still expected to perform the same tasks as the high-performing students. Thus, the

format of the events is non-inclusive not only in terms of gender but also in terms of students' diverse capacities and interests.

Some teachers mentioned that they tried to promote gender equality in the classroom and after-school settings. For example, Shushan Saharyan from the Arteni 1st school explained that as the teacher of Social Science, she gives high importance to the practices which promote gender equality at school. Particularly, she tries to follow the principle of equality in every activity, including public events. When I asked her to share some examples of how she reached that goal, Shushan brought up the event devoted to the Day of the Army, where boys and girls wore military uniforms. Yet, this event was gendered in terms of the role divisions on the stage, which I discussed in more detail in Chapter 2. Even when the teachers were aware of the issue of gender equality in education, the practices of fostering respective values were limited to the demonstrative acts of equality performed in the military domain, such as wearing military uniforms or singing military songs.

The interviews revealed another aspect of teachers' experiences that shape their education practices. All teachers acknowledged the importance of their work in shaping society as transmitters of national identity and values. This is a common perception of the teacher's role in Armenian society. For example, Zabel Yesayan[56] argues that educators are the ones who shape the future of young people (Simonyan, 2012, p. 185). With this assumption assigned to teachers comes a great sense of responsibility and certain expectations regarding teachers' personal and professional behavior. As Tsovinar from Lernagog put it, since teachers are seen as role models for the younger generation, their personal life and behavior are under scrutiny, especially in small communities where everyone knows each other. Not only are they expected to perform well as professionals, but also, they are required to act as proper women and wives.

[56] Zabel Yesayan, also known as Sipil, was an Armenian writer and prominent figure in academia and politics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Otherwise, they can easily be disrespected among students and the larger community. Tsovinar highlighted that especially young female teachers might be targeted and criticized by high school male students in case of not performing according to general expectations:

> Our 17-18 years old boys [meaning the school students] can already be considered as men. Especially if a young [female] teacher[57] runs a different life outside of school and brings a different value to the school, it is an issue.

Though it was not explicitly spelled out by Tsovinar, it was implied that this anxiety regarding the teacher's behavior is particularly about her sexual behavior. While traditionally teachers are given total authority in the classroom given their age and position, the hierarchy shifts when it comes to gender performance.

Marine from the Arteni 2nd school also touched upon this question. According to her, teaching at school is considered to be an appropriate profession for women for two reasons. First, because of the low wages, it is more likely that women take this position. Men, even after gaining pedagogical education, very often end up seeking jobs in better-paid spheres.[58] Secondly, Marine thinks that because of jealousy, many Armenian men prefer schoolwork for their wives since the staff there is mostly female.

> Cause there are still people with such a mindset, for example, in our home [meaning family] … I do not know, Armenian men are jealous, right? Why do they prefer school, because the majority of the staff is women, and because you work with children. At least, this is the case in our home [laughing].

These accounts by the teachers suggest that on the, one hand, the public education sphere is undergoing feminization processes, and on the other hand, 'teachering' becomes a form of controlling women's lives and choices. In this analogy, there is not much space left for teachers to challenge the traditional views on gender relations even when they are willing to do so.

[57] In the Armenian language, some professions have gender. The profession of teacher has two genders. The interviewee referred to female teachers.
[58] Women are 90 % of teachers at schools: why men are few, Ani Avagyan, (ampop.am, 2021).

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the role of teachers' personal views and experiences in their teaching practices by focusing on their perspectives about gender roles and representation in the context of national narratives. First, I provided a brief overview of the post-Soviet transitions in public education. I argued that while at the policy level, some reforms were applied, they were not reflected in education practices sufficiently. Thus, education being teacher-centered to a considerable extent does not promote democracy through classroom experiences. The hierarchies in education are reflected in the ways of organizing and conducting public events. Second, I unpacked the role of teachers' personal beliefs and experiences in educational practices. I focused on their understanding of gender roles and representation. I argued that teachers' gender biases often lead to the exclusion of women's stories from school public events by excluding girls from role plays. Those biases also depict and promote a certain kind of femininity and masculinity through public events. Finally, I reflected on teaching as a way of overseeing women's behavior. I argued that 'teachering', considered to be focal for the national thrive, is regarded to women for its nurturing character. Hence, female teachers', seen as role models for future generations, are under scrutiny by the community.

CONCLUSION

The socio-political and geopolitical developments in post-Soviet Armenia created an environment for the rise of gendered nationalist notions and agendas that were reflected in social, political, cultural, and educational domains. In this thesis, I revealed how gendered nationalist discourses, prevalent in political propaganda, social practices, and mass culture, are reiterated in contemporary Armenian educational content and school practices in rural areas. I conceptualized national and gender identity construction processes by building my analysis on feminist literature that examines the intersection of gender, nationalism, and militarism. By providing an overview of nation-state building processes, the omnipresent war in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, and the gendered transitions in the post-Soviet period, I laid out the environment and the context where my research is located.

My analysis of the collected data is divided into 3 analytical chapters. The first chapter examined the intersection of gender, nationalism, and militarism in political and education domains. It argued that the militarization policies predominantly target middle- and working-class male abled bodies by imposing on them the role of defending the 'fatherland' even at the cost of their own lives. Subsequently, in the discussion of state propaganda, I revealed the discursive mechanisms in the political domain which construct Armenian masculinity through soldiering and femininity – through mothering. I argued that gendered nationalist and militarist discourses widely promoted in state politics manifest to a significant extent within Armenian educational practices. More specifically, the notion of self-sacrifice for the 'fatherland', deemed as a personal responsibility of the citizens, was central in the narratives of a school event devoted to the Day of the Army. However, as in school narratives, as well as in political rhetoric, it was highly gendered. For men, it implied dying for the nation, while women were expected to give birth to future soldiers and sacrifice them for the nation. Consequently, male national

identity becomes intertwined with notions of strength, while female identity is portrayed as passive and vulnerable. Thus, I argued that militarist nationalist discourses prevalent in Armenian state politics and educational space provide a fertile ground for perpetuating male dominance by sacrificing lives deemed less valuable, while also promoting female subordination through their relegation to the role of national reproducers by occupying their bodies.

The second chapter focused on the construction of the "Armenian woman" through nationalist discourses in socio-political, cultural, and educational domains. I discussed nationalist and militarist processes that shaped women's lived experiences and representation in post-Soviet and post-war Armenian mass culture and education. I argued that nationalist and militarist practices on the one hand excluded women from politics in independent Armenia, and on the other hand, disvalued gender equality agendas coming from women's organizations in the civil society sector. Further, I illustrated how the "Armenian woman" is represented in the cultural domain by drawing upon the example of the Mother Armenia statue. I argued that while the exclusionist nationalist practices left women out of politics, the 'Armenian women' was constructed through the image of motherhood. Finally, I demonstrated how a similar approach was applied to education content and practices by discussing several school events devoted to days of national importance. I observed that although girls are assigned most of the work on the stage, women's stories are missing from the narratives of school public events. Instead, they are depicted as a collective character representing mothers and, in some instances, muses of male authors, and lovers/wives of soldiers. I argued that by reiterating the dominant perceptions about the "Armenian woman", education practices impose on students a patriarchal understanding of women's role and maintain gender hierarchies in society.

In the last chapter, I discussed teachers' role in shaping education practices. This chapter, built on interviews with teachers who organized the events, argued that teaching is personal. While

education policies, standards, and content are designed by political power, teaching practices are highly informed by the teachers' personal views and beliefs. The chapter suggested that despite several reforms in post-Soviet Armenian education, school practices keep reproducing traditional teaching approaches by maintaining age and gender hierarchies in the classroom and beyond. Teachers' accounts reiterated this observation. Though women teachers make up the majority of the education system, the education space predominantly serves men's stories. The interviews revealed that while teachers are given some freedom in terms of the topics and the format of school public events, these mostly remain within the commonly accepted practices. Consequently, school public events reproduce patriarchal gender norms by promoting gendered nationalist and militarist narratives. This chapter also revealed the feminization of public education. Since women dominate in public education as teachers, seen as primary role models and nurturers of the future generations (read: of the nation), their behavior and personal lives are subject to scrutiny in rural communities. Therefore, 'teachering' becomes a tool for controlling women teachers' lives in rural communities. Thus, while the teachers' personal views and beliefs shape education practices considerably, 'teachering' in turn defines teachers' personal lives and behavior.

Though the analysis of collected data illustrated the common patterns of constructing national and gender identities through school public events, it does not suggest that the practices at the involved rural schools do not differ. On the contrary, some differences could be identified depending on the topics of the events and the organizers' approaches to them. For instance, the events which were heavily based on the narratives of 'national struggle' depicted woman characters predominantly as 'mothers of the nation'; whereas in the events honoring prominent figures in Armenian literature and history, women were represented as muses or symbols of beauty. In addition, the event covering the "Great Patriotic War" portrayed war in a more romanticized way which I explain given its distance in time and space, as well as its media

representation by the Soviet propaganda. Of course, there were also differences in style and the content of the events. Nevertheless, the overarching theme in these events was the narratives constructing gender and national identities which shared more similarities than differences.

This research contributes to the body of literature examining post-Soviet Armenian education in general and the intersection of gender and nationalism in education in particular. While the existing literature provides an extensive analysis of the education content and policies through the lens of gender and nationalism, it often overlooks school everyday practices. This thesis, based on an analysis of school public events and interviews with teachers in rural Armenia, fills this gap in local scholarship. It also explores the role of nationalist public education in maintaining gender hierarchies by perpetuating patriarchal norms in society. The study draws attention to the teachers' roles in shaping education practices, and the role of the education domain in women teachers' lives. In doing so, it also addresses women's lived experiences in rural areas, which is another underrepresented aspect in local feminist studies.

The study also provides several implications beyond local scholarship. It conceptualizes institutional education as a prominent domain for social reality construction. In doing so, the analysis suggests that centralized public education highly contributes to the continuity of patriarchal gender norms in society by promoting nationalist and militarist content and practices. In addition, the research reveals the role of formal education in maintaining the heteronormative binary division of gender identities in post-Soviet space. This thesis argued that the rigid and teacher-centered education system, which is a Soviet legacy, is designed to reproduce power relations, hence the oppressive political system. In this context, I focused on systemic oppression based on gender and class. The research also provides a valuable account of the militarization processes in education with a focus on its gendered aspect. It argued that militarist content and practices in education normalize the state of war and systemic violence in the eyes of the younger generation. It also conceptualized nationalist and militarist discourses

as a device for reproducing gender hierarchies. It unpacks the reductionist character of these discourses which attempt to construct a homogeneous national identity by leaving in the margins diverse gender and sexual identities. While this research does not attempt to generalize the post-Soviet practices, it locates the pinpointed questions in a larger geopolitical context to highlight the interconnectedness of the local socio-political landscape and global politics.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Consent Form for the School Principals (in English and in Armenian)

Overview of the Research

Lilit Hakobyan (hereafter "the researcher") will conduct research in rural Armenian schools to analyze the ways in which national holidays and memorial days are celebrated in a public educational setting. More specifically, the research focuses on the representation of male and female roles in the context of days of national importance. For this purpose, the researcher will attend and observe events in rural schools (in Armavir and Aragatsotn regions) devoted to the Genocide Remembrance Day (April 24), the Day of Victory (May 9) and the first Armenian Republic Day (May 28). The researcher will use the research materials for the thesis project which she is completing as part of her MA degree at the Central European University (hereafter CEU) in Vienna, Austria.

By signing the Statement of Consent, you agree to allow the researcher to utilize the observation materials for her thesis project at the CEU and any resulting publications. After submission, the thesis will be available on the CEU library's online database with open access to everyone on the internet.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I confirm that by giving permission for participant observation, I authorize the use of research materials by the researcher for purposes associated with research within the framework of her MA thesis project conducted at the CEU on the following terms:

1. The researcher is allowed to attend up to 2 (two) events devoted to the above-mentioned national holidays / Remembrance Day taking place at _____ school.
   - ❑ **Agree**
2. The event participants will be informed in advance about the observation conducted by the researcher.
   - ❑ **Agree**
3. The research materials will be in the following formats:

❑ Video recording

- ❑ Audio recording
- ❑ Field notes in Armenian, which partly will be translated into English
- ❑ Photographs, published in social media by the school or event participants with public availability.

4. The researcher is allowed to talk to event organizers at the school about the content of the events.
    - ❑ **Agree**
5. The observation materials (audio/video/photo materials and field notes) can be used for academic and research purposes.
    - ❑ **Agree**
6. The research can reveal the name and the location of the school.
    - ❑ **Agree**
7. The initial language of the academic work will be English. The researcher will provide the school with a brief report of the research findings in Armenian.
    - ❑ **Agree**
8. The researcher can use the research materials in her further academic work.
    - ❑ **Agree**
9. This consent can be withdrawn up to the point of data processing.
    - ❑ **Agree**

Other conditions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Researcher: Lilit Hakobyan
hakobyan_lilit@student.ceu.edu

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Position: _____

Signature: _____

Հետազոտության նկարագիրը

Լիլիթ Հակոբյանն (այսուհետ՝ հետազոտողը) իրականացնում է հետազոտություն Հայաստանի գյուղական համայնքների դպրոցներում՝ նպատակ ունենալով ուսումնասիրել, թե ինչպես են նշվում ազգային տոներն ու հիշատակի օրերը հանրակրթական միջավայրում: Հետազոտությունը մասնավորապես կենտրոնանում է կանանց և տղամարդկանց դերերի ներկայացմանը ազգային նշանակության օրերի ենթատեքստում: Այս նպատակով հետազոտողը դիտարկելու է Հայոց Ցեղասպանությանը (ապրիլի 24), Շուշիի ազատագրման օրվան (մայիսի 9) և ՀՀ առաջին հանրապետության օրվան (մայիսի 28) նվիրված հանրային միջոցառումները, որոնք իրականացվում են մարզային դպրոցներում (Արմավիրի և Արագածոտնի մարզերում): Հետազոտության արդյունքները կօգտագործվեն հետազոտողի մագիստրոսական թեզում, որը նա գրում է Կենտրոնական Եվրոպական համալսարանում (ԿԵՀ)՝ Վիեննայում, Ավստրիայում:

Այս համաձայնագիրը ստորագրելով՝ դուք թույլ եք տալիս հետազոտողին օգտագործել իր դիտումների արդյունքները ԿԵՀ-ում իրականացվող իր թեզի նախագծում, ինչպես նաև հետագա հրապարակումներում: Հրապարակումից հետո հետազոտողի թեզը կտեղադրվի ԿԵՀ-ի գրադարանի առցանց համակարգում՝ բաց հասանելիությամբ համացանցում:

Համաձայնագիր

Ես հաստատում եմ, որ ուսումնասիրության թույլտվություն տալով՝ ես լիազորում եմ հետազոտողին կիրառել հետազոտության արդյունքներն ԿԵՀ-ում հրապարակվելիք մագիստրոսական թեզի շրջանակում՝ հետևյալ պայմաններով.

1. Հետազոտողը կարող է ներկա գտնվել մինչև 2 (երկու) միջոցառման՝ նվիրված վերոնշյալ ազգային նշանակության օրերին, Շենիկի միջնակարգ դպրոցում:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
2. Միջոցառման մասնակիցները նախապես կտեղեկացվեն իրականացվող հետազոտության մասին:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
3. Հետազոտության նյութերը կարող են լինել հետևյալ ձևաչափերով.

- ❑ Տեսագրություն
- ❑ Ձայնագրություն

- ❑ Նոթեր հայերենով, որոնք մասամբ կթարգմանվեն անգլերեն
- ❑ Լուսանկարներ, որոնք արդեն հրապարակվել են սոցիալական մեդիայում դպրոցի կամ միջոցառման մասնակիցների կողմից՝ հանրային հասանելիությամբ:

4. Հետազոտողը կարող է խոսել միջոցառման բովանդակության մասին դրա կազմակերպիչների հետ:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
5. Հետազոտության նյութերը (տեսա-, ձայնա- գրությունները, լուսանկարները և նոթերը) կարող են օգտագործվել ակադեմիական նպատակներով:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
6. Դպրոցի անունը և վայրը կարող են հրապարակվել հետազոտությունում:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
7. Ակադեմիական աշխատանքի բնագրի լեզուն անգլերենն է: Հետազոտողը դպրոցին կտրամադրի հետազոտության արդյունքների վերաբերյալ հակիրճ հաշվետվություն հայերենով:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
8. Հետազոտողը հետազոտության նյութերը կարող է օգտագործել իր հետագա ակադեմիական աշխատանքում:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
9. Այս համաձայնագիրը կարող է չեղարկվել մինչև հետազոտության տվյալների վերլուծության մեկնարկը:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**

Այլ պայմաններ

_____

_____

_____

_____

Հետազոտող՝ Լիլիթ Հակոբյան
hakobyan_lilit@student.ceu.edu

Ամսաթիվ՝ _____

Անուն, ազգանուն՝_____

Պաշտոն՝ _____

Ստորագրություն՝_____

Appendix 2:

Consent Form for the Interviewees (in English and in Armenian)

Overview of the Research

Lilit Hakobyan (hereafter "the researcher") will conduct research in rural Armenian schools to analyze the ways in which national holidays and memorial days are celebrated in a public educational setting. More specifically, the research focuses on the representation of male and female roles in the context of days of national importance. For this purpose, the researcher will attend and observe events in rural schools (in Armavir and Aragatsotn regions) devoted to the Genocide Remembrance Day (April 24), the Day of Victory (May 9), the first Armenian Republic Day (May 28) or any other events focusing on topics of national importance. She will also conduct interviews with the organizers of the observed events. The researcher will use the research materials for the thesis project which she is completing as part of her MA degree at the Central European University (hereafter CEU) in Vienna, Austria.

By signing the Statement of Consent, you agree to allow the researcher to utilize the interview materials for her thesis project at the CEU and any resulting publications. After submission, the thesis will be available on the CEU library's online database with open access to everyone on the internet.

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

I confirm that by participating in the interview, I authorize the use of interview materials by the researcher for purposes associated with research within the framework of her MA thesis project conducted at the CEU on the following terms:

1. The interview materials will be in the following formats:
   - ❑ Audio recording
   - ❑ Field notes
   - ❑ Interview transcript in Armenian which will be translated into English
2. The interview materials (audio recording, field notes and the transcript) can be used for academic and research purposes.
   - ❑ **Agree**
3. The interview products can contain information pertaining to my identity.
   - ❑ **Agree**

4. The interview will be conducted in Armenian, but the language of the academic work is English.
    - ❑ **Agree**
5. This consent can be withdrawn up to the point of data processing.
    - ❑ **Agree**

Other conditions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Researcher: Lilit Hakobyan
hakobyan_lilit@student.ceu.edu

Date: _____

Full Name: _____

Signature: _____

Հետազոտության նկարագիրը

Լիլիթ Հակոբյանն (այսուհետ՝ հետազոտողը) իրականացնում է հետազոտություն Հայաստանի գյուղական համայնքների դպրոցներում՝ նպատակ ունենալով ուսումնասիրել, թե ինչպես են նշվում ազգային տոներն ու հիշատակի օրերը հանրակրթական միջավայրում: Հետազոտությունը մասնավորապես կենտրոնանում է կանանց և տղամարդկանց դերերի ներկայացմանը ազգային նշանակության օրերի ենթատեքստում: Այս նպատակով հետազոտողը դիտարկելու է Հայոց Ցեղասպանությանը (ապրիլի 24), Շուշիի ազատագրման օրվան (մայիսի 9), ՀՀ առաջին հանրապետության օրվան (մայիսի 28), կամ ազգային նշանակության այլ թեմայի նվիրված հանրային միջոցառումները, որոնք իրականացվում են մարզային դպրոցներում (Արմավիրի և Արագածոտնի մարզերում): Նաև նախատեսվում են հարցազրույցներ դիտարկված միջոցառումների կազմակերպիչների հետ: Հետազոտության արդյունքները կօգտագործվեն հետազոտողի մագիստրոսական թեզում, որը նա գրում է Կենտրոնական Եվրոպական համալսարանում (ԿԵՀ)՝ Վիեննայում, Ավստրիայում:

Այս համաձայնագիրը ստորագրելով՝ դուք թույլ եք տալիս հետազոտողին օգտագործել հարցազրույցի արդյունքները ԿԵՀ-ում իրականացվող իր թեզի նախագծում, ինչպես նաև հետագա հրապարակումներում: Հրապարակումից հետո հետազոտողի թեզը կտեղադրվի ԿԵՀ-ի գրադարանի առցանց համակարգում՝ բաց հասանելիությամբ համացանցում:

Համաձայնագիր

Ես հաստատում եմ, որ մասնակցելով հարցազրույցին՝ ես լիազորում եմ հետազոտողին կիրառել հետազոտության արդյունքները ԿԵՀ-ում հրապարակվելիք մագիստրոսական թեզի շրջանակում՝ հետևյալ պայմաններով.

1. Հետազոտության նյութերը կարող են լինել հետևյալ ձևաչափերով.
   - ❑ Տեսա-, ձայնագրություն
   - ❑ Հարցազրույցի նոթեր
   - ❑ Հարցազրույցի սղագրություն հայերենով, որը կթարգմանվի անգլերեն
2. Հետազոտության նյութերը (տեսա-, ձայնա- գրությունները, և նոթերը) կարող են օգտագործվել ակադեմիական նպատակներով:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**

3. Հետազոտության նյութերը կարող են բացահայտել իմ ինքնությունը:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
4. Հարցազրույցը կանցկացվի հայերենով, սակայն ակադեմիական աշխատանքի բնագրի լեզուն անգլերենն է:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**
5. Այս համաձայնագիրը կարող է չեղարկվել մինչև հետազոտության տվյալների վերլուծության մեկնարկը:
   - ❑ **Համաձայն եմ**

Այլ պայմաններ

_____
_____
_____
_____

Հետազոտող՝ Լիլիթ Հակոբյան
hakobyan_lilit@student.ceu.edu

Ամսաթիվ՝ _____

Անուն, ազգանուն՝_____

Ստորագրություն՝_____

Appendix 3:

Interview Guide

Interview with the organizers of the school events

Interviewer: Lilit Hakobyan

Interviewee: Event organizers in Aragatsavan, Arteni, Shenik, Myasnikyan and Dalarik schools.

The Program: The interviews will be conducted for my thesis project which aims to analyze how men and women are represented at events taking place in public schools in rural Armenia. For this purpose, I am conducting participant observation of those events. I aim to conduct interviews with the event organizers in addition to the observations to learn about the event's preparation process and the organizer's view on it. Also, I aim to find out how the event topics are designed and delivered. Those are the initial questions to be covered during the interviews, however some specific questions will be added for each interview depending on the events' content and on the responses of the narrator.

I. General information

a. Name, surname, age, role at school, name of the school
b. Birthplace, place of living
c. Narrator's education and occupation
d. Previous work experience
e. Main responsibilities

II. Work at school

a. When did you start working at the school? What was your initial position there and how did it change over time?
b. What do you like about your job? What do you not like about it?
c. What is the most critical component of your job?
d. What are the main challenges that you face in your work at school?

III. The Event

a. How often do you organize events at school? What topics have you covered so far?
b. How are the decisions made about what topics should be covered in such events?

c. What are the most popular topics / days celebrated / commemorated within your school? Why do you think it is so?
d. What was the last event's topic and the main purpose?

IV. Preparation

a. How long did it take to prepare for this event?
b. Who was involved in the preparation process?
c. How did you design the script? How were the students involved in this process?
d. Did they do any prior preparation?
e. How did you divide the roles between the students depending on their age or sex?
f. Were they happy with their roles or did they attempt to change anything?

V. Gender Aspects of the Event

a. When dividing the roles what aspects do you consider about the students?
b. Are there specific roles that you think are proper for boys/girls only? What kind of roles are those? Why do you think so?
c. Do the students always agree with such a division of roles between girls and boys? If not, what are their perspectives on this question?

VI. After the Event

a. Who was present at the event?
b. What reactions did you get from the audience after the event?
c. Are you happy with the outcome? What about the students?
d. What would you change in it if you had a chance? Why?
e. Is there anything you want to add?