

MANIFOLD ANGLES OF GENDER

CONFERENCE MATERIALS

GEORGIA › POLAND › RUSSIA › UKRAINE

“Manifold Angles of Gender”

Materials of the International Conference “Manifold Angles of Gender:
Looking through a Magnifying Glass”

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INTRODUCTION

This is a publication of materials, a small selection of the papers presented by researchers and activists at the International Conference – *Manifold Angles of Gender: Looking through a Magnifying Glass*, organized and hosted by the South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation.

Social sciences are against the generalizations; therefore, in this introduction we cannot state that the four countries represented in the publication have common problems, or the described problems have the same origin. However, one can trace similar dynamics even at the first glance. First of all this is defined by the shared communist history and strengthening process of the nationalistic discourses in all presented countries in early 1980-ies, which was constituent of different, but yet with similar aim, national movements.

For one thing, it is obvious that the publication represents only a small part of the vast spectrum of the problems; it does not claim to be self-sufficient but the sharp accents and the right choices of the authors allow certain generalization. For example, strengthening of the religious wave in all three countries during last decades is obviously similar – which, in its turn seems to be a logical part of the mentioned nationalistic discourses, as religion is almost the strongest constituent of the revived mythologized national identities. Its role has grown so strong that it even questions secularism of the states.

One can observe how this background intensifies the mistrust to gender activism; how it is labeled as “imposed” and “imported.” On mentioning activism, it should also be noted that the authors of the articles are activists parallel to their work in academia in some cases; they work on daily basis on gender issues, women’s and LGBT rights. It is no surprise, as feminism, and later gender sciences, were born from the activism dictated by necessity social changes. Therefore, our authors are not satisfied with abstract theoretizing and discuss the problems based on their experience.

The goal of the conference organized by the Heinrich Boell Foundation to see the ongoing processes in our countries from different angles, and share experience with each other; despite differences, the similar dynamics is still evident in our countries. Activism should be supported by theory and vice versa. Hopefully, the presented collection of articles will contribute to achievement of this goal and will serve to wide range of researchers and activists.

Davit Gabunia
Editor in Chief

WOMEN'S RIGHTS: POLICY AND REALITY



Malgorzata Fuszara, Poland

Women, Politics, and Quotas.

The Case of Poland

In Poland the participation of women in the parliament was never very high. Women won full electoral rights quite early, in 1918, but in the period before World War II only 2-3% of members of the parliament were female. Under communism, the proportion was much higher, reaching a peak in 1980-1985, when 23% of MPs were female. One should keep in mind, however, that the parliament of those times was just a political ornament and not a real authority. The actual power was exercised by Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, which rarely counted any women among its members.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the percentage of women in the parliament in Poland dropped initially from over 20% to 13% (1989) and then to 10% (1991). There are many explanations why women are underrepresented in the Parliament. They include: burdening women with duties in the "private" sphere (motherhood, housework, caring for family members); traditions; stereotypes assigning men to the public sphere and women to the private one. Sometimes, the importance of character traits (gentleness, little combativeness) is cited as the reason, or lack of interest and political engagement on the part of women, or their reluctance to take political roles. Other barriers mentioned mainly by women (and women politicians) include favouring men, fear of women's competition, and male chauvinism. The main institutional barrier that women come across is inequality in access to places on electoral candidates' lists. All parties put significantly more male candidates on their lists than female ones. Very often parties put women on positions on the lists from which they have practically no chance of getting elected.

Poland has seen a number of attempts to introduce quotas as a mechanism to equalise opportunities of women and men in politics. In the first of these attempts, in the 1990s, quotas were incorporated into the bill on equal status of women and men. The subsequent bills were repeatedly placed on the parliamentary agenda, but none was finally adopted. The second attempt to introduce quotas in the electoral law (with a minimum of 30%) was made in 2001 by the female MP Olga Krzyanowska. The bill was rejected with hardly any discussion in the parliament.

Another option was to introduce a quota system in the political parties.

It would lead not only to an increase in the number of women among party executives, but also to an increase in the number of women in other decision-making bodies. In 2001, before the elections, quotas on candidate lists were introduced voluntarily by three political parties. Under this system there had to be at least 30% representation of each gender on the lists of candidates. Thanks to this system and the campaign carried out by women's organisations, the proportion of female candidates on those lists increased significantly.

In June 2009 Women's Congress was held in Warsaw organised by a network of women, some of them members of the women's NGOs but most of them never involved in women's movement. Some of these women are active in business organisations or in the academia, while others work as actresses, directors, and journalists, or hold ministerial offices currently or held such offices in the past. They are women from a wide range of backgrounds, professions, interests and political opinions. The Congress, which was preceded by a series of regional conferences, met with great interest. Over 4000 women participated. The activism it sparked has all the characteristics of a broad women's movement. A decision was made to propose a citizens' bill on gender parity on electoral candidate lists. Consequently, a social campaign was required, and a drive to collect the 100 000 signatures necessary for the bill to be considered by the Sejm, i.e. the lower parliamentary chamber. During the signature collection drive, participants of the Congress lobbied for a gender parity regulation among politicians. They met with the President, the prime minister, leaders of all parliamentary caucuses and all political parties, Speakers of the Sejm and the Senate, as well as conveners of the legislative committees both in the Sejm and the Senate. The signature collecting drive was a huge success. More than 150 000 signatures were collected. The action was carried out in public spaces: shopping malls, theatres, museums, etc. As such, it provided an excellent opportunity for a public debate on the subject. The first reading of the bill took place in the Sejm on February 18, 2010 as citizens' initiative.

In the course of further work on the bill, the ruling party (Platforma Obywatelska – the Civic Platform) lodged an amendment to replace the gender parity rule (50:50) with a gender quota (no less than 35% of either gender) on electoral candidate lists. The ruling party demanded voting discipline from its members during the vote on the bill. Nonetheless, ten MPs from this party, all male, breached the party discipline and voted against the bill. They were all fined for the breach. In subsequent votes (December 3 in the Sejm, later in December the Senate, and finally January 5 in the Sejm again) the gender quotas were adopted. The bill was signed into law by the President on 31 January, 2011.

During the first elections after introducing the quotas, the percentage of women among candidates increased significantly from over 20% (elections in 2005 and 2007) to over 40% (elections 2011):

Table 1. Women on candidate lists in 2005, 2007, and 2011

Political party*	2005	2007	2011
PO	21.0 %	21.1 %	43.4 %
PiS	21.0 %	19.2 %	39.8 %
SLD	27.6 %	22.2 %	44.4 %
PSL	19.6 %	18.2 %	41.7 %
RP	-	-	44.5 %
All	24.5 %	23.1 %	43.5 %

*PO - Platforma Obywatelska (Civic platform)

PiS - Prawo i Sprawiedliwosc (Law and Justice)

SLD - Sojusz Lewicy Demokratycznej (Democratic Left Alliance)

PSL - Polskie Stronnictwo Ludowe (Polish People's Party)

RP - Ruch Palikota (Palikot's Movement)

The law implements gender quotas, but does not contain rank order provisions. Many political parties placed the required number of women on the lists, but relegated them to positions where they had a very slim chance of being elected.

Only one political party, Platforma Obywatelska, used a soft rank order on its lists. The party applied the following principle: each list's top 3 must include at least one woman, and each list's top 5 – at least two women. As a result, Platforma Obywatelska succeeded in including many more women in the top 3 of the lists than any other party, and also the greatest number of women at the top positions on the lists.

Table 2. Women in the top 3 and at the top position on candidate lists

Political party	Women among candidates	Women in top 3	Women on top position
PO	43.4 %	40.6 %	34.0 %
PiS	39.8 %	21.2 %	24.0 %
SLD	27.6 %	22.2 %	44.4 %
PSL	41.7 %	21.2 %	24.0 %
RP	44.5 %	39.8 %	10.0 %

The results of the election indicate that the party with the biggest proportion of women at the top positions of the list and in the top 3 succeeded in introducing the greatest number of women into the parliament. Moreover, the results achieved by this party come the closest to the preferences of the voters:

Table 3. Percentage of votes for women and elected women

Political party	% voting for women	Women among elected
PO	32.0 %	34.8 %
PiS	24.8 %	17.7 %
SLD	31.2 %	14.8 %
PSL	24.7 %	7.1 %
RP	34.6 %	12.5 %

The results of the elections confirm that the combination of quotas and rank order has a clear impact on the proportion of women who get elected. After the 2011 election the proportion of women among MPs increased to the unprecedented level of almost 24%. To the greatest extent, this is a result of the fact that the party that won the biggest number of parliamentary seats had used rank order, rather than pushing women to lists positions that offer no real chance of being elected. In the case of this party, the proportion of women in the parliament is very close to the proportion of women on candidate lists (35%). Moreover, with regard to this party, the proportion of votes cast for women and the proportion of women actually elected are similar. In all other political parties, the proportion of women who were elected is much lower than the proportion of votes that went to women candidates. These results demonstrate that the combination of quotas and rank order is an efficient measure leading to increased equality between men and women on electoral lists. Poland provides also a good illustration of the fact that the implementation of such mechanisms is only possible if women mobilise rally strongly around this issue.



Tamar Tsopurashvili, Georgia

Gender Studies and Gender Sensitive Teaching

Issues discussed in presented article will be based on my experience teaching the course “Femininity and Masculinity in Medieval Christian Culture” at Ilia State University, Tbilisi. I have been teaching this course for 3 years and therefore I can outline some similar problems that are to find in almost every group. This course is a part of BA program in Philosophy.

I can only agree with the statement of two American professors Debra Langan and Deborah Davidson expressed in the article *Critical Pedagogy and Personal Struggles: Feminist Scholarship outside Women’s Studies*, that feminist pedagogy is “teaching that engages students in political discussion of gender justice” (Fisher 44) and that “the feminist teacher can be a potent agent of change” (Culley 211).¹

So, what kind of changes am I expecting personally as a university lecturer in Georgian case? I will outline 3 aspects of expected changes that I will step by step refer to in my paper:

1. First of all, constructing the gender sensitivity among the students – this is of course the most important goal of teaching we do in academia;
2. The second one, exploring and examining the roots of cultural stereotypes that we face in our everyday life;
3. The third one refers to academia and design of curricula: focusing on gender issues in the courses of different academic disciplines.

Building the gender sensitivity among the students is of course the most important goal of our activity as university teachers. In the society like Georgia the realization of this goal correlates with the liberalization of the society and establishing the civil values in population. What are the main values of students coming from school to the university in Georgia today? They are familiarized with the nationalistic narrative formed in the soviet era and implemented in the educational system in Georgia so deeply that, despite many reforms in education system it becomes stronger and stronger with the time. This nationalistic narrative has a strong outlined patriarchal character marked with ethnic-religious sentiments. It claims the past of Georgia, especially the reality of XII century, as an ideal one. Therefore it can be said that during their school years, starting from 5th grades pupils are learning the medieval ideals, medieval values that are

marked with strong patriarchal discourse with a zero tolerance to the gender issues. Of course, among the pupils such an ideological pressure is not always successful and we meet also very open-minded young people among them, but they can be regarded as exceptions that confirm the norm.

The second important issue in constructing gender intolerance among the young people and generally, in Georgian society is the increased influence of the Orthodox Church, which spreads the patriarchal values very intensively among the religious community. A good example is the statement of the Patriarch of Georgia made in spring 2012, when he said that the wife should wash the feet of husband when he comes at home from the work. The students that we teach are also part of orthodox religious community and most of them have internalized these patriarchal values, that claim that woman is a secondary being in comparison to the man.

How can this status-quo be changed? My answer is in some sense banal: more courses at the university that offer an alternative point of view on the gender issues in general, thus helping the young people to develop an alternative perspective on these issues.

How is it possible most effectively to explore and examine the roots of cultural stereotypes that we face in our everyday life? In face of strong nationalistic discourse mentioned above, in order to achieve the formation of gender sensitivity among the students it is important to offer them courses that show them the mythological character of this nationalistic narrative and thus, to explore the real roots of some cultural stereotypes. The course that I am teaching at the university seems as one of such: the course is an overview of theoretical issues about the relation of masculine and feminine starting from ancient time to medieval Christian culture. The course outline is described as follows:

The course Masculinity and Femininity in Medieval Christian Culture is designed as the cross-listed course and it is relevant for the students that are attending following specialization: Gender Studies, History, Philosophy, Theology, Cultural Studies. The course discusses the relation of masculinity and femininity in the Christian culture from the early Christianity till the late Middle Ages. Course is focused on the determination of role and social function of women on the basis of Church fathers' tractates and Paul's epistles. Course will figure out how the tractates of first Church fathers became a determined paradigm of gender role of women in Christian culture. Course will refer also the consciousness of body in religious discourse and in Middle Ages Christianity generally.

The first text in the reading material is Plato's Symposium. The most controversial seminar during the semester as a rule is the lecture about St. Paul's epis-

tles, when the students have an opportunity to find the controversial statements in Paul's text and compare the statements about the equality between men and women on the one hand (that are to find in Galatians) with the statements about the hierarchical disposition between them on another hand (that are to find in Second Corinthians). After this they know that the contemporary interpretation of the Biblical text offered by the Orthodox Church in Georgia outlines only one part of St. Paul's teaching and ignores the part of Paul's teaching about the equality between men and women presented for example in Epistle to Galatians. The course offers them to observe the development of this discussion by Church fathers like Jerome and Clement of Alexandria. In the second part of the course students read the mystical texts from XII-XIV centuries written by women theologians and see how the change of sex of narrators impacts on the change of perspective about the question which refers to the role of women in the Bible, church and itself rethinking the question of imago dei.

My experience of teaching this course shows that among the students who are interested in gender issues are more female students than male students. If the courses from the BA program of Philosophy are elected by either 50% of both sexes or even mostly male students, this course is really exception in this regard because it is mostly elected by female students. It became for me obvious even from the first year, when in the beginning of the semester a male student asked me: Is it a special course or why are so many women students here?

My observation is that as the Orthodox Church is very conservative and has really repressing ideas regarding women's role, the female students are trying to find satisfactory answers in the academic circle to the questions that cannot be responded by church. It is worth mentioning that among these female students some belong also to religious community and quite often, they have to overcome some inner controversy between the internalized stereotypes and the texts; and if I see this struggle, I consider it as a main achievement of the course.

And here are the next questions: Would the students that are under the influence of church rhetoric choose the course identified in the course catalogue as a "Gender Studies" course or as a "Feminist" course? Is it reasonable to label courses like this when stressing the gender issues are not so popular in the society and in the religious communities in Georgia? In my opinion, the answer is NO: if we consider the university as an instance of multiplication of some civil and liberal values, then the real goal from this perspective is to reach students with less liberal consciousness and have the impact on them.

Therefore, I think that the effective way for this is to split courses related to gender issues in different academic disciplines and maybe not always name them with the label "Gender Studies." Why? Because students that are

not sensitive to gender issues and not interested, will never choose an elective course with such name and therefore the idealistic goal – to form the gender sensitivity among the students – will remain only as an idealistic goal and nothing more. Therefore, from the Georgian perspective it seems for me very important to spread the Gender Studies issues in the curricula of different academic disciplines; because Gender Studies, which is a young academic discipline itself in Georgia, in most cases for students is like a terra incognita or – what is worse – they have some stereotypes about this academic discipline.

In Georgian case also the prejudices are present, that in some cases are familiar or common for Western academic circles too: when “they (students) wish to avoid affiliation with feminism because it results in a disparaging identity as a “man hater” (Bulbeck; Letherby and Marchbank; Culley), “victim” (Kitzinger and Thomas; Volman and Ten Dam), “psychopath” (Paquin), or “lesbian” (Paquin; Letherby and Marchbank; Culley).”²

To conclude, for transformation of the status-quo of gender insensitivity in Georgian society it seems very important to familiarize students with gender issues from the perspective of different academic disciplines, to split the themes about the gender equality in the syllabi of different courses and in curricula of different academic disciplines, to show students that these issues are very important for fluent understanding of human right issues. Finally, as Langan and Davidson state:

*However, we also understood that a change in consciousness was a precursor to a social change toward greater equality; thus, we wanted to raise student consciousness about feminism so that social change would be more likely.*³

To be optimistic, hopefully the change in consciousness by education will be a precursor to a social change in Georgia as well.

References

1. D. Langan/D. Davidson, Critical Pedagogy and Personal Struggles: Feminist Scholarship outside Women's Studies, p. 132.
2. D. Langan/D. Davidson, Critical Pedagogy and Personal Struggles: Feminist Scholarship outside Women's Studies, p. 133.
3. D. Langan/D. Davidson, Critical Pedagogy and Personal Struggles: Feminist Scholarship outside Women's Studies, p. 132.



Tamar Sabedashvili, Georgia

Gender Equality on the Surface and Beneath in Georgia

Equality of the sexes was considered by the Soviet government as one of its primary achievements. This success story on one hand was upheld by a number of concrete policy and legal initiatives that clearly empowered women. On the other hand, much was done by state propaganda to construct an ideology that regarded the “Woman Question” successfully solved. Respectively, the Soviet state turned a blind eye on such manifestations of gender inequality as women’s underrepresentation in positions of power, lower monthly average incomes, and their exploitation in the “double shift.”

The most decisive period for the formation of gender equality policy in the Soviet Union was from 1917 to 1936; detailed exploration of the legislative initiatives of this period, explaining the meanings and consequences of the introduction of civil marriage, easily obtainable divorce and laws protecting the rights of unmarried mothers and children born out of wedlock allows to conclude that the early plans were quite ambitious, but that in the 1930s the policymakers began to endorse a more conservative, traditional vision of femininity.¹ According to Wendy Goldman, the retreat towards conservatism was first and foremost a political decision made by Stalin’s regime and could not be explained by the harsh socio-economic and political problems that lied heavily on the shoulders of the young Bolshevik state.² This retreat resulted in the resurrection of the family, the cherishing of women’s reproductive function, the banning of abortion, the introduction of fines for divorces, as well as the double exploitation of women, both at work and at home. What Goldman found the most tragic in this transformation was that “subsequent generations of Soviet women, cut off from the thinkers, the ideas, and the experiments generated by their own revolution, learned to call this ‘socialism’ and to call this ‘liberation.’”³ This Soviet heritage has been one of the decisive factors of how gender inequality problems have been acknowledged by the post-Soviet Georgian society.

Concerns related to gender equality and women’s rights may not appear obvious from the first glance in contemporary Georgia. The legacy of the Soviet-times women’s liberation policies and propaganda, paired with romanticized narratives on the role of women in the pre-Soviet history of Georgia

contribute to the society's overall lack of sensitivity towards existing manifestations of gender inequality and violations of women's rights.

Georgia joined CEDAW without reservations in 1994 and Georgian delegation took part in the elaboration of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The principles of equality, regardless of one's sex, are embedded in Georgia's Constitution⁴ and all the other major legislative acts. Moreover, there has been formulated a State Concept on Gender Equality (2006), the Gender Equality Law (2010), Domestic Violence and Human Trafficking Laws (2006) with respective national action plans. However, effective implementation of these normative acts is lacking along with political will and commitment to achieve substantive gender equality. A sustainable institutional mechanism on gender equality issues, equipped with financial and human resources remains to be developed in the executive branch of the Government on central and local levels.⁵

Gender equality (*genderuli tanastsoroba*) has been first defined by the Georgian State Concept on Gender Equality in 2006 as "an integral part of human rights [referring] to an equal presentation, rights, responsibility and participation of women and men in all spheres of private and public life."⁶ The 2010 Law of Georgia on Gender Equality defined it as "a part of human rights referring to equal rights and obligations, responsibilities and equal participation of men and women in all spheres of personal and public life."⁷ This latter definition overrode the former one due to the legal superiority of the Gender Equality Law over the State Concept. Prior to 2006, there did not exist one agreed-on definition of what constituted gender equality in the Georgian language, therefore, it is very hard to establish what has been the agreed understanding (if at all) of this term as it is used in policy papers and discussions. In addition, the term *genderuli tanastsoroba* has been used interchangeably with "gender equity" in Georgia as there exists no applied translation of the latter.⁸

Below, I would like to provide some key data about women's rights and gender equality situation in Georgia since the country gained its independence.

The majority of women are employed in the low-paying fields of agriculture, education, healthcare and light industry. The vertical and horizontal gender segregation of the labor market is obvious from the high concentration of women either in lower positions or in the less profitable sectors of economy. According to the National Statistics Service, in 2010, the average nominal monthly salary of women in all fields of the economy and all sectors was 58% of that of men.

Women's political empowerment and participation in decision-making processes is also alarming; the fact that at present women account only for 10% of MPs is indicative of the cultural, legislative and internal party barriers that hinder women's political empowerment (in the parliaments elected

in 1995, 1999, 2004 and 2008, women comprised 7%, 6.4%, 9.4% and 6% respectively). The number of women in local self-governance bodies has been decreasing from election to election. From 14% after the local elections of 1998, the percentage of women dropped to 11% in 2010. In the new Cabinet there is only two female Ministers out of 19 Ministers and women constitute approximately 45% of the judiciary.

According to the 2003 Second and Third Periodic Reports of Georgia on the Implementation of CEDAW, "traditionally, gender-based discrimination and negligence of women's rights have not been recognized in Georgia."⁹ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) therefore complimented the government on its adoption of a Domestic Violence Law (DV Law) in its Concluding Comments to the Government of Georgia in August 2006. However, the Committee underlined its concern that implementation of some elements of the law, especially those related to the provision of shelter and crisis centers for the victims had been postponed.¹⁰ The Committee urged the Georgian government to strengthen awareness raising measures about the DV Law among respective public officials: "to ensure that public officials, especially law enforcement personnel, the judiciary, health-care providers and social workers, are fully familiar with applicable legal provisions, and are sensitized to all forms of violence against women and adequately respond to them."¹¹

According to UNFPA's 2009 National Research on Domestic Violence against Women, 6.9% of women acknowledged experiencing physical violence, of whom 2.6% experienced moderate and 4.3% severe physical violence. 3.9% of women reported having experienced sexual violence,¹² and 2.3% of women claimed to have experienced both sexual and physical violence.¹³ Among women who were, or had been, married, one in eleven had faced physical violence and 34.7% had been severely injured several times.¹⁴ About 3% of women who had born children admitted experiencing physical violence during their pregnancy.¹⁵ The survey also found that experiences of physical violence were not linked significantly to respondents' place of residence, education level, marital status or income.¹⁶

According to the survey, 14.3% of women reported having experience of emotional violence (threats, insults, humiliation).¹⁷ With regard to economic violence, 4.7% of those interviewed admitted that their husbands/male partners had taken their earnings against their will.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the survey also found out that 34.1% of women think that husbands have the right to beat their wives in certain cases.¹⁹ Another important finding of the survey was women's perception of the family as a sacred place. Thus, the view that whatever happens in the family should stay in the family is still strong, with 78.3%

of women convinced that family problems should only be discussed within the family.²⁰ The findings of this survey signal an acute need on the one hand for intensive awareness raising work, and on the other for further improvement of support mechanisms and services for the victims/survivors of DV.

Migration from Georgia has a considerable impact on the demographic structure of the country and negatively influences the families left behind in Georgia. The migration survey carried out by the National Statistics Service of Georgia has also provided that 43.4% of the migrants from the country are women in their most active, fertile age (25-35). Numbers of female and male migrants differ also in terms of countries of main destination as well as the sectors of work.

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, many members of national minorities remained poorly integrated in the social and political life of the country due to their lack of knowledge of Georgian.²¹ According to the first and so far the last national census conducted in independent Georgia in 2002, only 31% of persons belonging to national minorities in Georgia were able to speak Georgian fluently. Unfortunately, there does not exist sex-disaggregated data telling us out of this 31% how many women and how many men were knowledgeable of Georgian.²² However, the isolation of women belonging to national minorities due to their lack of knowledge of the state language is well known to women's rights and gender equality advocates. In Samtskhe-Javakheti region men significantly outnumber women in their knowledge of not only Georgian but also Armenian and Russian.²³ Migration patterns from these regions are also gendered and different from other parts of Georgia, in Samtskhe-Javakheti 24.5% of families reported having family member/s abroad with 77.6% of migrants being male and 22.4% being female,²⁴ while there is a gender balance in migration from the regions populated by the national majority Georgians, also sometimes women outnumbering men.²⁵

The unresolved internal conflicts with accompanying socio-economic and political vulnerabilities along with other challenges characteristic to the post-Soviet transition are the key obstacles towards country's sustainable development. The conflict and displacement had immense negative impact on citizens' health and well-being, these developments affected the majority of internally displaced women and men in almost all walks of their lives be it health, income, and career development, access to adequate housing conditions, increased gender-based violence, stigmatization and disempowerment. According to the Ministry of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Accommodation and Refugees of Georgia, there are about 258 599 Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Georgia, of which 157 276 live in "collective centers" and 101 323 live with relatives or in private housing.²⁶ Women

represent 54% of all IDP population. Access to durable and adequate housing has been one of the most acute problems faced by the IDPs, which sometimes is much more complex for single women, including single elderly women, single mothers and of course IDP women who face domestic violence and would like to seek divorce.

The above data are by far not exhaustive of the spectrum of problems present in Georgia in the area of gender equality and women's rights. For example, more research is needed to look into the issue of missing women in Georgia due to sex-select abortions, women's property rights and access to economic resources and opportunities and unequal gendered division of labor within household, gender based violence including sexual violence (during conflict as well as peaceful times) these are just few additional issues to name.

One simple conclusion that I would like to draw in the end of this brief paper is that acknowledgement of gender inequalities in Georgia is a critical first step in order to start debates about desirable positive change in the field of gender equality and women's rights. Such debates should take place with the initiative and active engagement of likeminded individuals who have the sensitivity to these issues. And for this positive change towards greater equality to occur, these likeminded individuals are to become a critical mass in all spheres of life, be it public or private sectors, NGOs or government.

Notes / References

1. Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 331-336.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 337-343.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 343.
4. Constitution of Georgia, article 14, states: "Everyone is born free and is equal before the law, regardless of race, skin color, language, sex, religion, political and other beliefs, national, ethnic and social origin, property and title of nobility or place of residence."
5. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
6. Parliament of Georgia, *The State Concept on the Gender Equality, 2006, 2. Definition of Terms*, accessed March 5, 2011, <http://www.parliament.ge/files/gender/Conc.pdf>.
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8. According to the Institute for Development Studies of the University of Sussex, there are principle differences between the two terms: gender equality stands for women having the same opportunities as men, including the ability to be active in public life. While gender equity (sometimes called substantive gender equality) stands for equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a redistribution of power and resources. Hazel Reeves, Sally Baden, *Gender and Development: Con-*

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13. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 33. The biggest number among these women belong to the 45-49 age group. The most frequently named forms of injuries were scratches, abrasion, bruises (84.4%) and injuries internal organs (29,1%). 18.8% of women reported brain concussion, 15.3% needed medical assistance at least once due to violence suffered from their husbands/male partners and among them 18.2% received medical assistance, while others did not for various reasons. *Ibid.*, p. 33.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 33.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 15, 37. Out of the 78.3% of women who think that family problems should only be discussed within a family 48% are rural, 30.3% are urban and 21.7% are from the capital Tbilisi. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

21. Jonathan Wheatley, The Integration of National Minorities in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli Provinces of Georgia: Five Years into the Presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili, ECMI Working Paper # 44, September 2009, 6.

22. UN Women was informed by GEOSTAT that some of the key data were not sex disaggregated in 2002 census including this one – this is one advocacy issue for the upcoming census (no clear date defined yet) to ensure that all such vital data are sex disaggregated.

23. Valuable information in this regard is provided in the only study of Samtskhe-Javakheti region from gender perspective conducted by the Institute for Policy Studies back in 2004-2005, please see Nana Sumbadze, George Tarkhan-Mouravi, Gender and Society in Samtskhe-Javakheti, Georgia, Institute for Policy Studies, UNDP, Tbilisi, 2005, pp. 40-41.

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25. For instance, Mtskheta-Mtianeti region, see Tamar Zurabishvili, Tinatin Zurabishvili, Giorgi Tavberidze, Tianeti Household Census 2008 & Tianeti Migrants to Greece 2008: Fieldwork Report, IOM, IFAD, 2009.

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Ludmila Popkova, Russia

Human Rights versus Social Protection: Discourses of Women's Political Activism in Russia

Women's movement and gender policy during the last twenty years of transformations may be considered as one of the most controversial issues for the process of democratization and promoting human rights. The perceptions of women's rights in their relevance to the problems of social change could be very important for understanding emerging civic society in Russia. The analysis of the ideological discourses of women's political and civic activism gives us an opportunity to understand the prospects for gender equality and human rights development in a context of transnational feminist movement. The attempt to frame women's rights as being substantial part of the democratization has been made by the new independent women's movement.

Central focus of this paper is the transformation of the political discourses of Russian women's activism during different cycles of civic mobilization. My research is based on interviews with politically active women, female candidates in the Regional and City Assemblies, interviews of civic activists in media and collected data of women's organizations and informal groups. The research raised principal questions: what kind of motivations and objectives can be traced from the women's activism in politics; what are their political priorities, ideologies and framings of women's issues.

According to the concept of the political process, the transformation of conscientious is a necessary condition for social and political activism. The important consequence of the construction of the political collective identity is the mechanism of group mobilization. Mobilization could play an effective role in group's involvement into political process. Some scholars stress the particular importance of mobilization in a society experiencing transition into the democratic regime. Mobilization helps citizens to get access to new political roles and become the new political agents. Social and political activity requires a critical mass of individuals who recognize that the discrimination or oppression they are experiencing is a systematic or political problem, and not a personal one; and that the rectification of the injustice they experience is possible. This process is diversely referred to as "framing" or "cognitive liberation."

After twenty years of the transformation process the most important question in regard with gender democracy is not the number of women's organizations and the number of women politicians in national parliament, but the ideologies of women's new political and civic activism.

From the very beginning in early 1990s the new independent Russian women's movement and women's political participation encountered two contradictory national and global political challenges for its strategy. On the one hand, the former socialist paternalistic regime granted the social rights, without any space for civil society and citizen's democratic participation. On the other hand, in neo-liberal post-Soviet transformational period all rights and especially responsibilities for well-being and social security were transferred to the families and grass-root civic initiatives.

Public Discourse on Gender Policy

The well-known factors of women's low political participation have to be examined in a context of Soviet legacy. In the transitional period the Russian society has found itself in a state of anomie, where present choice of values is subjective and arbitrary; it does not always correspond to the real interests of social groups. We should pay more attention to the subjective and discursive constraints of women's political choices from a perspective of post-Soviet cultural transition. In this context it is crucial to explore the influence of past norms of gender and culture. The Soviet state institutionalized a distinctive order in which the roles of men and women were defined according to the needs of communist state. The state-prescribed Soviet gender order had a significant impact on the subjective perceptions of Soviet men and women. Many researchers claim that gender identities even of the young generation are still strongly influenced by Soviet values (Ashwin, 2000; Sperliing, 1999). First of all this is the acceptance of supposedly natural sexual difference followed by the natural perception of having a minor position in all spheres of activities. Sociological researches show that despite the negative assessment of their chances in the labor market and in politics, the majority of Russian women rarely claim that they face discrimination. We can estimate this acceptance as a form of self-limitation, which reinforces women's subordinate position in labor market. Russian scholars name the specific post-Soviet lifestyle as the "impossible mission" for women. It is necessary for women to "correspond" to the untraditional model of behavior and at the same time to "match" quite a patriarchal system which included specific ideas of femininity and women's predestination. In many cases "successful women" try to use the patriarchal

ideas to secure themselves against accusations of “no femininity.”

According to the recent studies, women in Russia usually deny any kind of gender conflict in their professional and private lives; but at the same time they are much more critical and even hostile towards men in their interpersonal relations. This hidden gender conflict could be considered as one of the obstacles for creating the massive women’s rights activism. What is more important is that the most Russian women do not challenge the existing post-Soviet gender order. In the transition period of 1990s there was no period of reflecting gender relations similar to the process that took place in Western Europe and the United States during second wave feminism. Instead of conscious reflection on gender, we should rather describe the post-Soviet ideological process as the adaptation to the social and economic necessities.

The Russian gender studies scholars also argue about the legacy of the socialist gender regime with its focus on paternalistic and protective measures for working mothers. The use of “positive discrimination” – benefits granted to women only – as a solution to entrenched inequalities remains a guiding principle in state social reform programs. In the mid-1990s the programs and institutions were established to integrate gender equality issues in the state policy. Some revised laws and policies had been enacted to promote women’s labor rights, but no adequate system of their enforcement, court compliance and operational guidelines for implementation were established. Very often the strategic position of the most national agencies within the governmental bureaucracy does not create competence to influence the overall state policy. The legitimacy of created institutional mechanisms is also undermined by the problem of enforcement and implementation of policies and legislation. During time period of twenty years, in the post-Soviet Russia any special legislation for anti-discrimination or equal opportunity issues, similar to the West European examples, were not adopted.

During last decade of the political transformation gender policy and public discourse have been evolving to more conservative direction. In mid-2000s the state gender policy became “demography-biased.” Meaning of the policy is to refer to women primarily as to a demographic resource – all other ideologies that distract women from performing this main task of increasing the population are interpreted as potentially dangerous. Most researchers observe the contradictory trends of Russian contemporary gender order and public discourse on gender relations. On the one hand there is a progressive dynamics in creating new space for women’s professional career in business, the rise of the diversify gender roles and egalitarian, partnership gender relations in private life of young educated people. On the other hand we see the revival of the official neo-traditionalist gender discourses, combining two ideologies.

Neo-liberal traditionalism combines liberal ideas of gender equality with the publicly dominated essentialism, “naturalization” of gender roles. The second neo-state traditionalist ideology interprets gender issues in a Soviet-style paternalistic way, considering women only as an object for social policy and “state care” (Zdravomyslova, Temkina, 2007). At the end of 2000s we can observe the strengthening and general prevalence of conservatism in state ideology as well as considerable rise of the role of religion. Claims of “preserving national traditional gender culture”, “returning women to family” instead of applying western values of human rights, as well as an attempts to restrict women’s rights became the new factors for political mobilization of the feminist activism in Russia.

When analyzing the women’s political and civic activism in Russia, we can consider two different stages of its development according to the criteria of prevailing discourses on gender issues. Social paternalism as an ideology and “social motherhood” as a political strategy were dominant among the politicians and the activists at the first stage in 1990 and mid-2000s. Human rights and feminist discourse became evident both in Russian public debates and in political activism at the end of 2000s.

“I Am a Woman and a Mother”: Social Protectionism Discourse

From the very beginning in 1990s women’s movement started to speculate on the issue of losing their “protection.” This reflects the dilemma of actually being both – a woman (in need of some “specific” rights and politics) and an individual. When policies assist women as women (as mothers), they enforce the existing gender code. It is also true that these policies can lessen discrimination as they can potentially lessen women’s sole responsibilities for children and domestic duties. Russian women fear that new legislation will misrepresent the complicated reality of women’s specific needs and their equal rights. So these organizations and activists started to use the ideology of social protectionism as a dominant resource for women’s civic and political mobilization.

The majority of regional women’s groups have their roots in former Soviet “women’s councils” which were registered as NGOs in 1990s. In a context of a post-Soviet gender order these organizations have stressed the special value of women’s caring capacity and used it to inject the ethics of care into politics. Focused on the mother’s role they exposed an implicit essentialism, which leads to understanding gender policy primarily as welfare policy for women. Even when women’s deprivation was recognized, it was not connected to inequality and economic dependence on men, but rather to the problems of balancing

between work and family. These activists avoided the concepts of patriarchy, the terms of gender inequality, power relations and of course, feminist or human rights frames.

The majority of traditional women's organizations espoused the ideology which subordinates women's personal fulfillment to collective needs or the state's interests. Individual rights of a woman, her autonomy and independence are supplanted by traditional concerns for the "collective good", which is said to be equivalent to state interests. They argue for the necessity to return to the main Soviet gender contract of "working mothers," the reason for this being that giving birth is not women's "natural predestination." This is the point of view which is being revived by mass media nowadays – "civilly prescribed obligation and civic duty of women."

"We are now a nation, which is dying out; if we don't create proper working conditions for our women they will not give birth to children. The birth rate in our country dropped the moment the reforms started. Young girls are not ready to perform the functions of a mother; are not ready to sacrifice themselves to meet traditional requirements. To live like a great nation – that to a large extent depends on women" (Leader of one of the local NGOs).

Analysis of the strategies of political participation of Russian women during the whole decade demonstrated the same vision of women's agenda in transforming Russia (Popkova, 2004). Majority of women politicians got involved in the regional politics by insisting upon an assumption that women do have their specific interests and thanks to their special "nature" women are supposed to change the character of political power in the country. Their interpretation of women's political leadership in this case was based on the essentialist concept of specific, biologically determined female features. Key-expressions widely used by this group in an election campaign comprise such word combinations as "woman and the mother" and "a housekeeper-woman." Their political strategies were based on this ideology. Correspondingly, women's special "mission" in politics was understood as traditional responsibility for women's sphere – social and family politics. Very often one of the distinguishing features of "a woman-housekeeper's" rhetoric was her readiness to accept "secondary nature" of both her sphere of influence and her role in politics:

"Let women put everything in order in a social sphere and let men, if they want, take up defense, space, oil and gas" (Regional Assembly deputy).

Standing for this idea Russian women politicians try to meet the tradition-

al expectations and even insist on maintaining seniority relations; they don't claim for more power than provided by any gender system. Their pre-election behavior can be described as "submissive," irritating neither the male members of the electorate nor their party colleagues:

"A woman-politician shouldn't be too proud. You needn't dream of wide scale actions, you must do routine work. You can win the respect of all only doing specific deeds. We enter the realm of politics not to fight men but to help them to look at problems with our eyes. Can men really be disappointed if we put everything in order in our country?" (Regional Assembly deputy).

Associating the politician women with social policy in general and family policy in particular became their only trump card. Underlying this interpretation, there is a worldwide public opinion which is also accepted in Russia – the women in power are guarantee for successful strengthening of federal social functions and forming the "welfare state." In Russian political context, the 1990s official state policy of "increasing status of women in society" did not necessarily correspond to the urgent issues of gender equality. These women politicians were not ready to extend the traditional range of issues: to raise questions concerning employment and professional career discrimination, the threat to reproductive rights, domestic violence, and advancement of women into government structures, etc.

The newly evolving civil society, the space for autonomous activities between the state and the market, did not in practice embody participatory democracy to fill in the gap left after collapse of the state socialist welfare provisions, delivering different social service programs for disadvantaged groups. In the 2000s the dominant public authoritarian discourse emerged based on an idea of a strong paternalistic state and formal procedural democracy with the third-sector mobilizing society to help the state. The idea of civil society not as a political opponent but rather a helpmate of the state, of course, has been facilitated by the vast social problems and poverty prevailing in contemporary Russia. Some researchers suggest that the conceptual shift goes hand in hand with defining civic activity as feminine. Members of women's grass-root social service organizations considered their work as "real politics" or "new practice of democracy," without entering politics or claiming political demands.

"When repairing the benches in the park or helping elderly people, we are realizing women's true state policy" (Activist of women's regional NGO).

Feminist critics of this strategy have been stressing that this strategy perpetuates the undervaluing of women's political involvement, demeaning it as "humanitarian activity conducted within the terms of nurturing and caring roles often deemed 'natural' for women." This devaluation in turn contributes to the persistent relative invisibility of women as citizens in public sphere of politics. The hopeful trend can be traced in the intentions of women's organizations to influence state gender policy, when they recognize the need for state institutions to ensure that the provision of welfare is not left to the efficiencies or inefficiencies of the market. In this sense moderation, and as a matter of fact ideological indistinctness, become an inevitable component of the political strategy of "feminine" politicians. Their unique political trump becomes an identification of gender politics with maternity and family politics.

Some grass-roots organizations emerged in 1990s primarily as self-help women's groups and few feminist initiatives, which became critical to this ideology prevailing among politicians. They started debates on the perspectives of gender equality in Russia; viewing women only as potential beneficiaries of a welfare system reinforce traditional women's roles. Paternalistic ideology with its vision of women as objects of social protection undermines the perspectives for politics of equal opportunities. Some social and political attitudes of "female politicians" do not encourage at all the transformation process of patriarchal gender system. The female proportion of elected officials may have only a loose correlating with advancement of gender issues. That's why it was reasonable for Russian young educated women to be suspicious to all political "feminine" strategies that emphasize gender difference and women's special political and social obligations in a context where individual identities are submerged in the collective.

Analyzing the forms of collective actions of majority of women's organizations, one can find out that they are guided not by the concept of independent civil society but by the concept of the third sector that can help state in its social policy; they realize their objective to support the clients in improving their living conditions. According to the character of their activity, the women's organizations can be referred to as the so-called service organizations. But feminist groups argue that the issue of their citizenship rights is not one for which women alone are responsible. Regardless of whether women begin to self-organize to defend existing or to demand new rights, there is an irreducible need for the state to play a central role in guaranteeing gender equality. In this regard, it is essential to redefine the relationship between the state and the market in order to discover the balance between them most likely to produce social justice and gender equality. New social problems have been framed in terms of equity rather than in terms of human rights. Many feminist

scholars stress that “equity objectives may be treated as optional, but respect for human rights is obligatory.” In addition, the human rights framework may offer new opportunities for changing the agenda.

Women’s Human Rights Discourse

In 1990s another group of women politicians and activists who espoused liberal principles wanted to avoid any gender issues in their strategy. The process of democratization has been considered as leading to empower new active citizens who would bear individual responsibility both in economic and political spheres. They were not going to be associated with the special measures towards women because in public discourse “women’s interests” are connected only with social benefits positioning women as secondary; they preferred to frame the women’s issues in a concept of human rights. This group of politically active women didn’t include women’s and gender issues into their political strategy. Declared the aspiration for individual self- realization and adherence to liberal democratic values was their main motivation for entering politics. They also put the task of reforming the post-Soviet patriarchal-socialist gender system as a part of the general process of democratization. According to their logic, the effective strategy of political success excludes emphasis on the specifically “female problems.”

A modern concept of human rights, a concept of gender equality and its practical tool named gender approach to the analysis of social sphere and a concept of human development are the most important ones. All three concepts are closely interconnected: they have been tailored for men and women as equal partners in the modern history. Each of the above concepts envisages gender approach as a component of development reflected in public documents, programs and decisions. A target to create a democratic state based on the priority of law in Russia envisages that women as full-fledged members of the society should enjoy all human rights. This provision broadens legal support of the social status of a woman. At the same time it gives the ground to the women’s organizations to insist on a new approach of the state to the issue: to change the former soviet paternalism for the policy of equal rights, freedoms and opportunities for women and men. This new approach should guarantee not only formal legal equality, but real equality of opportunities for women and men. In 1990s very few women’s grass-roots organizations had to prove the importance of using human rights strategy as the most effective for women’s empowerment and gender equality. As it was declared in the program of regional organization – “The framework provides important language and tools to define, analyze, and articulate women’s experiences of violation and to demand redress in ways

already recognized by the international community.”

A human rights-based approach provides a common framework that brings together women with diverse experiences to collaborate on a wide array of diverse strategies for change. Women’s human rights activists consider the basic principles of this strategy are the only appropriate arguments for civic mobilization of young educated women. Among the most important are the protection and promotion of human dignity, the universal nature of human rights, non-discrimination and government responsibility.

Some of them, “Committees of Soldiers’ Mothers,” positioned the state and the civil society as independent or even antagonistic, are not going to be counterpart to the Russian state. This approach was untraditional for majority Russian women who expect the paternalistic state would be main provider of their main needs. This civic organization stresses the demand for the state not “to help people,” but to guarantee basic human rights for all citizens. Many researchers show how these organizations developed their strategy of defending human rights. It was the combination of traditional concept of motherhood and human rights ideology. The duties of “responsible motherhood” were interpreted as human rights protection, rights to defend their sons from the abuse of the military patriarchy.

Many feminist scholars see the “feminist challenge now” as need to redefine the citizenship so as to respect the diversity, women’s manifold identities of their profession, family, ethnic group, sexual preference, and culture – and yet do not fall into the essentialist trap. Pointing to the “tension between individuality and collectivity” as the starting point for such a redefinition, these scholars distinguish a “liberal individualism” that pictures an atomized and disconnected person in competition with others from a post-patriarchal individuality that recognizes the capacities and diversity of individuals as a part of the community that can either enhance or constrain their development.

The terms and ideals for political mobilization are embedded in discourses that provide the ground on which they are understood and from which they gain their power to move people. Political solidarity cannot be assumed on the basis of shared “womanhood.” It is not the same as the politically significant category of “women” as a mobilized identity, a self-conscious social collectivity. In order for social categories such as “women” to serve as the basis for mobilization, they must first be constituted as politically relevant. This is done through public discussions and by social movements. It follows that a commitment to advance women’s interests – and the definition of such “interests” is never merely the reflex of a politicians or a group’s subjectivity as women, or their experience of discrimination and oppression. Politicized identities are themselves a result of public arguments and activities that allow individuals to redefine their own sense of self, and redefine events and social processes.

Many scholars see the main contradiction of the discourses on women's identities and women's interests in the fact that the most post-socialist women's organizations focus on the women's collective interests – that is, on women as a “category” rather than as individuals entitled to basic rights. Women's claims may be framed either in terms of rights or in terms of entitlements and social benefits. It is dangerous to view women only as potential beneficiaries of welfare system may in fact, and even unwittingly, reinforce traditional women's roles and perpetuate inequalities (Gal and Kligman, 2000).

In this situation, introducing feminist and civic consciousness discourse became the most influential tool for creating women's independent political activism both at the personal and at the political levels. So in transitional period gender studies centers and university programs, emerged in Russia in 1990s, in some sense were more important for promoting women's rights agenda than increasing the number of women politicians in legislative and executive bodies.

The human rights-based approach provides a common framework that brings together women with diverse experiences to collaborate on a wide range of diverse strategies for change. Women's human rights activists consider the basic principles of this strategy are the only appropriate arguments for civic mobilization of young educated women. Among the most important are the protection and promotion of human dignity, the universal nature of human rights, non-discrimination and government responsibility.

“We are fed up with your care. We are standing up for our rights”: Feminist Discourse of Women's Activism

New feminist informal initiatives and groups emerged in Russia at the end of 2000s. The young educated women started their social networks activities as awareness-raising groups aimed at personal empowerment. Inspired by the second wave Western feminist theories they positioned themselves critical to existing women's movement in Russia. As one of activists of the initiative group “For Feminism” states in interview:

“To our regret, we have to concede that women's movement in Russia has lost significant ground. Instead of promoting the interests of women in general, some organizations concentrated on dealing local tasks. That was a strategic error. The time has come to address that. We have to develop new models for behavior, present society with alternatives to the patriarchal model. Our aim is to propagate feminist ideology and the concept of gender equality. Thus, the use of the word “feminism” in the group's name is a matter of principle. The situation is so crucial that we must call things by their true names:

we describe discrimination as “discrimination” and feminism as “feminism.”

Some of young activists came to feminist groups from left-wing organizations, disappointed with internal sexism of these organizations, and brought not only new agenda but also the new repertoire of collective actions. Just like the radical “liberation” wing of Western feminist groups of 1970s, they challenged the whole strategy of women’s traditional political activism. These groups insisted on the radical approach to gender issues in contemporary Russian political context “bringing them out onto the streets”:

“We have come together to create a feminist agenda, because today’s “women’s issue” is being articulated in the political arena in a spirit that is solely patriarchal: benefits for children, maternal capital, etc. I don’t place particular hope in legislative changes alone. Laws are only half of the battle. We have to combat the attitude that sees women as second-class human beings. For me, as a feminist, it is important that totalitarian way of thinking, which is why patriarchal thinking is, be destroyed.”

Before massive post-election protests against political regime in December 2011 the women’s rights ideas served as a consolidation base for political activity. In Spring-Autumn of 2011 an alliance of feminist groups, “For Feminism,” Moscow Radical Feminist Group, the Moscow Feminist Group, LGBT, and left-wing activist groups organized demonstrations to protest against Russian parliament’s plans to restrict women’s reproductive rights. Initiated by the leader of the State Duma Commission on Family, Women and Children the amendments into the draft law health care introduced a number of restrictions on abortion. The first and the most important was the exclusion of abortion from the system of obligatory medical insurance. The draft law also prohibited abortion without the consent of a husband; prohibited sales of contraceptives, forced women to be mandatory consulted by psychologists on immorality of abortions and allowed doctors to refuse from operation on “moral grounds.” All of these contradicted the Constitution, the Family Codex and international laws on women’s rights ratified by the state. Public pro-choice campaign with a slogan “Fight abortions, not women” started in social networks, mobilized different groups of civic activists, experts, ordinary citizens in their protests against the growing conservative and religious fundamentalist trends in Russian gender policy at the end of 2000s.

Feminist groups, whose activity evolved from personal empowerment into public actions, articulated the “gender equality and human rights” agenda on women’s issues in contemporary Russia. Instead of “social protectionism” rhetoric of traditional women’s organizations, they are framing their programs and activities in a context of the most serious challenges to women’s human rights and gender equality policy in Russia. These new feminist groups

are struggling to mobilize young women on a new ideology of emancipation, on realization of their interests. For them the negative trends in state policy and public discourse are evident. The threat of women's rights came from the Russian Orthodox Church, increasing their efforts to introduce traditionalist gender norms on a society and influence the state's policy. Another danger is coming from Russian government antisocial policy of curbing social programs, connected with education and health, in general, the benefits for pregnant women, miserable child benefits, shortage of kindergartens and many more, in particular influencing gender equality problems.

Social and political views of the majority of women-politicians as well as the ideology of non-governmental women's organizations in Russia for a long period of time stayed within the traditional gender system. The task of actualization of personal, individual potential of Russian women and understanding of their own political behavior seems to be the most important in socio-cultural context of contemporary Russia. Women's specific views on general problems in politics, economics and culture as well as new proposed decisions will be able to ensure the involvement of women in the process of gender system reorganization and democratic reformation of the Russian society. Recent feminist public debate has attracted young activists, new generation of educated women. They moved away from viewing equality as an issue that concerns only the problem of social protectionism, to understanding of the implications of unequal power relations on the society as a whole. Feminist activists and experts have argued that gender equality and gender democracy issues should be treated as structural and political questions that confront society and political regime, in general.

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GENDER AND RELIGION



Lesya Pagulich, Ukraine

Protecting Children of Ukraine: Attacks on Sexual and Reproductive Rights in Religious Discourse and National Legislative Initiatives

In Ukraine, fundamentalist non-governmental and religious organizations that perform anti-women and anti-gay politics have become stronger for the past five years. Some organizations chose strategy to concentrate on one specific agenda, for instance, criminalizing so called 'propaganda of homosexuality', or banning abortions. Others united all anti-women and anti-gay themes under auspices of improving 'Christian morality of the nation' and strengthening 'Ukrainian traditional family'. These organizations ally towards disrupting the gay-pride; holding together with authorities the Family Forums; signing the resolution to ban abortions at the national congress on bioethics organized by National Academy of Sciences and Ministry of Health of Ukraine. Extreme rhetoric finds its application in legislation aiming to limit sexual and reproductive rights. Besides organizations' activity, I analyze arguments, discourse and concepts of non-governmental and governmental participants. For that purpose I analyze Ukrainian homophobic bills that intend to ban so called 'homosexual propaganda' in the name of protecting the children. I argue that one of the key factors why homosexuality is particularly reviled in Ukraine is because it has been constructed discursively as a threat to the existence of the Ukrainian nation.

This paper briefly presents a section of research on gender, religion, and nationalism in Ukraine which was carried out by Galina Yarmanova, Ganna Grytsenko, Lesya Pagulich and Nataliya Tschermalykh with financial support of the Heinrich Boell Foundation Warsaw in 2012. Research analyses homophobic initiatives, anti-abortion and anti-choice initiatives, activities of radical right and religious groups in Ukraine, and examines discourses on gender and sexuality in religious and nationalistic settings, and mechanisms of implementing anti-gay and anti-women rhetoric of radical right religious groups into mainstream politics and legislative initiatives.

In this paper I focus on anti-gay initiatives, their rhetoric, and connections

to the parliamentary debate on homosexuality. I will proceed from (1) mapping anti-gay groups and outlining their activities; (2) analyzing discourse of anti-gay groups; through to (3) exploring homophobic legislative initiatives that have been registered in Ukraine in 2011-2012.

Mapping the Anti-Gay Groups

Recent conservative political situation in Ukraine is characterized by moralization and speculative concept of 'protection of public morality'. This politics is heading forward populism instead of solving social issues. On this background, radical right-wing groups and religious fundamentalist groups are becoming increasingly active in heating up the conservative discourse. The primary targets of these groups are reproductive and sexual rights.

There is quite a number of such organizations in Ukraine, but first of all I will focus on key players among anti-gay organizations. These include LPG (Lyubov Proty Gomosexualizmu/Love Against Homosexuality), its sister organization "All Together!", and Parental Committee of Ukraine. Description and analysis of organizations are based on the organizations' official websites, statements of leaders, written documents (e.g., open letters and declarations), and published materials produced by organizations for the purpose of agitation and promotion of their causes; these materials date time period of 2008-2012.

One of the most significant and visible organizations with regard to anti-gay activities is LPG. Its full name is Public movement of people with future "Love Against Homosexuality." LPG first announced itself in 2003 during a street action on the central square of Kyiv. The event's proclaimed aim was to "tell the truth on homosexuality." The main slogans were "Homosexuality = AIDS," "Homosexuality is a sin," "One is not born gay, one becomes gay!" "Same-sex love doesn't exist," "Ukraine is a Christian country," and "Homosexuality is an enemy to the family." According to the official website, LPG's objectives include "public and utter opposition to attempts of establishing homodictatorship," "protection of family institution," and promotion of traditional family values. The main activities include street protests, work with mass media, celebrities, members of parliament (MPs), and government officials. Condemnation of homosexuality and rejection of LGBT human rights for LPG serves to affirmation of the "Christian values" of Ukraine and cooperation with churches.

Since 2008 the annual LPG's street protests has transformed into "family carnivals." The first family carnival was supported by several organizations: Institute of Family and Marriage, ACET, International Center of Parenthood, Silver Ring, Spirituality and Well-being, Center of Social Protection of Youth

and Young People. It is remarkable that ACET Ukraine is a part of the ACET International Alliance which “works with infected and affected by HIV and AIDS without any discrimination on the basis of race, religion, disability, sexual orientation or any other factor.”¹ Activities of ACET Ukraine contradict the values of the international alliance. At the “family carnival” in 2008 the president of ACET Ukraine said: “The country that agreed to support nontraditional sexual relations automatically admits to AIDS epidemic. Today if we don’t say “no” to homosexuality – tomorrow they won’t let us say “yes” to normal family.”² Besides distorting information on HIV epidemics, president of ACET Ukraine violates values of non-discrimination. Such active engagement in anti-gay initiatives is common for a number of Ukrainian NGOs whose work is saturated with religious values.

LPG consolidates other actors of civil society who oppose LGBT rights. According to the organization’s leader Ruslan Kukharchuk, LPG receives organizational support from churches, religious associations and various public organizations, for example, ‘pro-family’. A number of LPG’s members are pastors at different churches. One of the members of LPG, pastor of the charismatic Christian church “New Generation,” the head of the NGO Center of Social Protection of Youth and Young People Yuriy Shmulyar expressed concern that “homosexuality is a threat to national security” of Ukraine which allegedly leads to the “extinction of the nation.”³ The founder of the church “New Generation” Alexey Ledyayev, a co-founder of human rights organization Guards on the walls in Latvia advocates for active participation of Christians in political arena and “establishing of hegemony of evangelistic Christians” in the state bodies and politics. Ledyayev persistently uses Islamophobic argumentation connecting tolerance to homosexual people with preparation for “Islamisation of society.”⁴

Since 2009, protests and carnivals of LPG have been expanded from Kyiv to a number of other Ukrainian cities. LPG has also started collecting signatures for legislative introduction of criminal liability for the so called “propaganda of homosexuality.” In 2010, street actions have introduced additional slogans “For propaganda of homosexuality – section in Criminal Code,” “Registration of perverts’ partnerships is a threat to national security,” “Parliament and the people of Ukraine – against juvenile justice,” “We will not allow homosexual lobby in Ukraine!” Protests were held by state institutions: the Parliament and the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine.

Furthermore, in 2010, a sister organization called “Civil movement ‘All Together!’” was established. This organization was also headed by Ruslan Kukharchuk, leader of LPG. The official site proclaims Christian values as the common basis. “All Together!” formed the following five quite extensive

blocks as subjects of movement's interest: "Safe society," "Complete family," "Religious freedom," "Sound health," and "Charity." "Banning propaganda of homosexuality" is placed within the interest of "Complete family."⁵ Despite extensive declared interests, website analysis shows that the vast majority of the information focuses on the 'homosexual propaganda' and similar anti-gay initiatives. Such strategy of disguising organizational goals under umbrella of various "social problems" when organization in fact is focused solely on one issue is quite common for anti-gay groups. It is used for passing off as vocalizing voices of 'concerned citizens', which allegedly deal with a broad scope of social issues rather than target a particular minority group.

Anti-gay groups frequently employ statistics manipulation and pseudo-scientific data aimed to prove extremely homophobic views as attitudes of popular majority. The following 'survey results' on the website of "All Together!" are one of numerous illustrations of such approach. A questionnaire that includes biased statements such as "Do you believe that citizens of Ukraine have a right to be protected from homosexual propaganda?" is used for creating news item: "85% of Kievians want to be protected from homosexual propaganda."⁶ Moreover, it is not uncommon to fully fabricate such 'opinion polls': "All Together!" along with other anti-gay groups attribute their various 'surveys' to random small centers of sociological research which have actually never conducted any such opinion polls.

In 2010 LPG started to openly cooperate with a number of MPs, first of all, with Pavlo Unguryan, who is the chairman of the Union of Young Christians of Ukraine and who was later one of the authors of the bill #8711, the first legislative initiative to introduce criminalization of the so called "propaganda of homosexuality." In 2011 his NGO Union of Young Christians has launched the so called social campaign Clean gaze "against social diseases which contradict Christian morality" and result "from the loss of moral guidelines." Homosexuality was listed as one such diseases among drug use, alcoholism, 'spread of abortions', 'free love', and smoking. The campaign included a number of banners and city lights in Kyiv and distribution of flyers among students of big cities.⁷ In 2010, Pavlo Unguryan gave a speech in support for LPG during their street action: "Our society is degrading. Scary numbers and dangerous trends: Ukraine is a leader in the spread of AIDS and child alcoholism, producing and copying of child pornography. We must take a direction towards revival of our Christian heritage to defend moral values."⁸

LPG's website states that organization does not support physical violence against homosexual people. However, one of the members of LPG's Organizing Committee Anatoliy Shariy declared: "The danger is that sometimes skin-heads want to join the movement, [our] movement has nothing to do with

that... They [homosexual people] should sit and be happy that they are not getting killed. (...) From their side should be respect; on my part there is nothing to respect them for, [they are] sick people.”⁹ He defined the ultimate goal of the LPG this way: “[When] homosexual people stay in their apartments and won’t come out to streets, to mass media and won’t propagate their life style,” “we demand criminal liability for propaganda of homosexuality.”

Another frequent participant of LPG’s street actions, particularly of the protests against equal rights for LGBT people by the embassies of the Netherlands and Canada and the office of EC Delegation in Ukraine, is Igor Druz’ who is the chairman of All-Ukrainian NGO Parental Committee of Ukraine. Parental Committee of Ukraine focuses on the prohibition of homosexuality described as a phenomenon that “harms the rights of the family.” Homosexuality is listed together with alcoholism, drug addiction, prostitution, pedophilia, violence and others. The Committee actively opposed the Kyiv Gay Pride in May 2012. Another key theme of their activities is resistance to juvenile justice in Ukraine.

Igor Druz’ is also a co-founder of the Kyiv organization People’s Council. He defines People’s Council as “Orthodox-patriotic movement which rejects the liberal model of the state that affects faith and a healthy family.” Despite criticism of many anti-gay initiatives as ‘not radical enough’, People’s Council is ready to cooperate with them ad hoc for the common cause. For instance, Igor Druz’ stressed that situational association and cooperation of various forces to disrupt gay pride allowed to prevent “perverts’ walk on the Mother of Russian cities.”¹⁰ Moreover, Druz’ is an advisor to the Representative of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) in Ukrainian Parliament Archbishop Lvivskiy Augustine (Markevich). This mix of affiliations is an eloquent example of the combination of religious and right wing ideologies, organizations and institutions.

This illustrates that radical right and religious organizations find common ground for cooperation and actively mobilize for common causes. These groups vary by the level of (explicit) violence and degree of radicalism; however, they are unanimous in their view of LGBT people as third-rate citizens who should not be entitled to the same rights as heterosexual people. First of all, Religious right groups are concerned with the right to marriage despite the fact that there has been no public debate or legislative initiatives to legalize same-sex marriages in Ukraine. Still, the LPG counter-march against Gay Pride in May 2012 has added a slogan “Homosexual ‘marriage’ is not a human right” among their other anti-gay statements.

Ukrainian nationalist right-wing organizations use similar rhetoric regarding sexual and reproductive rights, except that they explicitly oppose themselves to pro-Russian politics. These include All-Ukrainian Union, now a political party in the Ukrainian Parliament, “Freedom” which lists “banning propaganda of

sexual perversions” as one of the articles in their political program and actively opposes to demonstrations and public events supporting LGBT rights.

Sexual and reproductive rights, including LGBT rights and right to abortion, become common targets of churches of various denominations, religious organizations, and individual politicians with their ‘pocket’ NGOs. Since the direct initiatives of churches are less visible and intense than manifold activities of religious organizations, joint anti-gay and anti-women politics of Religious right is often represented as “civil society.” It is remarkable that many of these Religious right organizations label themselves as “movements.” The government often eagerly accepts their proposals and presents such cooperation as response to the same “civil society.” It is not coincidence that with regard to certain issues such as sexuality religious organizations are the only ones whose voices are taken into account by the government. However, cooperation with Religious right provides necessary legitimization to state’s decisions as if they were supported by the population.

Apart from religious organizations, voices of various churches are represented through the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations which includes 19 members. It was founded as a “representational interfaith consultative and advisory body aimed to unite churches and religious organizations¹¹ in spiritual renewal of Ukraine, coordination of interchurch dialogue, and participation in developing of legislation drafts on relations between the State and denominations” in 1996.¹² However, the Council of Churches has become significantly active only since 2006. In spite of the fact that memorandum of organization stresses that “Council bases its work on the principles of equality and equal rights,”¹³ one of their first joint documents was the “Declaration on negative attitude toward the phenomenon of homosexuality and attempts to legalize the so called same-sex marriages (registration of same-sex partnerships)” which will be further analyzed in the next chapter of this paper. This same declaration was afresh signed by the Christian churches of Ukraine in 2010.

Discourse Analysis of Religious Right Anti-Gay Rhetoric

In this chapter I will conduct discourse analysis of the following documents: “Declaration on negative attitude toward the phenomenon of homosexuality and attempts to legalize the so called same-sex marriages (registration of same-sex partnerships)” by the Council of Churches¹⁴ (2007); printed brochures “Anti-family Technologies: Threat to National Security” by LPG¹⁵ (2010), “Gender in Its True Colors: Through Gender Politics to Dictatorship of Homosexuality” by Parental Movement¹⁶ (2010-2011) and “Gender ‘educa-

tion', or How Your Children Will Be Made Homosexual"¹⁷ by the web-platform Stop-Gender. These published brochures are distributed during various conferences on gender issues, as well as anti-gay or anti-women demonstrations and other public activities organized by Religious right groups.

Council of Churches' Declaration on Homosexuality

Declaration of Council of Churches constructs homosexuality as "evil": "[S]exual relations between people of same sex are against nature and are evil. (...) No one must use freedom [of one's actions] for creation and amplification of evil." Their argumentation assumes that homosexuality is 'contagious'; it can be transmitted and imposed upon another person. The document uses the concept of "propaganda" and states that recognition of homosexuality as a variant of norm encourages people to engage in same-sex relations. It treats homosexuality simultaneously as a consequence of a personal free but "ill-judged" choice and an "expression of deeply-rooted sin" which one can overcome through faith and avowal of 'sinful nature' of same-sex relations.

Legalization of same-sex marriages is linked to "social catastrophe" and "distortion of the idea of public morality." The Declaration invokes examples of developed countries as those where institution of traditional family is negated which supposedly leads to demographical crisis, drastic decline of public morality and eventually all the way down to legalization of pedophilia. Linking (male) homosexuality with pedophilia is all-pervasive in every homophobic argumentation, religious or otherwise. It is worth noting that this concern with the legalization of same-sex partnerships has arisen in the context where no attempts to introduce same-sex partnerships have been made, neither in 2007 when the Declaration was created nor up to date. Council of Churches explicitly pronounces that a set of rights and privileges stipulated by the legal status of marriage should stay exclusively heterosexual, rightfully available solely for "traditional spouses." Such pronouncement only proves that LGBT community strives for equal rights and not some kind of 'special rights' as it is often argued by heterosexist critics.

Declaration's formal claims that believers do not treat lesbians and gay men with hatred or prejudice are overturned by its prohibition for any religious person "to put up with homosexuality, other immoral doings and their propaganda as spiritual and social occurrences." The Declaration states: "For evil, God punishes not only those who commit it, but also those who approve of it, either aloud or silently." The Declaration was slightly amended in 2010 when it was signed afresh and once again presented to the media. The new text additionally

proclaims: those “who support propaganda of homosexuality cannot be considered Christians,” whereas “society has no right to turn the blind eye to the homosexual propaganda taking it as if it were a ‘private matter’ of those inclined to this sin.”¹⁸ Such explicit stirring of hatred and hostility when even ‘lack of condemnation’ is regarded sinful and unlawful constitutes one of the most extreme examples of anti-gay rhetoric in Ukraine. Hypocritical and almost mocking affirmation that Council of Churches doesn’t advocate for discrimination against homosexual people does not modify the tone of the Declaration.

Religious Right Texts on Homosexuality

Religious right discourse on homosexuality is primarily based on conspiracy theories where Ukraine either as a separate country or in union with ‘Slavic countries’ is set against Europe or the ‘West’. Traditional family values, morale, and religious purity are claimed to constitute centuries-old essence of Ukrainian nation. European values of human rights, on the contrary, are defined as ‘filthy’, ‘corrupt’, ‘immoral’, and ‘degenerate’. For instance, the brochure “Gender in Its True Colors” notes: “Ukrainian society with its history based on true Christian values does not accept imposed immoral principles of perishing European civilization. (...) European Union sets up anti-values that destroy the social unit, the family, which is a direct threat to the national sovereignty! All sensible social forces must make a stand for Ukraine against the moral genocide.”¹⁹ Frequently not only ‘the spread of homosexuality’ but the same-sex relationships themselves are marked as ‘imposed by the West’, ‘alien’ and ‘outward’ to the Ukrainian culture, notwithstanding the fact that there are a number of established terms of Ukrainian or Russian origin that denote homosexuality.

The LPG’s brochure “Anti-family technologies” pursues conspiracy theory with racism and Islamophobia: “With regard to family, Europe is an example of how one should not live. Almost all European youngsters have tried drugs and are sunk into drunkenness and uncontrolled sexual behavior. Its indigenous people are dying out, and its lands are quickly populated by blacks, Arabs, and Chinese.”²⁰ The brochure aims to frighten its readership with the example of Paris where “Arab immigrants have organized property riots in the streets.” These quotes echo the typical right-wing moral panic created around demographical issues and the threat of extinction of indigenous [white] population. The religious dissimilarity is emphasized as most threatening to the national and ethnic borders; Muslims are portrayed as the utter “Others” to the Ukrainian nation and Ukrainian land. However, the same alleged religious extremism can be highly praised when discussed in the framework of safeguarding rigid gender norms: “In Iran, after the Islamic revolution of 1979 over 4000 of

lesbians and homosexuals have been sentenced to death. The clerical regime has also executed many women for adulterate sex. (...) I suppose the situation with prostitution, pedophilia, and rape in Iran is hundreds of times better than in our extremely cultured and civilized country."²¹

Liberalization of gender norms is seen by Religious right as a much larger threat than changes in demographic statistics or ethnic composition of population. Changes in gender regime brought by gender politics and education are represented as demolition of the traditional 'natural' world order. Distinguishing between sex as biological and gender as socially constructed concepts introduced by gender theory and widely circulated by women's organizations is in the immanent focus of Religious right groups. The issue of homosexuality is tackled particularly in this framework. The title of the brochure "Gender in Its True Colors" itself as well as other central informational materials of the anti-gay groups serve the purpose of 'unmasking the truth' behind gender politics and gender theory. Religious right create moral panic around the term gender exploiting metaphor of many-headed monster whose aim is to destroy the 'natural order' of rigid male/female, man/woman division. The authors of "Gender in Its True Colors" stress that "[Gender theory] fixes at least 5 genders: male, female, bisexual, homosexual, and transsexual. (...) Therefore, the person is born polisexual, with a number of genders, and can freely choose what to be, a man or a woman."²² The brochure "Gender 'education'" goes even further: in the chapter titled "From five to thirty genders" the authors continue that Congress of the USA is allegedly planning to legalize "30 types of severe mental disorders (...) thus zoophilia, pedophilia, incest, necrophilia, urophilia, homosexuality, trans-genderism and other perversions will be protected by the law."²³ Here 'new genders' are constructed as sexual deviations, not gender ones.

'Heterosexuality' as a concept is not mentioned in most of Radical right materials; it is assumed as natural and self-evident. Thus, 'proper gender roles' are implicitly marked by heterosexuality: it is understood that 'male' means masculine and attracted to female, and 'female' means feminine and attracted to male. Homosexual people are therefore constructed as 'deviant' not only based on sexuality, but also on gender: unlike 'normal' heterosexual people they are said not to be ascribed to any gender at all. They are totally excluded from gender matrix. "Gender in Its True Colors" spells this out: "Main goal [of the genderist conspiracy] is to destroy heterosexual division of people into men and women and replace it with new division according to the theory of 'gender'." This new gender division is depicted as a total chaos where a person's gender is changing every second depending on one's mood.

Homosexuality is further pathologized through association with non-reproductivity. Most Religious right groups define lesbians and gay men as

unable to bear and raise children. "Gender in Its True Colors" makes distinction between lesbians and gay men: supposedly men essentially cannot have children since male homosexuality is "an ideology of death that has nothing to do with reproduction"; whereas lesbians as women are said to be able to reproduce, however, in order to maintain population rates "it would be necessary for each woman to bear more than two children (...), so for two women there should be at least 5 children, which is rather exceptional."²⁴ This alleged inability of LGBT people to reproduce serves as a bedrock for creating moral panic around 'demographic crisis'.

Creating moral panics around homosexuality and reproduction have a long history in North American and Western European countries since 1970s. As Kath Weston remarks, "from New Right polemics to the rhetoric of high school hallways "recruitment" joins "reproduction" in the allusions to homosexuality. Alleging that gay men and lesbians must seduce young people in order to perpetuate (or expand) the gay population because they cannot have children of their own, heterosexist critics have conjured up visions of an end to society, the inevitable fate of the society that fails to 'reproduce'. Of course, the contradictory inferences that sexual identity is 'caught' rather than claimed, and that parents pass their sexual identities to their children, are unsubstantiated. The power of this chain association lies in the play on words that blurs the multiple senses of the term 'reproduction.'"²⁵ She continues that "by shifting without signal between reproduction's meaning of physical procreation and its sense as the perpetuation of society as a whole, the characterization of lesbians and gay men as non-reproductive beings links their supposed attacks on 'the family' to attacks on society in the broadest sense."²⁶ Notwithstanding that this was written in the 1980s based on the context of the USA, the exact same argumentation is core to anti-gay groups in Ukraine nowadays. It is omnipresent in their slogans, street demonstrations and speeches, printed materials and other public activities.

Ukrainian anti-gay groups base their arguments on two scenarios. According to the first one, gay population seeks expansion through 'recruiting' or 'homosexual propaganda'. One is made to believe that gay men try to make homosexuality seem as an attractive fashionable trend, or that LGBT people have such a strong state protection from discrimination that it becomes advantageous to claim gay identity, or that gay men seduce or force young men and boys into sexual relationships. "Gender in Its True Colors" proclaims that because of the alleged inability to reproduce, "the goal of homosexuals is to catch as many as possible youngsters into their nets." The authors give the (inexhaustive) list of ways in which gay men find "new victims":

1. Get a teenager or a lad drunk and rape him; in the morning he wakes up – that's it! "Now you are just like us!"

2. Rape in the army or in prison. Afterwards it becomes a bad habit.

3. Catch boys and teach them this business.²⁷

Such discrepancies in imagining homosexuality simultaneously as an 'in-born rare mental disorder' and as easily 'caught' from others either on the base of conviction, habit or force is very common for Religious right argumentation. Employing heavily loaded language of violence, deceit, dictatorship, and abuse intends to negate these discrepancies.

Another scenario that helps gay people 'expand their population', according to the Religious right, centers around horror stories of the juvenile justice system. This set of homophobic narratives is common for post-Soviet countries, where there have been legal attempts to introduce juvenile justice system in recent years. Juvenile justice aims to have less severe punishment for underage youngsters who commit crimes. However, Religious right discusses it mainly in terms of giving children 'way too much freedom' and 'impunity' and taking away control from the parents. Anti-gay groups call juvenile justice "system of legalized kidnapping"; one of its goal is said to be taking away children from their heterosexual families and giving them to the homosexual couples. Anti-gay groups are concerned that state will interfere into the private sphere of the family and will take away parental rights from those who abuse or mistreat their children. Religious right does not recognize violence against children within a family as a problem: according to their views, parents may discipline children in any way they like. On the contrary, lack of discipline is seen as a threat since it would allegedly cause uncontrollability of children and eventually loosen 'moral norms' and gender norms among younger generation. The child is said to have only one right – the right to blood parents. However, in the potential situation when a child would be taken to a shelter or an orphan home because of the parental abuse, the Religious right at once depicts a child as a victim of violence and abuse at the hands of social workers or adoptive parents. Anti-gay groups compare shelters for children to "concentration camps" and juvenile justice system to "fascism" and "war."

The attacks on juvenile system are in line with the general conspiracy theory of "homodictatorship." All printed materials that I analyze in this chapter mention "oligarchy conspiracy" which plans to significantly decrease the world population supposedly in order to receive more resources and easier control over population. Some materials emphasize that this "demographic genocide" is conducted particularly against 'Slavic nations.'²⁸ In any case, juvenile justice together with planned parenthood, sexual education, access to contraception and abortion are all said to discourage society from reproducing as a part of the world conspiratorial plot. Therefore, gay men and lesbians, children that grow up in the orphan homes, emancipated women who refuse to reproduce

“because of their selfishness” and even people who are “tolerant to racial and ethnic minorities” are all contributing to the creation of the “new world order.”²⁹ In response, Religious right groups define boundaries of the status quo that is claimed to be threatened by these various developments. These developments are seen as dangerous because they may question the ‘natural’ and ‘God-given’ parental authority over children, man’s unconditioned power in the family, and woman’s primarily role as a mother. The new slogan added at the LPG street demonstration in 2012 depicted heterosexual couples at the background of crossed out homosexual couples and read “Preserve the polarity!” This illustrates investment of Religious right discourse in biodeterminism and rigid polarization of gender roles. Scattered attempts of LGBT groups, human rights activists, writers, and artists to normalize homosexuality in public sphere are perceived as a threat to Religious right foremost because they challenge the traditional gender regime.

Legislation on ‘Homosexual Propaganda’

In this chapter I examine connections between Religious right groups and politicians, and conduct discourse analysis of the recent legislative drafts to ban the so called ‘homosexual propaganda’:

(1) the primary Draft Law #8711 “On Introduction of Changes to Certain Legislative Acts of Ukraine (regarding protection of children’s rights on the safe information sphere)” (2011);

(2) the subsequent Draft Law #10290 “On Banning of Homosexual Propaganda Aimed at Children” (2012);

(3) and Draft Law #10729 “On Introduction of Changes to Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offences (regarding making it an offence for homosexual propaganda)” (2012).

Concepts of “moral crisis” and “propaganda” are taken up without any explanation or justification by statistics and implemented into the bills. Legislative initiative not only interprets “propaganda” as violence but broaden it to any mentioning of homosexuality in the public sphere. Some concepts are transformed into more acceptable and beneficial legislative language. For example, the concept of “conspiracy” is not clearly read but is rather modified to a “threat to national security” and “demographic crisis.”

In the explanatory note to the bill #8711 MPs justify their initiative by proclaiming homosexuality “a threat to a national security as it leads to HIV/AIDS, as well as destroys the family institution and may lead to a demographic crisis.”³⁰ The purpose of the bill is to establish liability for the “abuse of free-

dom of speech of print media or television and radio" for mentioning homosexuality. The bill sets criminal liability for import, production and distribution of products that "propagate" homosexuality. Besides changes to the Criminal Code of Ukraine and the notorious law on public morality, the bill provides amendments to the Law of Ukraine "On the print media (Press) in Ukraine" and the Law of Ukraine "On Television and Radio" which implies censorship in the informational sphere. The arguments identically retranslate statement of Ruslan Kukharchuk, leader of the LPG: "Propaganda and spread of homosexuality is a threat to the state national security. Three reasons: The first threat: spread of homosexuality leads to the spread of AIDS; the second reason is a threat to deepen and strengthen already difficult demographic situation. And the third one is the destruction of the family institution."³¹ Unfortunately arguments of 'defenders of morality' are not only reflected in legislative initiatives but gradually become commonplace in political discussions around homosexuality in Ukraine.

Despite the fact that in 1990 the World Health Organization excluded homosexuality from the International Classification of Diseases, the bill proposes to return into application the discriminatory term 'homosexuality', which is scientifically incorrect, pathologized and associated with medical diagnosis, thereby laying the discriminatory terminology in legislative regulation.

The authors of the bill speculate with HIV statistics in Ukraine and reproduce stereotypical prejudices against homosexual people. Manipulating with moral panic around the 'demographic crisis', MPs oppose homosexuality to fertility, capability to reproduce and have children. Obviously, the appeal to the demographic situation for MPs is a convenient rhetorical maneuver to justify discriminatory homophobic legislative initiative. Lesbians and gays do not lose their reproductive function through non-heterosexuality; this is clearly an exclusively ideological construct which postulates lesbians and gays as "others," and like any other form of racism serves to justify discrimination.

The final and, in fact, the key arguments in favor of criminalizing so-called 'homosexual propaganda' MPs designate protection of 'public morality' and 'protection of children'. But morality is not the same for all historical periods; it changes and becomes more sensitive to oppressed groups. For example, in the nineteenth century it was not immoral to keep girls illiterate; neither was considered immoral public neglect towards and refusal to hire representatives of some ethnic groups, such as Roma; child labor was morally accepted and so on. Morality is not unified; there is no single comprehensive list of values which would cover all issues and be shared by all members of society. International legal practice argues that moral views can't be the basis for discrimination. Despite this, the concept of 'public morality' is used in Ukrainian law: for example, the law "On

protection of public morality” defines it as “a system of ethics norms, norms of behavior formed on the basis of traditional spiritual and cultural values, notions of goodness, honor, dignity, social responsibility, conscience, justice.”³³ Despite the ambiguity and vagueness of this definition we can observe further attempts to integrate this concept into Ukrainian legislation.

The lack of definition of the term “propaganda” in the bill #8711 was one of the subjects of critique. However, subsequent draft laws to ban ‘homosexual propaganda’ provide the definition: the Draft Law #10290 of 30.03.2012 “On banning of homosexual propaganda aimed at children” states that “propaganda of homosexuality is an activity that has a purpose of and/or is expressed in intentional dissemination of any positive information about homosexuality that may impair physical and mental health of the children, their moral and spiritual development, including formation of misconceptions about social equivalence of traditional and non-traditional marriage relations, and in the future affect their choice of social orientation.”³³ According to the bill, any person under the age of 18 (lawful age) is considered a child.

Lawmakers continue to use vague and undefined wording of ‘morality’ and ‘spirituality’ which together with ‘propaganda’ constitute subjective qualifications and will inevitably lead to the subjectivity of the decision should the law be passed and implemented. The mentioned “damage to child’s physical health” unjustifiably links homosexuality directly to physical violence, rape, and pedophilia. The definition of ‘propaganda’ also reflects religious concept of ‘evil’ that is supported by the prohibition to speak about homosexuality positively, and inequality of homosexual relations to the ‘traditional marriage’. Sexual orientation extends to ‘social orientation’ giving homosexual orientation (“non-traditional sexual orientation” in wording of the bill) the features of deviance. The only norm of “social orientation” mentioned in the bill further reinforces heterosexuality as institutionalized, ‘natural’, and compulsory.

Taking into account the critique of the previous bill #8711, as such that violates the constitutional principle of non-discrimination on any grounds, limits freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, expression, the bill #10290 states that none of its provisions “shall be interpreted as limiting constitutional human and citizens’ rights and freedoms of thought and speech, free expression of opinion and belief, association in political parties and organizations, holding peaceful gathering and social events.” Protests or demonstrations for the rights of homosexual people do not qualify as ‘propaganda’ either.³⁴ However, more detailed review of ‘homosexual propaganda’ definition reveals clear contradictions and proves the above mentioned statement to be only declarative. The bill defines the following acts as ‘propaganda of homosexuality’: “parades, protests, pickets, demonstrations and other public gatherings aimed at and/or are expressed

in intentional dissemination of any positive information about homosexuality," "dissemination in the mass media messages, articles about homosexuality," "lessons, thematic discussions, interactive games, educational classes, elective courses, and other educational events about homosexuality or delivering to the child (children) notification about homosexuality," "spread of information about homosexuality in any form in secondary schools."³⁵

Also the bill introduces the concept of "nonpublic propaganda" that is "hidden (secret) activity that aims and/or is expressed in intentional dissemination of any positive information about homosexuality."³⁶ Thus legislative initiatives continue to reproduce contradictions contained in the Religious right discourse on the private/public divide. Phantom respect for lesbians' and gays' private lives is manifested in creation and recreation of 'permissible' boundaries for homosexual people. Many heterosexist critics invoke the argument of the 'bedroom': as if something people do in their private lives were acceptable as long as they did not bring it into the open. Generally, the notion of 'homosexual propaganda' as non-acceptable is set against rather 'permissible' private practices. However, according to this draft law, there should be no positive information about lives of gays and lesbians, whether in 'public' or 'private' spheres. Certainly the existence of such boundaries itself is the subject of feminist critique, as sexuality does not only concern sexual practices but saturates every aspect of life.

The Draft law #10729 also adds bisexuality and transgender to the 'black list' of those that should remain nameless. This bill copies the one that has been adopted in St. Petersburg, Russia in March 2012.

Particularity of these legislative initiatives is their emphasis on the protection of children. The appeal to 'propaganda' of sexuality is a typical homophobic rhetoric according to which all children are considered heterosexual. A child from birth consistently gets verbal, nonverbal, and visual signals of heterosexuality as the only norm. Promoting hatred and intolerance towards any manifestations of non-heterosexuality leads to the marginalization of lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender people, internal homophobia and self-stigmatization, discrimination and even physical abuse. The proposed bills would have clear negative consequences for those children and adolescents who are experiencing their homo- or bisexuality, and whom these bills are allegedly designed to protect. Bisexual or gay adolescents, as well as those who do not fit into the heteronormative framework of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' are subjected to bullying and violence in schools which leads to traumatic and sometimes tragic consequences. Providing the opportunity to receive and pass adequate information on sexuality is an important step in creating a safe information environment, while Ukrainian politicians propose initiatives that

incite violence on the basis of sexual orientation. However, this seems in line with the general view of the radical right and religious groups on children's rights: violence against children is often not recognized or even justified.

The conclusion of Central Scientific Experts Office of the Ukrainian Parliament's Secretariat was to reject the bill #8711. Although, the expert group which analyzed the bill has also defined homosexuality as a "sexual deviation."³⁷ Such rhetoric is not uncommon among conclusions of Central Scientific Experts Office. For instance, the Office have recommended another bill #8212 of 10.03.2011 to ban the usage of assisted reproductive technology for persons in same-sex relationships, justifying it with the "protection of a child born in a result of ART from violence, including sexual abuse by parents or other person who provides care for the child."³⁸ Likewise, experts of the Office groundlessly link upbringing of children in same-sex families directly to the sexual abuse of children.

Afterwards, relevant Committee for Freedom of Speech and Information recommended Parliament to adopt the bill #8711 in the first reading. This decision was made despite the negative conclusion of Central Scientific Experts Office, numerous letters to Ukrainian Parliament, condemnation from International and Ukrainian human rights international, and EU bodies.

In October 2012 when public attention was riveted on the fate of the bill on defamation, Parliament of Ukraine has adopted the Draft Law #8711 in the first reading. It took two attempts. In the speeches MPs referred to the support of the bill by churches, the Council of Churches of Ukraine in particular,³⁹ which questions the status of the secular and democratic country.

Number of organizations have expressed the appeal to reject the bill #8711, as it violates the following documents: the Constitution of Ukraine, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The draft law contradicts to the recommendations of the European Court of Human Rights and UN Committee on Human Rights. According to journalists, practical application of this bill would lead to limiting the right to freedom of expression and increasing of censorship in society and media.

There has been a trend to lobby Religious right initiatives through NGOs, especially through LPG and "All Together!" Religious leaders are trying to hide the fact of violating Constitutional principles of separation between church and state. Politicians, on the other hand, use activities and slogans of Christian organizations for their own political purposes and manipulation. For instance, MPs Tsarkov and Unguryan actively support LPG's actions aimed at introducing the bill to criminalize 'homosexual propaganda', and use protests to attract more media attention before the elections. It's not a coincidence that the bill #8711 tries to remove the following clause from the list of prohibited

published products: “products that preach religious beliefs that threaten life, health, citizens’ morality, violate their rights and freedoms or call for public order disturbing” by amending the Law “On Publishing.” The bill proposes to replace this clause with prohibition of “production or distribution of pornographic published products and one that promote the cult of violence, brutality, and homosexuality.” Thus, the bill clericalises Ukrainian law and contradicts to the Constitution of Ukraine which defines Ukraine as a secular state. Equating homosexuality to the cult of violence, lawmakers put it alongside with fascism and neo-fascism, national and religious hatred.⁴⁰

Meanwhile, President Viktor Yanukovich has promised to take into account believers’ opinion in approving the bill against ‘propaganda’ of homosexuality. Ukrainian Parliament Commissioner for Human Rights Valeria Lutkovska criticized the bill for the lack of definition of the term ‘homosexual propaganda’ and has requested to take into account this position during the preparation of the bill for the second reading. It is symptomatic that the bill #8711 has not been criticized for introducing discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and establishing illegal restrictions on the dissemination of information.

Conclusion

The Religious right groups such as LPG, “All Together!,” and Parental Committee of Ukraine that have been analyzed in more detail in this paper use heavy-loaded emotional language of ‘fascism’, ‘evil’, ‘violence’ and alike to create a moral panic around homosexuality. They monitor closely activities and events on gender topics and manipulate this information to present women’s and LGBT organizations as having vast resources and influence over state politics. Religious right discourse is based on various conspiracy theories of ‘homodictatorship’ and ‘oligarchy regimes’ whose alleged aim is to destroy Ukrainian nation and religion. In this rhetoric, LGBT people are portrayed as non-reproductive and as such posing a threat to the ‘family’ and society as a whole. Normalization of homosexuality seems particularly dangerous for the Religious right as it challenges the rigid traditional gender regime.

The conspiracy theories are further translated into the language of ‘demographic crisis’, ‘threat to national security’, decline of the institution of family, and protection of ‘public morality’ which are well suited for Ukrainian legislative discourse. Radical right and fundamentalist religious groups use their significant informational and financial capacities to popularize their ideas through informational campaigns, street demonstrations, conferences and other activities in public arena. Collaboration with right-wing MPs allows

lobbying of this set of homophobic and moralistic narratives into legislative drafts. Three bills that introduce a ban of the so called 'homosexual propaganda' are presented as a response to the 'concerned voices' of the civil society. The need to regulate this issue is justified under the guise of protecting children. The legislative drafts do not take children's interests into account but use this cover as a part of electoral populism.

In the increasingly conservative political climate such developments pose a threat not only of violating LGBT rights and imposing censorship in media and society, but also of restricting women's rights and strengthening sexist and xenophobic attitudes in the population.

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Katarzyna Pabijanek, Poland

The Role of the Catholic Church in Abortion Debates after 1989 in Poland

“The issue of antiabortion law proposal is treated here in a more serious way than some circles in Poland can imagine, I mean those circles which make it a matter of political manipulation. I am entitled to believe that the visit of John Paul II to Poland in June next year may be cancelled if the matter is not resolved in a favourable way before spring 1991” – wrote the Vatican journalist Dominik Morawski (*Solidarność*, No. 43, 26 October, 1990) when the rumors spread that the Polish parliament intends to promulgate the Unborn Child Protection Bill as a gift to the pope.

My proposal is to analyze how growing influence of the Catholic Church affected debate on abortion after 1989 in Poland.

Poland’s abortion law is one of the most restrictive in Europe and even more restrictive in practice than on paper. Although the law allows termination of pregnancy under three conditions – among them for therapeutic reasons and when as a result of a criminal act – legal abortion is actually not accessible even for women whose conditions fall under the exceptions.

The current law regulating access to abortion and the way it is observed is influenced by debate on so-called “fetal personhood” that started in Poland shortly before the collapse of communism.

In 1989 Polish government and opposition elites negotiated a transformation of state power from exclusive Communist Party rule to a governmental system partially open to the opposition. The new democratic government in Poland introduced a much freer market, a push toward the privatization of industries and trade, and restrictive family and social welfare policies. Throughout the early 1990s many individuals and groups in Poland resisted these policies. Complicating the tensions of a newly pluralized political environment was the simultaneous renewal of nationalist ideologies, sparked by the victory over a state socialism viewed as composed by the Soviet Union. Democratization in Poland has taken place alongside a resurgence of the nationalism. The nationalist discourses evoke a unified, singular tradition and destiny as necessary to the survival of a “real” (authentic) motherland. That this dynamic of democracy and nationalism has particularly and negatively affected women has been well documented (Einhorn 1993; Fuszara 2000; Gal and Kligman 2000). Within the rubric

of nationalism, women, as the subjects who physically give birth and symbolically reproduce the nation, are marked as vessels of the nation's moral integrity, survival, and coherence (Yuval-Davis 1996). Thus, reproductive politics – particularly laws regulating access to abortion – have become the territory on which conservative social ideologies play out fantasies of the ideal Polish mother.

In the first section of my paper, I will present the sequence of main events that contributed to establishing of Catholic Church leaders as actors in abortion debate in Poland. In the second section, my aim will be to overview the general trends regarding religious fundamentalism's influence on debates on intimate citizenship and link Polish example to general tendency.

The involvement of the Catholic Church in the abortion debates dates back to 1956, when the Law on the Termination of Pregnancy was passed allowing abortion on various grounds, including social conditions. The Catholic Church leaders criticized the new legislation, but their doubts were silenced by society's eagerness to take advantage of the liberal legislation. In 1989, after the Iron Curtain was raised, the abortion was put in the forefront of political debate throughout Eastern Europe (Gal and Kligman 2000). The attempts to curtail legalized abortion were among the very first legislative initiatives in the first democratically elected Parliament. The debate with active involvement of the Roman Catholic Church led to adoption of restrictive anti-abortion law in 1993. When the law was liberalized after elections in 1996, two political parties sent it to the Constitutional Tribunal questioning its constitutionality. And indeed, the verdict of the Constitutional Court pronounced the liberalized law unconstitutional. The justification for the decision – articulated at length and published with both supporting and dissenting opinions in the press – pivoted on the category of the „conceived child“. Moreover, according to the decision, not only abortion at any stage of pregnancy is a procedure that violates such person's right to life, but also it threatens newly established Polish democracy. This way the court's decision constructed not only a presumption of fetal personhood but also a space in which fetus becomes a subject of the state (Holc). The text of the decision elevates the fetus/„unborn child“ to the status of „unborn citizen“ as it is presented as subject of state authority and welfare goals. This wording of the decision has had decisive impact on shaping the abortion debate in Poland. It has also enabled the Roman Catholic Church to enter in the secular political life of Poland, which happened in contravention of the Polish Constitution, but in the name of defending fetal personhood that was framed as main prerequisite for building the „real“ democracy.

In order to understand how was it possible, it is necessary to reflect on the position of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland. According to declarations, majority of Polish population is Catholic. For many Poles, the Church has

been a symbol of nationalism throughout Poland's turbulent history, especially under the communist regime, when it positioned itself as the center of anti-communist opposition.

Once the leaders of the anti-communist opposition established themselves as decision-makers of the new Polish democracy, they hurried to pay back the debt for supporting anti-communist opposition under the communist rule. They quickly established „male democracy” (Eisenstein) in which women were reduced to their reproductive functions.

One of the most important figures behind support granted to the anti-communist opposition by the Roman Catholic Church was the late pope, John Paul II. Internationally he has gained disputable reputation after condemning family planning and condom use, even in the critical situation of HIV/AIDS pandemic.

After the collapse of communism in 1989, as the country tried to transform itself into a modern, democratic society, the Church has been confronted with difficulties trying to redefine its role in Poland. The fall of communism resulted in an increase in the political power of the Catholic Church. The attempts on behalf of leaders of the Church to influence Polish politics are especially evident in the abortion debate that started in Poland in the late 1980s.

The Polish Church officials advocate an absolute prohibition on abortion. According to the Catholic teaching, abortion is a murder because a fetus is a human being from a moment of conception, existing independently of the wish or the will of the woman. Therefore, according to the Roman Catholic Church doctrine, abortion is a direct violation of the right to life enjoyed by every human being, and a woman should be prohibited from having an abortion, even if her life is in danger.

Individual priests, the Polish Conference of Bishops along with politicians influenced by the Roman Catholic Church undertook wide array of initiatives headed towards restricting Polish women's access to abortion. Starting with the letter sent to the management of Polish state TV in 1989 to the recent statement of the Polish Conference of Bishops encouraging Polish parliamentarians to ban eugenic abortions in October 2012.

What is happening in Poland is just an example of religious fundamentalism or religious extremism understood as the use of religion as a political tool to control women and to curb the support for their human rights that has been extensively observed in the past 20 years throughout our region. This can be seen, on the one hand, as a response to the recognition of reproductive rights of women for the first time at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 by governments around the world, and on the other, the growing role of religion in the post-communist societies of

Central and Eastern Europe. Fundamentalist/extremist groups in CEE region use religion against human rights – particularly against sexual and reproductive rights – in several ways, including:

- Labeling sexual rights as a Western agenda that is imposing new forms of imperialism in order to make the traditional society and ways of life of the people in the region defunct, and
- Claiming to counteract that the religious extremists impose the traditional misogynist interpretations of religious texts and teachings and do so quite selectively.

Despite using religion as a basis for their actions, the approaches taken by the fundamentalists/extremists are anything but religious. This is evident in the way cultural values are packaged as strict religious tenets by the Roman Catholic Church, which uses out-of-context literal interpretation of religious texts to bar women's access to contraception and abortion. Fundamentalist groups manipulate religious sentiments amongst people of faith to impose narrow and conservative interpretations of religious texts, treating historical religious teachings outside its context and evolving capacity. When fundamentalist notions take the form of a political agenda and are transformed into vicious actions targeted at certain vulnerable and marginalized groups, it translates into religious extremism that adversely affects the society as a whole. In either case, whether fundamentalist ideologies or extremist actions, the problem is not religion per se but its politicization. The use and misuse of religious sentiments in favor of a certain socially dominant group is at the root of religious extremism today.

No matter what is the religion, the analysis of fundamentalisms seems to suggest that the common denominator is the objective to control bodies and identities, particularly of women. Such approaches are inherently problematic, as they are clearly patriarchal, based on cultural misogynist interpretations and selectively used against women and other marginalized groups only.

In this situation, the main challenge for women's rights advocates is to address these fundamentalisms by reinterpreting religious texts from a women-centered and feminist perspective, constructing clear demarcations between culture and religion and at the same time carefully recognizing that demonizing religion per se might turn out to be problematic.

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Rusudan Gotsiridze, Georgia

Why does the Gender Equality Disappear at the Church Gate?

*„What we see is not necessarily what is there,
What we see depends on where we are standing.
No matter how much anybody sees, nobody sees it all.
What we see is always subject to correction“*

Robert McAfee Brown

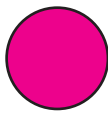
To be honest, religion has gained not very good reputation on different stages of the civilisation development. As a rule, the secular society was ahead about true human values while the Church has bailed to be the Prophetic Voice for the society.

The Bible authors, Prophets and the Church Fathers were special people, chosen by God to reveal His Truth, but still all these people were human beings, people of their socio-cultural environment. Does not matter how rich the church experience is, it is never perfect, there is always something left to discover. There have always been some issues Church was struggling to understand. It was true about slavery, racism which is not argued any more. While working on this particular research I tried to find the basis for the gender egalitarianism both in Old and New Testament as well as in the Christian Church experience and also to see the future prospects.

Biblical Egalitarianism

Christian Egalitarianism holds that all human persons are created equally in God's sight – equal in fundamental worth and moral status. This view does not just apply to gender, but to religion, skin colour and any other differences between individuals. All have equal responsibilities to use their gifts and obey their calling to the glory of God. God freely calls believers to roles and ministries without regard to class, gender, or race.

Some scholars believe that the principle of egalitarianism was present in the teachings of Jesus and the early Christian movements, but this is a highly



contested view. These interpretations of Christian origins have been criticized for “anachronistically projecting contemporary ideals back into the first century.” In the Middle Ages Julian of Norwich and Hildegard of Bingen explored the idea of a divine power with both masculine and feminine aspects. Proto-feminists from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries addressed objections to women learning, teaching and preaching in a religious context.

The first wave of feminism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included an increased interest in the place of women in religion. Women who were campaigning for their rights began to question their inferiority both within the church and in other spheres justified by church teachings.

As Christianity is built on the basement of the Old Testament teaching, in order to see what the New Testament equality means it is important to dig into the Old Testament understanding. There was a particular social and historical background that influenced the patriarchal nature of Judaic culture. It can be seen in the Scripture as well as in the historical reality.

Creation Story is not a single narrative in the Bible. Even more, it is not the first book written in the Scripture. There are two similar but very different narratives of the creation in the Bible.

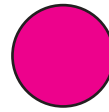
“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.” / Genesis 1:27

This first narrative tells the creation story within one verse how human being was created as man (ish - אִישׁ) and women (ishah - אִשָּׁה). This is the story of two equal beings. The second narrative is more detailed story which pictures women as subordinated being: The Lord God said,

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” / Genesis 2:18

The so called “dual nature anthropology” interpretation gives the most powerful patriarchal influence on theology. It speaks about two creations of which one is superior to the other; while the “single nature anthropology” is all about the creation of A Human Being on the sixth day. Human Being is a crown of the creation that had both masculine and feminine natures while being the image of God.

If we continue this chain, we can see that even in God creator there are both feminine and masculine natures. This is not something projected from the modern ideas. VIII century scholar John Damascus speaks about motherhood of God. Later, Julian of Norwich repeats the same concept in XV century.



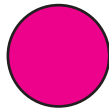
Old Testament is all about the history of God's people who have been chosen by God and entrusted his Truth. Sanctification and purification of God's people was about to be different, set apart from the rest of the world. As the scripture says in Leviticus 20:24 "I am the Lord your God, who has set you apart from the nations." It implied to be apart from the religious understandings and beliefs of the nations around them.

We read in Deuteronomy 16:21 and 2 Kings 23:4-7 about the goddess Asherah (אֲשֵׁרָה). Asherah in Semitic mythology is a Semitic mother goddess, who appears in a number of ancient sources including Akkadian writings. She is identified as the wife or consort of the Sumerian Anu or Ugaritic El, the oldest deities of their pantheons. This role gave her a similarly high rank in the Ugaritic pantheon. The Book of Jeremiah refers to Asherah when it uses the title "Queen of Heaven" (Hebrew: מַלְכֵּי־הַשָּׁמַיִם לְמֶלֶכֶת) in Jer 7:18 and Jer 44:17-19, 25. The more popular was Asherah's cult in the Old Testament People's contemporary cultures the more radical was the distance of Jews from the understanding of feminine nature of God.

It is very interesting to observe the fearful attitude of the Old Testament people towards women. In order to see the reason it is important to follow the logic of the men-women physical difference. This particular track goes to the reproductive role of women and in particular, it is all about blood. Anthropological researches show that primitive societies treated blood as mystic phenomenon. The fact that bleeding was resulted by physical weakness or even death created the apprehension towards the Blood. Every religion has its own understanding and explanation of blood. For one culture, blood was about life and accordingly it was a sacred phenomenon; for others – blood was about death and something unclean.

Jews have their own understanding of Blood. It explains their specific diet. The blood must be removed from the meat, as there is a biblical prohibition against the eating of blood. (Gen 9:4, Lev 17:10-14, Deut 12:23-24). All large arteries and veins are to be removed, as well as any bruised meat or coagulated blood. Then the meat has to be purged of all remaining blood (koshering). The process is generally performed by letting the meat soak for around 30 minutes. Consequently, the Blood was connected to religious rituals. It shows how they try to distance from it. The same is about the bleeding of women. Apprehensive attitude is very clear. Women are considered unclean during the menstrual period and not only they but also the bed and the people, who may occasionally touch them, are declared unclean.

Christian thinking was very much influenced by the Greco-Roman Culture too. Ancient Greek thinkers created the tradition of freedom and justice that lies in the basement of modern democracy. However, they also gave the



basement to development of misogyny tradition. This tradition starts about VIII century BC when Hesiod told the myth about Pandora; the first woman created by Zeus in order to punish Prometheus for stealing the fire from gods. Zeus needed an evil creature that would be desirable and attractive. Pandora opened the fatal box and freed all the sins, illnesses and other evils. Pandora's story is very similar to Biblical Eve's story that is about her mistake to test forbidden fruit and causing the fall.

Plato speaks about women as imperfect creations. He says that human nature is dual – masculine and feminine and the masculine race is "Superior." He also speaks that the sinners would be reincarnated into women as a punishment for the sins. Moreover, if that did not work the next punishment would be the reincarnation into beast. So women were somewhere in between men and beast.

It is important to study carefully the story of the Original Sin. That is the most powerful weapon against the equality theory. For centuries, the traditional interpretation of Adam and Eve's fall was the source of the subordinate position of women.

Thomas Aquinas was the most popular interpreter of the story. In his *Summa Theologicae*, he speaks about women as a source of sin – *Femina est mas occasionatus*.

Disciples about Women

The disciples were the ordinary children of their culture. It can be easily observed in their understanding of what Jesus says and does about women. Very often, they omit women in their narration. For instance: 1 Corinthians 15:5-6 Paul speaks about Jesus appeared to Paul and the twelve disciples after His resurrection. No word about Mary who was the first one to meet resurrected Christ in the cemetery yard. In addition, of course Paul does not take in account any women who were present when Jesus appeared before the disciples.

It is not surprise if you think about the Jewish grammar and grammatical gender in particular:

1. pupils– [talmodot]- תלמידות (all women)
2. pupils – [talmodim]- תלמידים (+ one man)
3. friends- [khavot]- חברות (all women)
4. friends – [khaverim]- חברים (+ one man)

Apostle Paul is the most quoted author about the superiority of men over women (1 Cor. 14:34-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-12; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1-5). But on the other hand it is Apostle Paul who can be quoted for the equality:

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male

and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” / Gal. 3:28

One thing is clear – the dispute about Biblical Egalitarianism cannot be solved by fighting with verses from one or the other book in the Bible. Everybody interprets according to the tradition and culture one belongs to. In this case it is important to understand what does Jesus say about women.

Jesus about women:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”
Luke 4:18-19*

This is Jesus declaration of freedom, declaration of universal human values. He came for those who were marginalised and oppressed. Jesus teaches socio-cultural freedom. He turns everything upside down, everything that was divine and essential for Jews. This particular declaration implies to women particularly. There are several important stories in Jesus’ life that shows what he thought and what he wanted his disciples to understand.

First, he was born by a woman. God uses a woman; the most ignored and marginalised human being as a sacred vessel for His incarnation.

The second and very important story is about a Samaritan woman at the well (John 4:1-42). This is a story of Jesus meeting somebody who was Samaritan, not very respected divorced young woman and there was no chance Jesus would talk to her. But Jesus reveals Himself to this woman and tells her His name (I am), explains about the temple, about the holy water...

There is a wonderful story of two sisters Mary and Martha (John 11:1-44) in the Gospel. Here Martha does exactly what the society wants proper woman to do. She is a good hostess, looks after the family... and all of a sudden Jesus gives privilege and praises the one who does everything on the contrary. The pose Apostle John describes Mary sitting at the feet of Christ is a position of the teacher and the disciple. Jesus tells to women, that their place is not where the society allows them to act, but “next to Him.” He gives the free choice to women.

We spoke about blood and the apprehension towards it. There is a woman in the New Testament who was bleeding for 12 years. She was untouchable,

she was unclean and she was a threat for everybody around her. However, when she touches Christ, He says nothing about uncleanness, but He praises her courage and faith.

The most powerful story is a story of Mary Magdalene. Church tradition defused her portrait and mixed her story with the prostitute who was forgiven and set free. Mary was a rich widow who supported first community (Luke 8:2). All four evangelists write that Mary was there on the Calvary (Mark 15:40; Matthew 27:56; John 19:25; Luke 23:49). She was one of the few brave followers of Christ who did not leave their master until the very end.

The last discoveries showed that Mary of Magdalene was a significant figure in the early Christianity. In 1896, German Scholar Karl Reinhardt found a manuscript in Cairo Market written in Coptic. It was Apostle John's apocryph, St. Peter's Acts and Mary's Gospel. This document shows the importance of her position among the disciples.

9:4-9 "3) Peter answered and spoke concerning these same things. 4) He questioned them about the Saviour: Did He really speak privately with a woman and not openly to us? Are we to turn about and all listen to her? Did He prefer her to us? 5) Then Mary wept and said to Peter, My brother Peter, what do you think? Do you think that I have thought this up myself in my heart, or that I am lying about the Saviour? 6) Levi answered and said to Peter, Peter you have always been hot tempered. 7) Now I see you contending against the woman like the adversaries. 8) But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you indeed to reject her? Surely the Saviour knows her very well."

There is another important thing about Mary. She was the one Jesus entrusted the most important task – to be the witness of His resurrection. While from the Jewish legal point of view women's witness was nothing (Talmud, Civil Law, Baba Kama – the first gate, 88a). This is one of the clearest pictures of Jesus challenging the Jewish socio-cultural order.

When we speak about the early Church, we need to take into consideration, that they did not have Gospel, as we understand it. They had no Creed, no temples or special church buildings. It is hard to say whether the first Christians could understand Jesus' teaching better than modern world does. They of course had some privileges as they had direct contact, but on the other hand they did not have the experience what we have – experience of lessons learnt from painful mistakes. One of the biggest challenges of the modern Christianity is Gender Equality. The struggle is obvious. There are quasi equality versions in different Christian traditions: equality on the level of salvation (Jesus died for everybody), equality in the involvement in Church life (social service/diaconal), Diaconal Ordination equality, Pastoral Ordination equality, and Bishop's Ordination Equality.

This is about power of the masculine culture and masculine society. As

long as the Church is about power, it is deprived of the most important thing – faith. The simpler was the structure of the early church the more natural was the human relationship. The stronger the church is, the more powerful and influential it becomes, the easier it loses its main mission – to be the prophetic voice in the society.

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LGBT AND SOCIETY



Homophobia in the Political Discourse

Homosexuality in Georgia was decriminalized in 2000. In addition, in 2012, according to the amendments made to the Criminal Code of Georgia, sexual orientation and gender identity were added to the list of crimes committed for intolerance motives that are considered aggravating circumstances.¹

While in western countries, the introduction/implementation of anti-discriminative laws on decriminalization and depathologization of homosexuality is the logical continuation of a long struggle for civil rights, in Georgia both changes are politically motivated and related to the declared aspiration of the country to join the common European space. Decriminalization of homosexuality was one of the indispensable steps for joining the Council of Europe and the amendments to the Criminal Code are related to the 2010 recommendations of the European Committee of Ministers on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity in the member countries.² The step made by the state in this direction was a necessary, but insufficient condition for the changes that would actually be reflected on the state of LGBTs in the country. No full-scale research has been conducted in Georgia until present, which would reflect the attitudes of the public towards the representatives of LGBT group and analyze the reasons and forms of demonstration of homophobia. The existing surveys studying the dynamics of changes in approaches and attitudes towards various values/ issues and/or groups (among them homosexuals) enable us to speak about the dynamics of homophobic attitudes of recent years.

According to the survey conducted by the “Institute of Policy Studies” in 2003, the majority of the respondents expressed negative attitude towards homosexual orientation (84% – negative, 14% – neutral, 2% – positive).³ As a result of the 2006 survey, 81.4% of the respondents stated that they would not wish to be friends with homosexuals and 71.4% did not want to work together with them.⁴ The surveys conducted by the Caucasian Research Resource Centre in 2009-2011 showed that the situation regarding homosexuality has not changed much and for 90% of people homosexuality is unacceptable.⁵

Other surveys conducted in 2011 to reveal attitudes and approaches to various minorities show the similar picture.⁶ The survey carried out by the South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation on attitudes and approaches of the population towards minorities has shown that among other

minorities the representatives of LGBT groups are under the greatest pressure.⁷ According to the assessment of the LGBT group itself, the attitude in the society towards them is getting more negative. According to the survey conducted in 2012, the number of people who considered that the attitude towards LGBT group was intolerant compared to 2006, has increased from 57% to 78%.⁸

The survey into discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation and gender identity carried out in 47 countries of Council of Europe has shown how diverse is the attitude towards the issue of LGBT in these countries. The authors of the research consider that this difference is based on two important aspects. The first is connected with national, religious and traditional values regarding gender, sex and family issues, while the latter is linked with the perception of public and private spheres and the visibility of LGBT group.⁹

As regards the issues of gender, sex and family, Georgia can be characterized as a country of deep patriarchal culture, including the concepts of masculinity and feminism.¹⁰ As the media analysis of recent years has shown, problematization of homosexuality is due to the concept of "being a Georgian/ Orthodox traditions."¹¹

As for the visibility of LGBT group in the public space, their appearance is automatically perceived as "the propaganda of homosexuality." "Purification" of the public space from LGBTs remains one of the mobilizing strategies to which religious organizations,¹² as well as representatives of some political forces resort.¹³

The culture of tolerance of the society has a significant impact on the level of homophobia in general. The events that had been developing in the 1990s in Georgia (and not only Georgia), clearly show how intensively the pseudo-tolerance culture had been cultivated by the Soviet regime. The Soviet regime, like any other totalitarian one, was in the first place directed against a human being, against an individual. In the process of development of a single, homogeneous mass, be it expressed at the level of behavior or an idea, any kind of "dissent" was perceived as the act against the existing regime. Among them was a "diverse" manifestation of sexual orientation.

In the 1920s, the Bolsheviks considered homosexuality as the manifestation of "bourgeois decay" and they were strongly convinced that after the proletarian revolution, homosexuality, as well as other forms of "sexual perversion" would disappear completely. However, later they changed this opinion and in the 1930s, it becomes a current concern to link homosexuality with anti-state actions – counter-revolution and espionage.¹⁴ This opinion, along with other factual material, is substantiated by the fact that in Stalin's life homosexuals had been persecuted and arrested not by the police but by the state security. And the letter by Maxim Gorky published in 1933 "Proletarian Humanism"¹⁵ had become

the basis for the ideology of declaring homosexuals as enemies of the people.

Another scientist studying the issues regarding homosexuals/homosexuality in the Soviet Union wrote that when it concerned popular or famous people, the representatives of security preferred to accuse them not of being homosexual but of being engaged in counter-revolutionary activities.¹⁶ In a later period, starting from the 1960s, an opposite trend appeared – this Article was often used as a punishment for “otherwise-minded” people who could not fit well into the ideological scheme of the Soviet system. In the opinion of Kon, the academician, with the aim of artificial reduction of the number of dissidents in the times of Khrushchev and Brezhnev’s rule, the security often arrested the undesirable for them persons on a charge of homosexuality.¹⁷

Thus, in order to feature homosexuality as a threat, the Soviet regime actively resorted to a myth about homosexuality having been originated in the West through artificial signification of territorial and ideological “alien.” In the 1990s, when homosexuality first appeared in the discourse of Georgian media, most of the articles featured show business representatives working abroad, which on the one hand determined the neutral tone of these articles (based on alienating the issue) and on the other, it strengthened the myth about the western origin of homosexuality.

This myth was reincarnated in the end of 1990s, exactly in the political discourse. From 1998, the process of gradual transformation of a homosexual/homosexuality as of an “alien” into an “our sick person” started in the media.¹⁸

Consequently, the existing political force inside the country, which declared the Western and liberal values as the main vector for the country’s development instead of Russia, played the role of an “ideological enemy.” This had made it possible to artificially “link” the concept of homosexuality to western, liberal values and to that particular political group which appealed to exactly these values when they came to power. Manifesting homosexuality as of a danger “threatening the Georgian nation with degeneration” and “running contrary to Georgian traditions and orthodoxy,” has acquired a political context.¹⁹

Apart from qualitative analysis of media monitoring materials, the dynamic use of the language of homophobic hatred in the Georgian media also indicates the politicization of the issue. As a rule, the peak of homophobia in the media coincides with the processes of the distribution of power in the country. In pre-election period, marking political opponent/opponents as homosexual, blaming for the propaganda of homosexuality in this case served on the one hand as a strengthening effect in the process of making an “alien” from the opponent and on the other – generalizing the future danger coming from the “alien” that posed a threat to the whole country.²⁰

Kindling the existing phobias in the society in the pre-election period re-

mains one of the main strategies for the manipulation of public opinion and mobilization of the electorate. Irresponsible statements made by politicians, the frequent use of the language of hatred and the low sensitivity of the society towards the threats coming from ideological xenophobia considerably enhance the intolerance towards separate marginalized groups and favors the initiation of violence in the society. The increasing dynamics of negative attitude toward the LGBT (and not only) in the country proves the above.

The first case of criticism about the use of the language of homophobic hatred in the political space was first heard in 2012 when one part of parliamentarians reacted to the legislative initiative proposed by the Christian Democratic Party.²¹

In the new Parliament among the members of former opposition now representing the majority there are many politicians who have been kindling and overtly expressing their homophobic attitudes. Whether the minority issues and anti-xenophobic discourse remains (at least at the level of declaration) the part of political mainstream is the matter of the future. But at present, the issue is still the subject for speculation.

Notes

1. Criminal Code of Georgia. Part 3/1, Article 53. According to the addition, commitment of a crime on the grounds of intolerance towards sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, nationality, ethnicity or any other form of discrimination is the aggravating circumstance for any corresponding crime prescribed by this Code.
2. CM/REC(2010)5-Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on Measures to Combat Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity. <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1606669>
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6. "In response to the question, "How much is it desirable for you to have the groups listed below in your neighborhood?" – The majority of respondents named homosexuals as the most undesirable, followed by drug users and persons with mental disorder. Besides, intolerance towards all groups, except those with mental disorders, increases along with the age." N. Sumbadze, *Generations and Values*, Institute of Policy Studies, Tbilisi, 2012. http://www.ipska.techtone.info/files/4313/4245/8451/Taobebi_da_Girebulebebi_-_Book_1.pdf
7. The survey of the South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation on attitudes

and approaches towards minorities, June 2011. The survey of the South Caucasus Regional Office of the Heinrich Boell Foundation on attitudes and approaches towards minorities, conducted in the frameworks of the project "Addressing Hate Speech in Georgia: A Litmus Test for Human Rights and Social Tolerance"

8. According to the results of the survey conducted by the Foundation "Inclusive" in 2006, 57.5% of the LGBT group assessed the attitude of the society as intolerant; 24.2% considered the public to be indifferent towards them, 10% thought the society was tolerant towards them (The survey on LGBT Discrimination in Georgia, Foundation "Inclusive," 2006). In 2012 the joint survey conducted by "Women's Initiative Support Group" and organization "Identity" has shown that the number of people among the representatives of LGBT who considers that the society is intolerant to them has increased to 78%. 15% of the respondents assess the attitude as "more intolerant than tolerant" and 4% - as "more tolerant than intolerant." 3% did not respond at all and the number of people who thinks the attitude of the society is tolerant is less than 1%. LGBT Discrimination Survey in Georgia, WISG, Tbilisi, 2012.

9. Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Europe, 2nd edition, Council of Europe, 2011. http://www.coe.int/t/Commissioner/Source/LGBT/LGBTStudy2011_en.pdf

10. Study on Homophobia, Transphobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Sociological Report: Georgia. COWI, 2011. http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/source/lgbt/georgiasociological_e.pdf

11. Aghdgomelashvili E., Homophobic Language of Hatred and Political Processes in Georgia. LGBT discrimination survey in Georgia. WISG, 2012.

12. "Certainly, it is totally unacceptable that such people appear on the screen. They are shown as if they are miserable and we have to pity them. By no means! We should not encourage and applaud their actions but the society should rather speak about how such person dares to make his/her ugly sexual orientation visible and promote such action." Father Michael: "The participants of a "Bar" and its authors will be severely punished." Author: Rusudan Advadze. Magazine "Sarke," 24-30 October, 2007.

13. See the speech of the leader of "Christian-Democrats" (the speech made in the Parliament on Constitutional changes on 22 May) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0yflb5WF-K8&feature=plcp> or a pre-election video-clip in which the pre-election promise "We will ban the vociferous propaganda of homosexuality and sects" on the background of stills showing the march against homophobia and transphobia in AIDAHO on 17 May. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L9HZIJoglc>

14. Genrikh Yagoda, who was the deputy head of the security committee in those years, in 1933 (before the legislative changes) in his report to Stalin speaks about the arrests of the members of "pederasts group" who were "creating saloons, the hide-outs for perverts and pederasts groups with the further aim to form espionage network." Later, in another letter to Stalin he says: "Pederasts acting within the exclusive caste system for direct counter-revolutionary purposes, were perverting the young people from different social strata, as well as trying to penetrate into the Red Army and Navy." Stalin's note on this document has been preserved which reads: "It is necessary to award an exemplary punishment to scoundrels and to make necessary changes to the legisla-

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15. Healey D., *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*, Chicago, 2001.

16. Kon I.C., *Culture of Sex in Russia*, M., 1997

17. Aghdgomelashvili E., *Representation of Homosexuality in Georgian Media*, 2006. http://women.ge/wp-content/uploads/2011/04/media-analysis_homophobia_un.pdf

18. "Nontraditional sex" is the beginning of breaking up of all traditions and the necessary condition, while along with having such "non-traditionalists" in the government the preservation and strengthening of national consciousness and originality gradually comes to a discreet end..." "Today's Georgia is a balloon inflated with a harmful gas which is dangerously floating between West and North." Ilnar Gorelishvili, Newspaper "Meridiani," # 44/2, 17 January, 2001.

19. Aghdgomelashvili E., *Coverage of the Issues Related to Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity in the Media* (May, 2011), Media Development Fund. <http://www.mdfgeorgia.ge/index.php?menuid=16&lang=1&id=54>

20. The leader of Christian-Democratic Movement, who presented the package of constitutional changes to the Parliament, estimated the action as "the beginning of a significant and a long-term aim whose final purpose is probably moral legalization of homosexuality, decay, perversity and the pervert lifestyle in Georgia." It was for the first time when the members of the parliamentary majority placed their position towards the use of the language of homophobic hatred on record: "The proposal by Christian-Democrats is anti-constitutional and the leader's speech is homophobic." "Christian-Democratic Movement initiates the constitutional changes after the LGBT activities have taken place." Civil Georgia, Tbilisi, 22 May, 2012. <http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=25490>



Tamara Martsenyuk, Ukraine

Gender Roles in LGBT Families in Ukraine: Idealization and Reproduction of Heteronormativity

Among the variety of forms of cohabitation only heterosexual monogamous relationships are recognized in Ukrainian state politics, thus constructing the norm and marginalizing the rest of the forms of relationships, including same-sex families. So, LGBT families in Ukraine are invisible, especially on the level of state statistics and research. A limited number of studies conducted by LGBT organizations estimate that there are some 100,000-200,000 same-sex couples in Ukraine.¹ Such estimates say more about the very existence of LGBT families in the country instead of their exact number.

Same-sex families are characterized by a number of features compared to heterosexual families. First of all, as could be confirmed by public opinion polls,² there is rather high level of homophobia in Ukrainian society that has increased over last ten years. Secondly, the gender roles played by lesbians, gays, and transgender people are not that strict compared to heterosexual couples when it comes to the division of household duties or duties in the public sphere, and are less based on power and inequality. As indicated by an American sociologist Michael Kimmel in his work "The Gendered Society," gay and lesbian couples are "less likely to fall into the patterns of inequality" that define heterosexual marriages. By bringing together two people of the same gender, gender inequality is neutralized and gender difference eliminated."³ That means that LGBT families have a bigger potential than heterosexual families to create relations based on equality.

This article is part of report "LGBT Families in Ukraine: Legislative Regulations and Social Practice" published by NGO "Insight" in cooperation with the Heinrich Boell Foundation Warsaw Office, Kyiv 2011. The empirical data in my research consist of in-depth interviews carried out in July-September 2011 with seven LGBT families from different regions of Ukraine (central, northern and southern). The interviewees included three gay couples, three lesbian couples and one transsexual couple. Five of these couples are raising children born with the use of a donor, artificial insemination or from previous heterosexual marriages. The couples have been in their relationships and have lived

together from 3 to 15 years. Each partner was interviewed separately (around 45 minutes – 1 hour) on the peculiarities of gender (family) roles in private relationships, on attitudes towards family institution and its parts (marriage and parenthood). Patriarchal and egalitarian aspects of gender roles and their essential component were characterized.

Interpretation of Family

On the question of identity of their own long-term relationships, respondents of this study almost unanimously determined them as family. Almost all indicated that common space (shared accommodation) is important to family life, it could be identified with certainty of life choices and stable relationship. Questions from parents and friends regarding to the fact of cohabitation always raises questions of coming-out. Queer families are often forced to explain their cohabitation with the help of economic reason (“it is cheaper to share an apartment”), while marking their family relations as friendly. For some respondents, having children and caring for them is crucial for family relationships; this is so called “formula” of family happiness. Of course, gay men who want to have children, face bigger problems than women because they cannot give birth themselves, and to have a baby using a surrogate mother or by adoption in Ukraine is rather difficult and sometimes impossible. However, some respondents who do not have children, are quite critical to child-centred ideal for family relationships, as it excludes a number of couples from public family discourse.

An important aspect of family relationships shared by a majority of respondents is family traditions, holidays and anniversaries. The absence of structuring traditional and external support mechanisms (such as registered marriage, fear of loss of status, public opinion) on the one hand, makes LGBT families vulnerable, but on the other hand, permits greater flexibility and freedom in the search for mechanisms to maintain relationships and family preservation (for example, they independently construct and reconstruct the history of their relationship). Some couples wear wedding rings. Deprived of the right to a formal wedding rituals and features of the official recognition of relationships, same-sex couples use wedding rings as a symbol of securing a new status of their relationship, recognition at the interpersonal and social level:

“At the 5-year anniversary, we bought the ring. So we wanted. (...) Co-workers, when I returned after the holidays with a ring, made their conclusions and decided that this was engagement” (Polina).

One respondent, 42-year-old Ostap told about the wedding ceremony in the Orthodox Church as an important personal practice and ritual declaration

of mutual obligations and commitment to partner. The respondents' attitudes towards the (lack of) possibility to enter into marriage as a sign of the family differ: some of them are for and would like to do this (seeing marriage as an indicator of stability, seriousness of intentions and plans for the future); others have quite a sceptical attitude, although in general they talk a lot about the necessity to protect LGBT rights in state institutions.

Gender Roles in LGBT Families

In analysis of gender roles in LGBT families, I use the established classification of the so-called two ideal types: traditional and egalitarian. Traditional gender roles are dual opposition, based on a functionalist approach: the man (the father) takes on the role of "breadwinner" who earns tangible income for the family, while the woman (the mother) assumes the role of "housewife" and "keeper of the hearth." Egalitarian roles, instead, are based on the same and, if possible, an equal distribution of responsibilities. No emphasis is placed on "natural" roles, assuming household duties can be performed equally.

Katerina Nedbalkova, in her research of lesbian families in the Czech Republic, wrote that the institution of family and relationship intimacy is deeply gendered, based on gender roles, and therefore is heteronormative. Same-sex families are also inscribed into heteronormative society and are characterized by gender division.⁴

Answering questions about the distribution of domestic responsibilities, most respondents emphasized egalitarianism within their families. Same-sex families are often contrasted this to traditional division of gender roles in heterosexual unions, and based their comparisons on their own previous experience or marriage, or on the experiences of their families and friends.

The question of "head of family" by the majority of respondents is perceived quite critical, even sceptical. However, for some families the notion of "head of family" was important. Mostly older and "more experienced" partners were named in such a way.

During the interviews it became clear that direct questions about the distribution of housework in the family is ineffective because they brought on quite expected answers such as "we do everything together" and "we have full parity." Further explanations of everyday practices and additional clarification from interviewee about specific types of household responsibilities appeared to be more fruitful. Despite statements on the egalitarian family roles, the division of labour in household depends primarily on the involvement of partners to the labour market. This distribution, when the partner who does

not work full time or works part time is also engaged in household, many couples perceived as fair and “natural.”

Moreover, respondents were not always able to explain why sometimes it is only one person in a couple who tends to always have the time to do housework. For example, one female explained her greater share in household labour precisely with having a lot of time, also calling her non-office (distant) work as “staying at home.”

The question of the so-called traditionally “male” household work, of who does it and how, sometimes arose in interviews with lesbian couples. The respondents used heteronormative concepts of gender roles division, according to which there is a traditional “male” role in the household:

“I usually ask my father to help if there is anything complicated. He comes and helps us, since male hands, obviously, are quite important. But if there is anything we can do on our own, it is usually my girlfriend, who is not very tall but quite slender, who likes to do something with a hammer and nails” (Viktoria).

On the contrary, in male couples no one talked about any “female” work that the partners were not able to do on their own and for which they would constantly need to invite a woman (mother, grandmother, sisters) from outside the couple.

Mechanisms of Idealisation and Normalisation in LGBT Families

During the in-depth interviews with LGBT couples it seems that queer-families are constantly forced to demonstrate that they are perfect. The respondents used to mention their problems rarely. Typical example can be the answer given in this study by Valentyna (45 years old): “I think our family is ideal?! No other options.” Such idealization is a form of legitimizing your relationship in a society where the mere existence of same-sex couples is often ignored or marginalized. Since not all LGBT families have good relations with their parents or other relatives, very often they need to prove in all possible ways that everything is perfect in their own family.

Another mechanism of legitimization of the phenomenon of LGBT families by respondents was “normalizing” their own relationships by using heteronormative language and traditional categories such as “normal” or “right.”

Media plays an important role in constructing “normality” discourse on queer-families in Ukraine. Non-existence of LGBT relations in Ukrainian media could influence respondents’ perception of their own families and relationships. For instance, one of the respondents who has been living in a lesbian

relationship for a long time sees it as strange for homosexual couples to have the possibility of going through an official marriage procedure:

"I can hardly imagine it. Well, maybe a civil ceremony, a normal wedding, I could imagine that. (...) But still, it's somehow strange. It's so pompous, such celebration (...). A suit and a dress seem more logical than two dresses" (Kateryna).

Sometimes, respondents who consider that "the society is not ready" to learn about their family, use a strategy of silence, avoiding questions about "uncomfortable issues" or hiding the visual symbols which manifest their queer identity. Thus, they do not go to corporate parties with their partner, they avoid talking about their personal life: "So as not to take part in private conversations. It's better to avoid them" (Georgiy). The common space of living can be even more "filtered" when parents come to visit:

"We hide all the photos, take off all lesbian stickers or magnets; we still haven't put them back after last time my dad visited. We delete unnecessary tabs from Mozilla, so that an unwanted issue does not crop up" (Svetlana).

Therefore, there can be very different mechanisms of normalizing one's experiences that go beyond the social norm. No wonder that parents of LGBT couples, even if they accept the life choices of their children, may want them to normalize this state, for example by performing one of the fundamental functions (in the heteronormative sense of family) such as having a child. Such mechanisms as idealization and normalization of own family relations or adopting the heterosexual symbols of marriage and family, all show that LGBT families do not always propose a division of duties which is alternative to the traditional one, or are able to critically evaluate and deconstruct the dominant concepts of the only possible forms of social life, entrenched in main state institutions.

It would be naive to believe that LGBT families are free from general societal framework of heteronormativity and gender norms. Gender is an inevitable part of our lives, a system that structures society; it is present in every situation of our interaction. LGBT families are forced to obey the demand of silence, control their expression. Queer families exist in a state that does not recognize them – in a Ukrainian society that marginalizes them as all other form of non-heteronormative sexuality. Society forces queer families to follow standards of "ideal," "normal" family and demands non-visibility in public discourse. In this situation mentioned above, mechanisms are helpful for respondents to construct their own place in the heteronormative society.

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