Lund University Master of Science in International Development and Management

June 2024

Motherhood as resistance

The use of political motherhood in the Armenian Velvet Revolution

Author: Åsa Setterquist

Supervisor: Ellinor Isgren

Abstract

Political motherhood, which is the strategic use of patriarchal norms of motherhood for political resistance, is generally understudied in the field of social movements studies. This study explores in depth how political motherhood was utilized during the Velvet Revolution and its effect on other protesters' activism and patriarchal gender structures. This article develops the theory of political motherhood, building on the works of Schirmer, Mhajne and Whetstone, Butler, and O'Reilly. This qualitative study examines how political motherhood operates and how various actors can use it for conflicting objectives, illustrating it with the material from twelve interviews conducted in Armenia in 2022. This study finds that mothers played a crucial role in the Velvet Revolution by strategically using patriarchal norms of motherhood to claim political space and mobilize political resistance. It also reveals how state authorities and others used political motherhood against mothers' activism to deter their protest engagement. Additionally, mothers used their traditional respectability to protect other protesters from violence, enabling them to sustain their activism. Mothers' norm-breaking actions redefined the role of mothers in Armenia and challenged patriarchal gender structures.

Keywords: Political motherhood, Armenia, Velvet Revolution, activism

Words: 14981

Acknowledgements

This study is dedicated to the mothers participating in the Armenian Velvet Revolution. Your brave actions during the Armenian Velvet Revolution inspired this master thesis. An immense thank you to all the participants in this study and everyone involved in the process; without you, this thesis would not have been possible.

To Vide and Simon, thank you for your invaluable help guiding my research, asking critical questions, and supporting me. I could not have done it without you.

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“…at the same time, it is not political, motherhood for society. So, it was the first-time mothers were on the streets claiming their space; it was not in the home.” Quote from interviewee five.

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction, aim and motivation

When Armenia experienced a massive popular uprising called the Velvet Revolution in 2018, which successfully and peacefully transitioned the country from a semi-authoritarian state towards a democracy, mothers were at the front lines of the revolution. Despite Armenia being referred to as a kin-based patriarchal society, where gender ideologies place motherhood in the private sphere of the home and define it as non-political (Ziemer, 2019), mothers were not deterred from joining the popular uprising. Mothers actively participated in the revolution in several ways, such as organizing mothers' marches, blocking streets, protesting with their children, banging on pots through windows, and creating social media groups to mobilize more mothers to join (ibid.). For most of these women, political protest was something new. Many did not identify as feminists or necessarily as activists but still challenged the patriarchal hierarchy by claiming male-dominated spheres. Mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution seems contradictory at first; before the revolution, they were excluded from the political sphere, yet they participated in masses during the Velvet Revolution. This raises the question of how mothers could break out of the private sphere and become activists. According to Ziemer (ibid.), mothers were able to legitimize their participation in the revolution by declaring themselves as mothers protesting for their children's future. This study explores mothers' participation in the Armenian Velvet Revolution in depth.

Throughout history, women have strategically used the trope of motherhood to challenge patriarchal hierarchies, legitimize their activism, mobilize community support, and encourage others to join their political cause (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Shriver et al., 2013; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018; Xiaoqing He, 2022; Seddighi, 2023). In patriarchal societies, the use of motherhood identities as protest strategies has proven to be an effective method for resistance against regimes and state authority (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Shriver et al., 2013; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018;

Seddighi, 2023). However, using stereotypical characteristics of motherhood as a protest strategy has been criticized for reinforcing stereotypes about women and motherhood (Aroussi, 2009; Ahall, 2012). In addition, these movements have been interpreted as emotional or social instead of political, which has led to the understanding that entering public spheres on the premise of motherhood has a limited effect on women's political empowerment (Einwohner et al., 2000). Still, it is this paradox of mothers being identified as both non-political and political that has left mother activists a window of resistance, otherwise not possible in highly militarized and patriarchal societies (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). This paradox has enabled mothers to negotiate with patriarchy, claim political space, and expose motherhood and gender as a social construct (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). As such, the use of motherhood identities in political protests can empower women and translate into effective resistance, which has been evident in many parts of the world, including CoMadres in El Salvador (Schirmer,1993), Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina (Howe, 2006), the Prague Mothers in Czechoslovakia (Shriver et al., 2013), Saturday Mothers and Peace Mother in Turkey (Karaman, 2016), the Meira Paibis mothers in Kangla fort protest in India (Ray, 2018), in the Arab Spring (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018), the Tiananmen Mothers in China (Xiaoqing He, 2022), and the Mourning Mothers of Iran (Seddighi, 2023).

This study sees motherhood primarily as a social construct shaped by societal norms contextual to each given society, and other identity factors such as age, ethnicity, class, race, religion, and sexuality affect how motherhood is experienced and expressed. In Armenia specifically, mothers generally have a glorified role (Beukian, 2014). This is arguably true in most nationalistic societies, but the concept of motherhood has an especially strong position in Armenian society as it has emerged in a nation constantly struggling for autonomy; wars (Nagorno-Karabakh), the genocide of 1915-1923 and the nation-building process during and after the Soviet union's fall (ibid.). The glorification of mothers comes from the understanding that mothers were keeping the Armenian nation alive during these difficult times by giving birth to the nation, raising children in Armenian culture, providing their community with all the social services society was unable to

provide, as well as taking the role as both caregivers and breadwinners to maintain the family's honor (ibid.). As such, women's and mothers' gender roles in Armenia are shaped by the history of hyper-militarization nationalism (ibid.).

Political motherhood, which is the strategic use of patriarchal norms of motherhood for political resistance, is understudied within the field of social movements studies (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018). This study aims to explore in depth how political motherhood was utilized during the Velvet Revolution and its effect on other protesters' activism and patriarchal gender structures. The Velvet Revolution is a compelling case to study political motherhood due to mothers' high level of participation, high status in Armenian society, and norms of motherhood being deeply cemented in Armenian society. To my knowledge, no previous study has researched how political motherhood was used as a protest strategy and its effect on other protesters' activism and patriarchal gender structures in the context of the Armenian Velvet Revolution. This study examines how political motherhood operates and how various actors can use it for conflicting objectives, illustrating it with the material from twelve interviews conducted in Armenia in 2022. The interviewees were mothers of different ages, family constellations, professions, and backgrounds, in addition to Armenian-based journalists, activists, gender experts, students, and staff from non-governmental organizations.

This study is particularly needed since social movements have the potential to challenge patriarchal power structures or reinforce them (McKee Hurwitz & Dahl Crossley, 2019). McKee Hurwitz and Dahl Crossley (ibid.) emphasize the importance of analyzing gender dynamics in political and social contexts as they may enable or hinder participation in activism and indicate whether activists will achieve their goals. However, one understudied aspect of gender in social movements is how resistance can be formed within patriarchal power systems (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). There is also a need for more studies focusing on how gender functions in social movements that are not primarily about gender (McKee Hurwitz & Dahl Crossley, 2019). In addition, mothers often experience social, economic, and political inequalities that differ from those experienced by women who are not mothers (O'Reilly, 2021). To achieve Sustainable Development Goal number 5, "Achieve gender equality and empower

all women and girls" (United Nations, n.d), it is therefore essential to recognize how motherhood can limit women's access to the same economic, social, and political opportunities as men and women who are not mothers. This study also contributes to the previous research about the Velvet Revolution and gender. This study uses the theory of political motherhood to explain how motherhood identities were used as a protest strategy in the Armenian Velvet Revolution. It investigates to what extent the theory of political motherhood can be used to grasp the dynamics of the Velvet Revolution. As such, it provides important empirical grounding for the theory in an under-researched context. In addition, this study contributes to the theoretical framework of political motherhood by providing a detailed analysis of its underlying mechanisms. By explicating these mechanisms, the study enhances the understanding of how mothers can form political resistance within patriarchal power systems.

1.2 Research Questions

Research question 1:

How were norms of motherhood used as protest strategies in the Armenian Velvet Revolution of 2018?

Research question 2:

How did mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution of 2018 affect other protesters' activism?

Research question 3:

How did the mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution of 2018 challenge patriarchal gender structures?

1.3 Contextual background

1.3.1 The Armenian Velvet Revolution

In 2018, after three weeks of massive non-violent protest led by the opposition politician Nikol Pashinyan, the former Armenian president Serzh Sargsyan was removed from power, taking both the international community and the Armenian people by surprise (Broers, 2021). After two weeks of removing Sargsyan, a free parliamentarian election was held, in which the Armenian people chose Pashinyan as the country's new leader (ibid.). These rapidly occurring events, which successfully transitioned Armenia towards a democracy, came to be called the Velvet Revolution (ibid.). The protest was a result of discontent with Armenia's decreasing socioeconomic standards, corruption, political elitism, and authoritarian entrenchment (ibid.). The immediate trigger of the protests was Sargsyan's announcement that he would run for prime minister, confirming the fears of the Armenian population that Sargsyan would refuse to release his grip on power (ibid.). Before the Velvet Revolution, the hopes for meaningful political resistance were low among the population (ibid.). However, during the revolution, hope spread like wildfire, involving all segments of society (ibid.). The main messages of the revolution were about love and unity- together as one people to reject Sargsyan (Ziemer, 2019). The involvement of a large part of the population is argued to explain the revolution's success (ibid.).

Women entered political spaces during the Velvet Revolution that normally would be allocated to men (ibid.). Armenian women were, prior to the revolution, experiencing gender inequality in all parts of their lives, economically, politically, and socially (ibid.). Armenia is described as a kin-based patriarchal society where gender ideologies place men and women in separate categories with different pre-decided capabilities (Shirinian, 2021). These gender roles are often understood as natural and not as social constructions (ibid.). Women are portrayed as fragile, under the directorship of men, belonging to the domestic sphere (ibid.). In contrast, men are understood as protectors and superior to women with responsibilities in the public sphere (ibid.). Female activism is not something new in Armenia; still, before the revolution of 2018, it was practiced mainly by a small group of women living in the capital, Yerevan (Ziemer, 2019). During the revolution, women with different economic backgrounds, professions, and sexuality came together to

protest (ibid.). For many of these women, it was their first time protesting (ibid.). Even though their immediate aim might not have been feministic, they were challenging patriarchal gender hierarchies by claiming a male-dominated sphere and breaking gender stereotypes (ibid.). One powerful example of how traditional gender stereotypes were challenged in favor of the movement was when mothers joined the protest with their strollers and small children (ibid.).

1.3.2 Motherhood as Armenianess and the nation-family

In Armenian society, women's most important role is understood as mothers (Beukian, 2014). This is arguably true in many nationalistic societies, but the concept of motherhood is especially strong in Armenia as it has emerged in a country constantly struggling to survive; wars (Nagorno-Karabakh), the genocide of 1915-1923 and the nation-building process during and after the Soviet union's fall (ibid.). Through the many challenging historical times in Armenia, mothers have been seen as playing significant roles as bearers and preserves of the family (ibid.). Armenian women are recognized for not only giving birth to and raising the nation but also for sustaining their families during times of war, economic crisis, and genocide. They are perceived as having upheld their families' honor, kept them alive, and taken on the roles of breadwinners and household caretakers, providing the services that society was unable to offer during these challenging times. The concept of motherhood is, therefore, shaped by the history of hyper-militarization nationalism (ibid.).

Mothers' glorified role must also be understood in the Armenian culture of family and shame (Shirinian, 2021). The unit of the family is fundamental in Armenian culture (Beukian, 2014). The Soviet Union involuntarily helped crystallize family's position in society through their 'modernization' attempt, and so did the escalation of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh that led to ethnic warfare against Azerbaijan in the early years of independence from the Soviet Union (ibid.). The war with Azerbaijan also reminded Armenians of the horrors of the Armenian genocide, which further fired up the political aim to strengthen traditional family values (ibid.). Armenia is, therefore, best described as a nation-family, where politics are practiced as an extension of family (Shirinian, 2021). Armenia being a nation-

family is especially evident in Armenia's shame culture, which allows everybody, not only men, to address improper behaviors of anybody to keep the family's (both biological and national) honor intact (ibid.). Men are expected to take care of women, seeing them as mothers, wives, or sisters, and this paternal relationship justifies men making decisions for women as this is part of men's responsibilities of care in the family (ibid.). Therefore, men can address and control women's behavior without even having a relationship with them, as men feel an obligation to tell women what proper behavior is to save them from becoming 'bad women' and threatening the nation-family (ibid.).

2. Literature Review

This literature review has three parts. First, it will provide a critical theoretical and empirical overview of previous research regarding motherhood and protest. Second, it will present what has been researched regarding the Armenian Velvet Revolution and gender. Third, it will situate this study in relation to previous research.

2.1 Previous studies of mother-activism

2.1.1 Motherhood as a protest strategy

Throughout history, women have used their identities as mothers to justify and sustain their activism in patriarchal and militarized societies (Schirmer, 1993; Bosco, 2006; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Harcourt, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018; O'Reilly, 2019). Examples of such movements include CoMadres in El Salvador (Schirmer,1993), Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina (Howe, 2006), the Prague Mothers in Czechoslovakia (Shriver et al., 2013), Saturday Mothers and Peace Mother in Turkey (Karaman, 2016), the Meira Paibis mothers in Kangla fort protest in India (Ray, 2018), in the Arab Spring (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018), the Tiananmen Mothers in China (Xiaoqing He, 2022), and the Mourning Mothers of Iran (Seddighi, 2023).

When studying mother movements, previous studies have researched how mothers have legitimized their activism against state authority or paramilitary groups as an extension of their motherhood (Schirmer, 1993; Bosco, 2006; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). These studies find that mothers adopted contextual patriarchal norms of motherhood, for example as asexual, sacred, and peaceful acting out of maternal love to use these in the norm-breaking context of political resistance (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). Often, these movements have started from women's role as mothers, wanting to bring justice to their children or to better the lives of their children (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018; O'Reilly, 2021). Their activism has been

crucial in addressing authorities' violence and human rights violations (Schirmer,1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). One of the most studied aspects of mother-activism is how it uses non-violent methods (Baker, 1984; Berkman, 1990; d'Estrée & Babbitt, 1998; Zagarri, 2007; Stavrianos, 2014). Recently, more studies have emerged researching how mothers' activism can use violent methods (Sjoberg & Gentry, 2007; Gentry, 2009; Aharoni, 2017).

Mother activists' usage of norms of traditional motherhood has created effective resistance in patriarchal and nationalistic societies (Schirmer,1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). However, it is not only mothers who can use motherhood norms for political goals. Carreon and Moghadam (2015) research how different actors can use motherhood identities for political goals. They conclude that both state authority and grassroots activists can use motherhood ideologies and identities for political goals and that these goals can either be patriarchal or feministic.

According to Mhajne and Whetstone (2018), mobilizing under the trope of motherhood can shield mothers and other activists from violence. Still, mobilizing under the trope of motherhood does not guarantee that mother activists will not be met with violence. Several mother movements have been met with horrible human rights atrocities and violence by state authorities or paramilitary groups (Schirmer, 1993).

Although these movements may not have had the immediate aim of achieving feministic objectives, their appropriation of motherhood has expanded traditional norms of motherhood and questioned women's traditional roles (Schirmer,1993; Werbner, 1999; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018; O'Reilly, 2021). Mother-activism as such deconstruct essentialist and patriarchal notions of motherhood, by transferring the personal into something political and reframing boundaries of motherhood (Schirmer, 1993; Werbner, 1999; Howe, 2006; Nathanson, 2008; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018,).

The literature above indicates that the use of motherhood identities in activism takes many forms for different aims: violent, peaceful, feministic, patriarchal, state-led, and activist-led. It also demonstrates how mothers have successfully claimed political space by using their identities as mothers and that their appropriation of motherhood has expanded traditional norms of motherhood and patriarchal gender structures. Still, this begs the question of whether entering the political sphere through the trope of patriarchal norms really can have feministic results and empower women. The following section will address this question by examining previous studies.

2.1.2 Mother-activism is it feministic?

One of the most studied aspects of mother-activism is whether it allows or limits women's agency (Schirmer, 1993; Einwohner et al, 2000; Cockburn, 2004; Howe, 2006; Nathanson, 2008; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018; Manchanda, 2023). Several scholars have raised concern over the potential backlashes mother-activism can have (Einwohner et al., 2000; Cockburn, 2004; Aroussi, 2009; Ahall, 2012). Cockburn (2004) discusses how the framing of mother-activism is dangerous close to patriarchal norms and, therefore, risks being co-opted by nationalistic powers. Carreon and Moghadam (2015) emphasize that the context, by whom, and how motherhood is implemented determines whether mother-activism empowers women or reinforces essentialist ideas. Einwohner et al. (2000) argue that mother-activism might be effective in the short run for gender equality, but entering the political sphere on the premise that 'mothers' risks placing women's political participation at a standstill. Still, other studies demonstrate that women entering political spheres through the frame of 'mothers' does not necessarily stagnate their political participation (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Ray, 2018). Instead, mother-activism can be a steppingstone into other forms of political engagements (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Ray, 2018). Aroussi (2009) and Ahall (2012) criticize mother-activism for reinforcing stereotypes about women and motherhood. Others, in contrast, emphasize that mother-activism can challenge patriarchal ideas of motherhood (Schirmer, 1993; Werbner, 1999; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). Women engaging in mother-activism can also become aware of gender as a social construct, which

can enable them to further disrupt patriarchal hierarchies (Schirmer, 1993; Howe, 2006; Karaman, 2016; Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). In addition, in highly militarized and patriarchal societies, entering political spheres through motherhood might be one of the few opportunities for meaningful resistance available (ibid.).

2.2 Gendered dimensions of the Armenian Velvet Revolution

There has been an increase of studies on the Armenian Velvet Revolution. Most of them aim to understand the secret of the movement's success from different aspects such as social media (Witman, 2018), Collective Identity (Burrows et al., 2022), history of protest (Zolyan, 2021), women's participation (Ziemer, 2019) and decentralization (Shirinian, 2021) and what comes next in terms of human rights including for women (Ziemer, 2019), Karabakh conflict (Ohanyan, 2021), corruption and if the new government is going to lean more towards aligning Europe or Russia (Ohanyan, 2021). To my knowledge, only two studies focus on gender aspects of the Velvet Revolution: Shirinian (2021) and Ziemer (2019).

Ziemer (2019) explores women's participation and contribution to the Armenian Velvet Revolution. She interviews 25 female Armenian-based experts, journalists, and staff from non-governmental organizations in addition to female protesters. Even though all kinds of women participated and made up half the demography of the revolution, it was not gender that motivated women to become revolutionaries. Instead, it was the rejection of President Serzh Sargsyan. Still, gender played an important role in the strategies of the revolution. Several female leaders would use the word sisters to emphasize women's unity in the fight against patriarchal and paternal structures. Women who could not or were not allowed to join the protest for their husbands started a protest action of banging on kitchen utensils through the window to show their dislike of the regime. Using kitchen utensils to challenge the regime was a powerful symbol as these protesters were taking a traditional feminine object and turning it into something political. Also, when women were organizing street blockades and the police would come to try to disperse the blockade, the men would make themselves scarce while women would not back

down, instead they stayed as no ‘man with honor’ would hurt a woman. As such, they were able to use their bodies as sites for resistance. Ziemer (ibid.) finds that when mothers joined the protests, they were seen as mothers fighting for their children; as such, they were able to use their motherhood to claim space in the revolution. Ziemer (ibid.) describes that mothers have immunity in protest, as using violence against a mother would bring shame to not only the individual policeman but the entire state apparatus. Ziemer (ibid.) explains that mothers were able to join the protests due to the protests being non-hierarchal. Ziemer’s (ibid.) findings indicate that women’s participation was one of the reasons for the Velvet Revolution’s success, as they used their bodies as sites of resistance and developed protest strategies originating from gender stereotypes.

Shirinian (2021) interviewed female protesters to explore how patriarchal ideas were interacting with feminist grassroots activists during the Armenian Velvet Revolution. One of the most significant differences between the Armenian Velvet Revolution and previous protest movements in Armenia is that Nikol Pashinyan and other revolution leaders would call on women to join the protest. Still, the activists Shirinian (ibid.) interviewed stated that even as the leaders welcomed them, sexist ideas were evident on the street level. For example, male protesters were saying to the female protesters that they should not be there, referring to political actions as non-natural for women and public space as reserved for men. Some male protesters would also speak for the female protesters to ‘protect’ them. The police would also harass female protesters by referring to them as ‘bad women’. Shirinian (ibid.) concludes that patriarchal hierarchies were evident and prevalent throughout the revolution, but it was also a space where women challenged these existing gender norms daily. For example, women were claiming political space, doing things that normally would not be allowed, such as sitting on the grass in parks or with their legs wide apart. However, according to Shirinian (ibid.), as soon as the revolution was over, patriarchal hierarchies went back to almost the same state as the pre-revolution state. The findings from Shirinian (ibid.) contradict the explanation of protest being non-hierarchal, which Ziemer (2019) presents as the reason why mothers were able to participate.

2.3 Research contribution

To summarize the literature review, women have strategically used motherhood's symbolic power to legitimize their activism, mobilize community support, and encourage others to join their actions. The use of motherhood identities as a protest strategy has been used with different aims and has been discussed to have had different results for women's political agency.

This study identifies several gaps in the previous literature through the literature review. First, one understudied aspect of gender in social movements is how resistance can be formed within patriarchal power systems (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018; Ray, 2018). Second, most studies in the literature above focus on how motherhood identities are used as protest strategies as part of mothers' movements. Therefore, there is a need for more studies focusing on how gender functions in social movements that are not primarily about gender (McKee Hurwitz & Dahl Crossley, 2019). Third, this study's review of previous literature suggests that one understudied aspect of mother-activism is its effect on other protesters participating in social movements (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018). Perhaps this is linked to the need for more studies focusing on how gender functions in social movements that are not primarily about gender, as articulated by McKee Hurwitz and Dahl Crossley (2019). This study strives to address these gaps by exploring how women form resistance within patriarchal gender systems and in a gender-oppressive environment, examining how gender functions in a social movement that was primarily non-gender-related, and exploring how mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution affected other protesters' activism.

Similar to other studies, this study will focus on how motherhood identities are used as a protest strategy; however, it will do so in an under-researched context. To my knowledge, only two studies have focused on gender aspects of the Velvet Revolution, and only one has empirical findings on mothers' participation. Ziemer's (2019) study focuses on women's role in the revolution; in the empirical finding, she discusses mothers' roles in the revolution but does not explore this phenomenon in depth. This study seeks to contribute to Ziemer's (2019) findings by exploring mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution in

depth. It also explores how norms of motherhood were used as a protest strategy and its effect on other protesters' activism and patriarchal gender structures.

3. Theoretical Framework

This section will outline the theoretical framework of this study. This study's theoretical framework is built primarily on the theoretical work of Schirmer (1993), Butler (1993), Mhajne and Whetstone (2018), and O'Reilly (2021). The structure of this text is as follows: First, a detailed conceptualization and analysis of the underlying mechanisms of political motherhood is presented, demonstrating this study's theoretical understanding of these. Second, this study's definition of the theory of political motherhood is constructed using the works of Schirmer (1993) and Mhajne and Whetstone (2018). Third, to guide the reader and the data analysis, an operationalization of political motherhood is presented, drawing on this study's definition of political motherhood and its underlying mechanism.

3.1 Conceptualizing 'Motherhood'

This study defines motherhood as a social construct, building on the works of Rich (1976), Butler (1993), and O'Reilly (2021). The concept of motherhood as a social construct forms the core theoretical underpinning of this thesis. To define the theory of political motherhood, I will first define the concept of motherhood and this study's understanding of how motherhood functions in patriarchal societies.

Rich's book *Of Woman Born* (1976) remains one of the most theoretically fundamental books for feminist scholars to study meanings and expressions of motherhood. Rich (ibid.) introduces the terms motherhood and mothering as two different terms. Motherhood is referred to as a patriarchal institution used to control and dictate women's thoughts and actions, unlike mothering, which refers to women's lived experience of giving birth to children or taking care of children (ibid.). Mothering can be an empowering experience, while motherhood is used to describe when motherhood is imposed to control women (ibid.). Rich (ibid.) introduces the term motherhood to unmask motherhood as a social and cultural construction rather than one based on biology. Drawing on Rich's (ibid.) definition of motherhood versus mothering, this study defines the term motherhood as referring to a patriarchal institution imposed on women to subordinate women's thoughts and actions.

Butler's (1993) theory of the performativity of gender unmasks gender roles as something that is performed. Performativity is not an isolated act but a recurring repetition of social norms until it is understood as a natural state, concealing the underlying social hierarchies and inequalities (ibid.). Drawing on Butler's theory of the performativity of gender, O'Reilly (2021) describes how motherhood is performed based on social norms until it is understood as natural or biological. This study, building upon O'Reilly (ibid.), sees motherhood as something that is performed based on social norms until it is understood as natural, masking underlying social hierarchies and injustices. Recognizing motherhood as a performance is crucial for this study because if it is understood as such, it can be re-performed in a new context, thereby uncovering and challenging the underlying social hierarchies and injustices. This study uses Butler's (1993) performativity of gender to explain how political motherhood can challenge patriarchal gender structures.

The understanding of motherhood as a performance shaped by contextual norms underscores its non-universal nature. The experience of motherhood is intricately woven with societal norms, influenced by factors such as age, ethnicity, class, race, religion, and sexuality (O'Reilly, 2021). Therefore, this study understands maternal oppression from an intersectional perspective, taking into account the unique societal context of Armenia. However, despite these variations, there are structural similarities in how motherhood operates in patriarchal societies. O'Reilly (ibid.) outlines ten dictates of normative motherhood to describe these structural similarities, two of which I will focus on privatization and depoliticization.

O'Reilly (ibid.) defines privatization and depoliticization as two of ten dictates of normative motherhood. Privatization places mothers in the home, defining motherhood as something women do in the private realm of home (ibid.). Depoliticization assumes that motherhood is non-political without any impacts on the political and social (ibid.). O'Reilly (ibid.), building on Rich (1976), describes how normative motherhood functions as a tool in patriarchal societies to dictate women's and mothers' actions and thoughts. Women who fail to adhere to these norms are often labeled as bad mothers, and this also includes mothers who will not or cannot fulfill these norms due to age, ethnicity, class, racial oppression, religion,

and sexuality (O'Reilly, 2021). I will use O'Reilly's (ibid.) privatization and depoliticization to operationalize what this study refers to as traditional norms of motherhood.

3.2 The confinement of mothers to the private sphere

This study sees privatization and depoliticization of motherhood as connected to the gendered divide of public and private. The public-private divide within feminist scholarship refers to the divide of women and men in different spheres, where men are perceived as belonging to the public and women to the private (Pilcher & Whelehan, 2016). The public sphere is understood as where activities that are related to politics, law, labor, and governance take place (ibid.). While the private sphere is understood as the activities that take place in the domestic and that are personal without relation to the state juristic (ibid.). Men have historically been allowed to engage in both spheres while women have been confined to the private (ibid.). It is important to note that the gendered divide between the private and public is a generalization that enables one to study reality; it does not encompass all lived experiences of women and men (Werbner, 1999).

Several classic feminist authors have underlined the importance of women entering the public sphere as central in order to achieve gender equality, such as hooks (1984), Fraser (1992), Butler (2006), de Beauvoir (2015), and Arendt (2018). Still, other feminist scholars emphasize the risks of understanding the transition to the public sphere as automatically translating into women's empowerment. Instead, authors like Hill Collins (1990), Federici (2003), Gay (2014), Ahmed (2017), and Lorde (2018), emphasize that entering the public sphere does not translate to women's empowerment if oppressive social structures related to gender, race, class, and sexuality, are not dealt with. This study sees entering the public sphere not as the panacea for women's empowerment but as a critical need-to-have in order for women's emancipation and empowerment. It will, as such, critically examine whether mothers entering the public sphere had an empowering effect on women, without assuming that it did, and look at possible explanations why it did or did not.

The private sphere being identified as non-political ignores the influence of the public sphere on the private sphere and how issues in the private sphere are political (Hanisch, 1969). Hanisch (ibid.) introduces the well-known term 'the personal is political' to emphasize that what happens in the private sphere is also political and acknowledges how the two spheres interconnect. I join Hanisch (ibid.) in her understanding of the personal as political. As such, I understand motherhood as always being political, regardless of whether it takes place on the streets or at home. However, to apply the theory of political motherhood in the context of the Armenian Velvet Revolution, I will use the dichotomy of private versus public to understand how motherhood became acknowledged as political in a patriarchal society.

3.3 Political motherhood: Transforming motherhood into resistance

Political motherhood, first introduced by Schirmer (1993), is a theory that explains how women can mobilize, sustain, and legitimize political resistance by using traditional norms of motherhood. Schirmer (ibid.) introduces the theory of political motherhood to encompass and reflect the lived experience of mothers actively using motherhood identities to engage in political resistance against oppressive regimes. The theory of political motherhood suggests that women can temporarily adopt characteristics of motherhood to bargain with the dominant power structures of patriarchy (ibid.). As such, political motherhood is a form of role-play in which individuals and groups of mothers temporarily emphasize essentialist characteristics of motherhood to achieve political goals (ibid.). The theory of political motherhood suggests that even as mothers are oppressed under patriarchal structures of motherhood and norms around motherhood, they can use these preestablished norms to bargain with patriarchy to gain agency (ibid.).

3.4 Paradox in motherhood enabling political motherhood

Political motherhood is effective in patriarchal societies due to contrasting ideas of mothers as both political objects being 'worthy' of the state's protection (as they are

traditionally identified as bearers and preservers of the nation) and mothers as non-threatening non-political actors (as motherhood is understood as biological and not as a social construct) (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018). The idea that motherhood is driven by biology renders mothers' political actions invisible, enabling mothers to sustain their political resistance and invoking the state's protection while doing so (ibid.).

Mhajne and Whetstone (ibid.) explain that the states' role as protectors of mothers can shield protest actions from violence when mothers participate; that is, as long as mothers are present, other protesters can be shielded from state violence. Mhajne and Whetstone (ibid.) also build the theoretical argument that mothers' participation in social movements can legitimize these and mobilize others to join. This is possible due to the authority mothers have in nationalistic societies as the bearers of national identity (ibid.). States' role as the protector of women can be understood as an extension of the patriarchal family unit where males are the family heads and the protectors of women and children, and women are breeders and nurtures of the family (Werbner, 1999, p. 231; Hall, 2023). Mothers being marked as the perseveres of the nation and the state responsible for their protection leaves the state with a dilemma, as using violence against protesting mothers would break the patriarchal social contract (Mhajne & Whetstone, 2018).

3.5 Different applications of political motherhood

Mhajne and Whetstone (2018) develop Schirmer's (1993) theory of political motherhood, as they introduce that political motherhood can be used by other actors than mothers. Political motherhood, Mhajne and Whetstone (2018) define, can work either passively or actively and have feministic or patriarchal goals; a passive use of political motherhood refers to when state actors use political motherhood, and an active use of political motherhood refers to when grassroots actors apply political motherhood to their activism. An active implementation of political motherhood typically focuses on increasing women's rights; however, it can also be used to preserve traditional values of motherhood and resist social change (ibid.). A passive use of political motherhood can manifest through states using traditional

ideas of motherhood to portray protesting mothers as bad mothers harmful to the nation, legitimizing using violent force against them (ibid.). As such, whether the use of political motherhood has empowering results or reinforces patriarchal gender structures depends on how and by whom it is used.

3.6 Feministic consciousness through activism

Several scholars have underlined the importance of women becoming aware of gender as a social construct to challenge patriarchal hierarchies, such as hooks (1984), Fraser (1992), Butler (2006), de Beauvoir (2015), and Arendt (2018). In similarity, Kaplan (1982) and Molyneux (1985) emphasize the importance of female activists' gender awareness for their activism's empowering results.

Kaplan (1982) emphasizes that women's activism translates into women's empowerment only if women have feminist consciousness. In studying women's movements, Kaplan (1982) distinguishes between female consciousness and feminist consciousness; the first means women accept the gender system of their society and may fight for their rights within assigned gender roles, and the latter is aware of gender as constructed and thus an ability to challenge dominant gender systems.

Molyneux (1985) categorizes women's political activism as either having strategic gender interest, which aims to address underlying causes of women's subordinate status in society, or pragmatic gender interest, which focuses on the urgent needs of women, for example, economic or social, without necessarily aiming for gender equality. However, Schirmer (1993) disagrees with Kaplan (1982) and Molyneux (1985) that activists must be aware of gender as a social construct for their activism to have empowering results.

Schirmer (1993) argues that Kaplan's (1982) and Molyneux's (1985) distinction of consciousness and interests of women's political activism are too simplistic. Instead, Schirmer (1993) presents that these four categories are non-exclusive, meaning that through activism, women's consciousness can transform from non-feministic to feministic, and pragmatic interest can develop into strategic. Schirmer (ibid.) finds that the process of political motherhood leads to gender consciousness,

which allows women to challenge traditional understandings of motherhood and femininity further. As such, Schirmer (ibid.) argues that mothers' activism does not need to start from a gender-aware place for it to have feministic results; instead, becoming aware of gender as a social construct can be a process fueled by activism.

3.7 Operationalization of Political motherhood

This study defines political motherhood as the strategic use of patriarchal norms of motherhood for political goals. 'Norms of motherhood' are operationalized as privatization and depoliticization; this means that the data will be analyzed by how motherhood is assumed to be something natural without any impacts on the political and social and that motherhood is a practice that takes place at home. The data analysis will focus on how these two norms, privatization, and depoliticization of motherhood, limit or enable mothers' activism. 'Strategic' refers to when actors apply these norms of motherhood to their activism or others' activism to achieve political goals. For example, a strategic use of depoliticization could be for mothers to justify their activism as an extension of their roles as mothers. A strategic use of privatization could be for state authorities to claim that mothers are 'bad' mothers for not being home with their children.

To operationalize how mothers' activism affected other protesters' activism I will focus on three aspects shielding, mobilizing and legitimizing. I operationalize these aspects, building on Mhajne and Whetstone's (2018) theoretical arguments that mothers usage of political motherhood can shield other protesters from violence, mobilize other protesters to join and legitimize social movements.

This study focuses on changes in the perception of motherhood as private and depoliticized to operationalize whether mothers' activism during the Velvet Revolution challenged patriarchal gender structures. If mothers have more freedom to engage in both spheres and motherhood is acknowledged as political with impacts on the political and social, then this indicates, according to this study's theoretical frameworks, that patriarchal gender structures were challenged through mothers' activism. Also, if mothers developed feministic consciousness as a result

of their activism, then this is also an indication that mothers' activism challenged patriarchal gender structures. This study theoretically defines feministic consciousness as distinguished from female consciousness. The first refers to women being aware of gender as constructed and thus can challenge dominant gender systems. The second refers to women accepting the gender system of their society and fighting for their rights within assigned gender roles.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

According to Bryman (2015, p.401), an abductive approach aims to understand and describe actors' relations to the social world. I will use an abductive approach to my research as I try to understand actors' interpretations and relationships to the social world.

My research has a feminist theoretical ontological and epistemological position. Feministic ontological positions see reality as based on gendered power struggles, and it takes the epistemological approach that reality is known through the study of social structures, and through studying these structures, reality can be transformed. The researcher's goal of the study is often to have a transformative result for women, and the researcher often asks questions that emphasize how gender forms our consciousness (Creswell, 2017, pp.34, 36). My research aspires to have a transformative result for women, and my research practice is to underline how gender shapes our consciousness.

Case studies focus on developing an in-depth understanding of a case or a phenomenon. A case can be understood as an event, activity, or process, all of which are constrained over a period (Creswell, 2014, p.15). Drawing on Georgie & Bennett's (2005) definition of a case, I see the Armenian Revolution as a historical episode or class of events and my study of motherhood as the case or aspect within that period (See Georgie & Bennett, 2005, pp. 5, 17-18). My aim is to analyze the process of mothers' activism (aspect) during the Armenian Velvet Revolution (class of events); therefore, I see case study as a suitable design for my research.

Qualitative studies focus on exploring individuals' or groups' understanding of social or human problems (Creswell, 2017, p.43). It explores how social structures shape the individual and how these individuals make meaning of the world (Scheyvens, 2014, pp.57, 59). As such, qualitative studies go beyond numbers and answer questions that are not measurable by numbers (Scheyvens, 2014, pp.57, 59). I aim to research activists' motivations and actions and how these are affected by

social structures. I am interested in activists' perspectives of motherhood and its expression, meaning, and limitations during the protests. Using a quantitative method would have made it possible to generate a generalized picture of mothers' activism during the Velvet Revolution. However, it would have prevented this research from exploring the underlying social structures behind activist motives, actions, and their understandings of these. I understand that my research depends on trust since I'm asking personal questions. Using a qualitative method allows me to establish trust through in-person or digital interactions in a natural setting.

4.2 Sampling and Data Collection

This study used snowball sampling as its sampling technique. As part of the snowball sampling method for an interview-based study, the researcher first samples a small number of participants based on their ability to provide input to the study's research questions, and then these participants suggest other participants to be interviewed. The first initial sampling was strategic to ensure that the initial sample included different perspectives. I identified different key stakeholders, such as activists, scholars, journalists, and mothers' organizations working with different groups of mothers. Also, as I spent two weeks in Armenia, I was naturally introduced to more and more people through my initial contacts. Through these encounters, I could inform about my study and find participants. These first contacts were as such invaluable.

The common denominators that guided my selection of participants were that all should have experience or knowledge of mothers' participation in the revolution and, therefore, give me insights into my research topic. Below, I list the three criteria that guided the selection of participants.

I. Mothers who participated in the Velvet Revolution
II. Other protesters, meaning individuals who participated in the Velvet Revolution who are not mothers but have experience or knowledge of mothers' participation
III. Experts within gender or social movements that studied or participated in the Velvet Revolution

The sampling strategy provided a variety of perspectives and identities of the interviewees. My participants were mothers, women, men, journalists, professors, students, and staff of non-governmental organizations, among other professions, all with the experience or knowledge of mothers' participation in the revolution. In the first category, I defined mothers as women who participated in the revolution with their children, were pregnant, or identified as mothers participating in the revolution. I did not define any specific group of mothers as especially interesting; instead, I wanted a variation in mothers' ages and social and economic backgrounds as part of the maximum variation strategy. I also sampled protesters who were not mothers; I did not want to interview only mothers because I wanted to understand whether mothers' presence in the revolution affected other protesters. The reason for wanting to interview gender and social movement experts was to identify mothers' role in the Velvet Revolution and whether their participation in the revolution affected gender structures in Armenia.

4.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured and unstructured interviews have been described as the paradigm of feminist methods, especially face-to-face interviews (Bryman, 2015, pp.491-492). Some of the reasons for its popularity within feminist research are that it diminishes power relationships between interviewer and interviewee, it focuses on the perspectives of the interviewee, not the interviewer, and it offers reciprocity from the interviewer (ibid.). Qualitative interviews, as such, allow women's voices to be heard (ibid.). In semi-structured interviews, the interviewee often has an interview guide that covers different thematic questions related to the research questions (Bryman, pp.470-471). However, the researcher does not follow the guide rigorously (ibid.). Instead, the researcher encourages interviewees to go off target or 'rambling' and gives the participant significant leeway in how to answer the questions (ibid.). Also, the semi-structured approach allows the interviewer to ask follow-up questions and add questions during the interview (ibid.). For the above reasons, semi-structured, in-depth interviews suit my research.

Eleven interviews were conducted, and twelve people were interviewed during the period of March to July 2022. In Armenia, I conducted six interviews; one of these

six interviews occurred on the phone due to logistical reasons, and the rest of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. In one of these interviews, I interviewed two people at the same time on the interviewees' request. To ensure that the participants felt as comfortable as possible, I asked them where they would like to be interviewed but also encouraged them to choose a place where we would not be disturbed and they felt they could speak freely. These six interviews were recorded using a dictaphone with the consent of the participants. I used a dictaphone for two reasons: one, to ensure safer storage than my phone, and two, to optimize the sound recording. Five interviews were conducted online through Zoom. In these, I used Zoom's auto-recording function with the permission of the participants. Both the Zoom recordings and the Dictaphone files were then stored locally on my computer. After the interviews were transcribed, the files were deleted from my computer.

I used an interview guide, which can be found in Annex A, to guide the interviews. I practiced being an active listener as I let the participants guide my interviews, trying to fit the questions into our conversation as much as possible. In practice, this often meant asking follow-up questions to what the interviewee already had said and using the interview guide more complementarily to ensure all themes in the questions had been covered in each interview.

In addition to the 11 interviews, I also did an informal interview in March 2022. The reason for this interview was that I wanted to do a background check to ensure my study's relevance to Armenian society. The person I interviewed was an Armenian journalist active during the Velvet Revolution. We discussed how mothers were participating in the Revolution, Armenian mothers' role through history, and whether their participation in the Revolution could have affected their roles in society and their political participation.

4.4 Data Analysis

All interviewees agreed on being recorded. As I wanted to familiarize myself with the data and ensure accuracy and the interviewees' anonymity, I transcribed all the interviews manually. The transcribed data was then analyzed using a thematic

analysis method. The thematic analysis enables researchers to systematically identify patterns and themes across data and interpret collective experiences and meanings through these (Braun & Clarke, 2012, pp. 65-66). Thematic analysis is suitable for analyzing the ideas and assumptions behind what the interviewee is saying (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 66), which is crucial for my research as I am trying to unmask assumptions about motherhood and gender identities. I followed the six phases of doing reflexive thematic analysis outlined in Braun and Clarke (2012). First, I read and listened to my interviews several times; then, I identified codes; then, I identified similarities in codes, merging or expanding them if possible, and eventually, I categorized the codes into different themes. The theoretical perspective of political motherhood and my research questions guided the themes that emerged from the coding process.

4.5 Biases

Acknowledging potential biases is essential to researchers' reflectivity (Bryman, 2015, pp. 39-40). I am aware of potential power imbalances between the interviewer and the interviewed; I am a white Western woman conducting interviews in a context tired of presumed Western superiority. As such, I used a feministic methodology to reduce these power structures. I was genuinely interested in the interviewees' perspectives, and I purposely took a backset position, letting them guide the interviews.

However, it was not enough for me to use feministic methodology; I also tried to balance theoretical perspectives and literature from the global south with traditional Western feminist perspectives. Because it did not want my study to replicate the power structures of Western feminism or conduct my research under what Mohanty (1988) refers to as 'Western Eyes'.

The advancements of feministic methodology are that it assumes that gendered differences exist. Researching under this perspective allows the researcher to address and unmask social gender hierarchies. However, this is also the problem with feministic methodology, as my study could have missed alternative explanations for the phenomena I was studying.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

Bryman (2015) outlines four ethical considerations central to social research: The researcher should not do harm to participants, it should not deceive or lack consent from the participant, and lastly, it should not invade the participants' privacy. In line with guidelines for processing personal data at the faculty of Science provided by Lund University and ethical considerations addressed in Bryman (ibid.), I took several measures to ensure that the study did not do harm to participants, did not deceive or lack consent from the participants, or invade the participants' privacy, as stated below.

4.6.1 Consent and anonymity

All interviewed were read the consent form before the interview (see interview guide Annex A), which informs the interviewees about: the purpose of the study, how the data will be anonymized, stored, and used, emphasizes that the interviewees are free to leave or stop the interview at any point during the interview, and explains that interviewees are free not to answer questions. Also, in the consent form, interviewees were informed that they were free to withdraw parts of the interview, certain statements, or the whole interview before the 29th of July 2022. After the consent form was read, before verbal agreement was given, interviewees were encouraged to ask questions about the study, researcher, or consent form if they wished to do so. Consent was given to the researcher verbally after the consent form was read. As there are only 2,8 million living in Armenia and as I am using a snowball sampling method, I decided to anonymize the names of organizations, persons, places, and work titles of the interviewees. Also, personal stories that might risk interviewees being identified were anonymized or removed.

4.6.2 Data storage

In accordance with the guidelines for processing personal data at the Faculty of Science provided by Lund University, I took several measures to ensure that the

data was stored safely to ensure participants' anonymity. The data was stored locally on my computer or my Dictaphone. I anonymized the transcribes as I was writing them.

4.6.3 Psychological strain

As part of the do-no-harm consideration, it is essential to ensure the interviews do not cause psychological strain, such as stress. Due to my understanding of how motherhood experiences in Armenia can be shaped by its violent history, I took several measures to ensure that the interview would not add stress to the participants. All interviews were voluntary and conducted in a conversational manner, and the interviewees chose where and when they wanted to be interviewed. The interviews started with a general check-in on how the participants were feeling and left space for the participants to ask questions about the study. Several participants expressed after the interviews how it was uplifting and fun to remember and talk about their activism during the Velvet Revolution. After our interview, one participant talked about how remembering her activism made her want to do more activism in her everyday life as a mother.

4.7 Limitations

4.7.1 Language barrier

The first limitation of my study was the language barrier between the participants and the researcher. All interviews were conducted in English, as I do not speak Armenian and did not use an interpreter. The language barrier was expressed in some interviews, where the interviewees felt that they could not express themselves as freely as they would have wanted due to the language barrier. However, none of the interviews were gravely affected by the language barrier; it was more a question of flow in the interviews.

4.7.2 Sampling implications and Validity

There are several benefits to using a snowball technique, such as it is cost and time-efficient, and it allows the researcher to find groups that are otherwise hard to reach (Naderifar et al., 2017). There are several possible implications of using snowball sampling, as using snowball sampling relies on participants to provide contacts to other potential participants (Bryman, 2015). Here, there are several risks, such as the researcher being left with too few participants, the risk of bias, and problems with generalization (Naderifar et al., 2017). Still, qualitative research does not aim to generalize findings; instead, it aims to gain a deeper understanding of specific groups or phenomena (Naderifar et al., 2017). My study aims to gain a deeper understanding of a specific case rather than provide generalizations applicable between cases. My first sample group was strategic to minimize bias in the sample, aiming to find participants with different experiences. In my study, using a snowball sampling method generated a smaller sample than initially planned. Still, as Bryman (2015, p.425) accounts for in qualitative studies, it is 'impossible' to in advance decide how big the sample needs to be to answer the research question. Instead, a smaller sample can allow the researcher to develop more fine-grained data and provide a more in-depth analysis of a phenomenon (Bryman, 2015, p. 426). Also, it is not sure that a bigger sample will provide more codes than a smaller one. Guest et al. (2006) found that after having analyzed 12 interviews, no new codes were needed for the rest of their 60 interviews.

5. Findings

In this section will present this study's findings as guided by the research questions and the theoretical framework. The coding process generated five themes: From motherhood to feminism, Motherhood as resistance, Motherhood legitimizing, mobilizing, and protecting other protesters, Motherhood identities used to disengage and Traditional norms of motherhood in transition. The interviewees were ascribed random number from 1-11. As two persons were interviewed in interview 8, I refer to one as a) and the other as b) to separate them.

5.1 From motherhood to feminism

"Well, motherhood is very much respected. It is like a sacred thing if you are a mother, especially with small children people will not dare to touch you or they will respect you more." (5)

Across the interview data, one commonality is that motherhood is argued to be highly valued and respected in Armenian society (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 a-b, 10, 11). It is regarded as a sacred and integral part of society, representing the heart of the nation. This glorified role highlights mothers' high status in Armenian society, giving them some degree of power.

"But also, at the same time it is not political, motherhood for society. So, it was the first-time mothers were on the streets claiming their space, it was not in the home." (5)

While the status of motherhood in Armenia gives mothers some authority, motherhood was not seen as a political matter before the revolution. Instead, it was seen as a private and non-political aspect of life. The practices associated with motherhood were confined to the realms of the home and were not considered to have any political influence (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 a-b, 10). Despite societal norms of motherhood confining mothers to the private sphere and defining motherhood as non-political, mothers were not deterred from joining the revolution (1, 2, 3, 4, 5,

6, 7, 8 a-b, 9, 10, 11). Instead, mothers transferred their motherhood from the private realms of home out to the streets.

"Because I wanted our previous government to be resigned of course." (7)

For most of these women, political protest was something new. Many did not identify as feminists or necessarily as activist. Instead, what motivated these mothers to join the protests was to reject the president Serzh Sargsyan (1,5,6,7,8a).

"The first I was thinking about citizen, it was very important for me, for my children to know, what is citizen and responsible for their country for their village or their city." (6)

Besides wanting the old regime gone, mothers' motivation for joining the protests often started from their ascribed roles as mothers, wanting a better future for their kids (1, 5, 6, 7, 8a), teaching their kids how to be active citizens (5,6) or to protect their kids (5, 8a).

"The government could not have done a bad thing; my children will know about that and they will try to change something or fight for their rights." (6)

As mothers, interviewees five and six saw it as their responsibility to raise active citizens capable of defending themselves against oppression and having the agency to change society. Therefore, participating in the revolution and bringing one's children was seen as an extension of their responsibilities as mothers.

"Because you cannot keep these teenagers, you know, because it was also their classmates also all on the street. So, we were checking on each other." (5)

Mothers also considered their participation in the revolution part of their protective roles as caretakers (5, 8a). These mothers had older children who were already actively involved in the revolution and participating in protests. By joining the protests themselves, they hoped to ensure the safety of their children and protect them from violence.

"So, it started like that, and then at night we will come and discuss – what happened, we will try to see what we will do, risk assessment to see: Okay, what to do next, what happens if things happen, you know. What to do if police arrest them as minors, what should they do, what should they tell and these kinds of things." (5)

Person five planned her protest strategies based on her caregiving role to ensure their kids' safety. This demonstrates how activists' identities as mothers were incorporated into their protest strategies and vice versa. These quotes demonstrate how activists' identities as mothers became a stepping stone into activism.

"So, we were saying reject Serzh but reject anyone else who is trying to rule your life and being the master, you know, we had slogans such as saying we do not have any fathers. We are walking without fathers, no one telling us what to do." (5)

Additionally, during the protest, several mothers' goals expanded into feministic (5, 6, 7), aiming to not only reject Serzh but also all male control, both on a state level and in one's home and everyday life. Several mothers used the term father to describe patriarchal hierarchies. The activists' use of the word father arguably demonstrates their feminist consciousness and how their interests were both practical and strategic.

As such, identity traits of motherhood in Armenia contain both duties and responsibilities, largely stemming from their role as caregivers and protectors of the future generation, serving as mobilizing factors towards anti-regime protests with the potential to transcend into feministic political goals. This despite not necessarily viewing themselves as activists, nor having past experiences with engaging in open contentious political actions.

5.2 Motherhood as resistance

"Or if the police were trying to arrest some of the young protesters, they [mothers] would also interfere. They would stand, you know, with their body, in front of cars." (5)

Mothers would use their bodies as tools for resistance (2, 3, 4, 5, 7). Mothers would interfere in police arrests, standing in front of police cars and stopping them from driving away with protesters. Additionally, they would position themselves between police officers and other protesters, acting as a buffer to prevent the police from using force.

"...on the streets you are just standing between men, I mean participating in the revolution, men and policemen and trying to describe come on this is our society and you should not kill each other on the street." (7)

Mothers would mediate between police and protesters, trying to calm tensions and prevent conflicts (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8a-b, 10, 11).

"And they [mothers] are very powerful that they do that. Because, they have this unspoken power of you know, an aura that protects them from violence because they are just mother with small children. Nobody would dare to touch them." (5)

Mothers strategically used the traditional public understanding of motherhood as sacred for political resistance. The quote above shows how mothers' glorified roles in Armenia protect them from state violence. Knowing or discovering that the police would not hurt them, mothers incorporated this knowledge into their protest strategies. Also, the usage of the words 'an aura' in the quote above demonstrates how the glorification of motherhood is perceived as coming from natural aspects rather than social norms. This exemplifies how societal expectations of motherhood are performed until they are seen as biological and how mothers internalize these expectations.

"Sometimes it really helps I know that maybe it is not too feministic to claim this but sometimes when there is such occasions use your gender for the sake of public benefit in the patriarchy." (2)

Some activists were aware of motherhood and gender as a social construct but temporarily emphasized essentialist characteristics of motherhood to achieve political goals as demonstrated in the quote above.

"When police for example did not allow protesters do move towards street and governmental buildings when they saw that I was pregnant, and I am just like walking woman during her pregnancy they just opened this line and they allowed me to go. So, for me it was somehow a sign that it is not so scary, or I did not feel any unsafety for me and my kid." (7)

Several interviewees (5,6,7) describe how they discovered that the police would not hurt them, later using this as part of their protest strategies as they would rely on their identities as mothers to shield them from violence and use the high status of motherhood to justify their interference in police interactions.

"It was a couple of things of strong tension, and we were trying, you know, as female actors to do everything possible to lessen the violence towards the protesters as much as possible in you immediate surrounding and in bigger, you know, around bigger actions if possible. And that is why we came up with the idea having the solar female march with kids might remind the society that, we are from the same, basically, we might disagree on some things, but we do not want our kids to die or whatever in this protest, so it was just for the sake of lessen the tension at that point." (2)

Some interviewees (2,4,5,10) understood the marches organized solely for mothers with their children as a way to try to calm down growing tension and prevent the state from using massive force. This highlights how the societal norms of motherhood can be utilized as part of larger protest strategies and how mothers' participation can garner support from the wider society and form unity among protesters.

"...so they tried to make it as an event so they took children outside with them as strolling for peace something like that and there was a couple of activist mothers

that just had children so they wanted also to get involved. So, they opened a Facebook event so other people joined. In Armenia it is true when you have mothers with small children police is a little bit more careful and that helped a little bit." (5)

Person five describes how protesters were afraid of the police and whether they would use force. When organizing marches solely for mothers, it was helpful to know that the police would be more careful around mothers.

The findings above suggest that while motherhood can be a mobilizing factor on various scales, it can also be a strategic social and cultural resource for women to use to shape and adopt protests according to their wishes and demands. This includes lowering the risk or use of violence against themselves and other protestors.

5.3 Motherhood legitimizing, mobilizing, and protecting other protesters

"Also it helps, women who does not have children, young women, because young women are the most targeted. They will tell them, 'What are you doing on the streets!' 'This is not your place!' 'Only bad women are on the streets protesting'. But when you see mothers protesting as well, it is kind of, you know, change a little bit this discourse." (5)

The glorification of mothers in Armenia played a significant role in legitimizing the participation of women in the Velvet Revolution. Women with children protesting, and therefore able to ascribe to the idealism of Armenian motherhood, cannot easily be branded as 'bad women' and, by default, serve as enablers for women with lower social status (e.g., non-parents) to participate. As seen from the quote above, it challenged the narrative that only 'bad' women participated in the movement, which in turn allowed or motivated more women to join, diversify, and further participate.

"Other women when they saw that there are also pregnant women, women with children, and they joined thinking everything is peaceful, and it is not so dangerous." (7)

In addition, mothers' participation mobilized other protesters to join, as it was understood that mothers' participation indicated that the movement was safe and peaceful. This demonstrated how motherhood not only legitimized other protesters' participation but also motivated and mobilized them to join.

"... it is something even visually when you see that there are policemen there and you do not know what to expect from them, whether they will attack you or not, how will they, whether will beat you or not. And then come women with their children and this is kind of I think a frustrating thing also for policemen and for the authority because it is not, it is not even imaginable that you can take women with children or something like that." (3)

Other protesters confirmed the descriptions of mothers using their identities to lessen violence and protect other protesters (2, 3,4,8b,10,11). Mothers' participation in the protests was perceived as minimizing the risk that state authorities would use violence against other protesters, making other protesters feel safer to join.

"I think of course it is hard for policemen to be aggressive with women publicly or maybe anyways. So, when in 2018 when we saw so many women, mothers and children there you could really understand that revolution is going on and it will win. Because no one, no one adequate will shot them. Or I don't know - beat them... Because in our protest we even tried to, we wanted to encourage women to participate. Because yeah that is, policemen are very much gentle with women of course." (4)

During the revolution, protesters discovered that mothers' participation mitigated the risk of the state using violence against the protests. As a result, protesters encouraged more women and mothers to participate, which helped these activists

to sustain their activism. As such, protesters incorporated norms of motherhood into their protesters' strategies.

These findings show how mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution not only authorized the movement, indirectly legitimizing other women's participation but also played a crucial role in shielding other protesters from state violence, which allowed these protesters to sustain and mobilize their activism.

5.4 Motherhood identities used to disengage

"I think of course if you are with children or pregnant nobody will touch you...But they have another thing which is psychological bullying. Everyone told you go home and sit with your children and go to the kitchen. It is another that psychological bullying, is another and it can also change your mind and you can really leave and go home." (6)

Although mothers were not met with physical violence in response to their activism, they were exposed to psychological bullying. The bullying was linked to their traditional identity as mothers. Norms of motherhood, as non-political and private, were used to discourage mothers' activism. The police and other actors used political motherhood against these mothers, portraying them as 'bad women', but as 'bad mothers' who were acting unnaturally and unmotherly. These tactics were arguably aimed at pressuring the mothers to stop their activism and stop breaking the norms of motherhood.

"They said that 'Oh it is encouraging children to be uneducated. Preventing them to going to school. You are not a good mother. Mothers keep children in school.' So, many of us got that criticism. But you know it is, I did not affect me, maybe somewhere it did effect, but not me personally." (5)

Mothers who brought their children to protests were often criticized. The quote reflects patriarchal narratives that there are 'good' and 'bad' ways to be a mother, and activism is not considered a 'good' way. It shows how societal norms confine

motherhood to the private sphere and how attempts by mothers to express their motherhood roles in public are deemed inappropriate, earning them the label of 'bad' mothers. This demonstrates how norms of motherhood are used to control women's actions and thoughts. However, in the quote above, person five describes how others labeling her a 'bad' mother did not stop her activism.

"I feel stronger because every time I felt they are bullying me and I am staying here, every time I felt more and more stronger." (6)

Similarly, person six recounts how others' attempts to confine her to the private only increased her awareness of her political capabilities and fueled her motivation to participate.

"I was participating while I was pregnant, it was visible and of course my family was against that I was participating because of security issues but of course also security of my child… And my father and my brother they were totally against of my participation in the revolution." (7)

Mothers were also met with resistance from their families due to concern for their and their children's safety.

These findings demonstrate how motherhood can be used to discredit or limit mothers' activism. It shows how political motherhood can be used by actors other than mothers and for various patriarchal aims.

5.5 Traditional norms of motherhood in transition

"Well, it changed the fact that they are not passive, as they were. Their role is not passive, and they can take an active role in decision making, in community issues, in politics. Nobody can force them to stay at home. If they want to be out... And just having a small child does not mean that you cannot voice your and be present in the public." (5)

The activism of mothers during the Velvet Revolution expanded norms of motherhood and challenged patriarchal gender structures. Mothers' active participation in the revolution challenged the norm of mothers as private, confined to the realm of the home without influence on the public sphere. Through activism, mothers' roles changed from private and passive to public and actively involved in political decision-making.

"Because social movements before that was usually young women without children or maybe not as much. Mostly men. But after the revolution you would see, you know, that more women, would, for example there was the protest after the revolution about climate and environmental issues, against mining, and there was a huge protest and again you would see mothers and with children coming and protesting." (5)

Before the revolution, most protesters were men. After the revolution, the participation of mothers in protest actions has become more frequent. Mothers continued their political involvement after the revolution, which suggests that their participation as protesting mothers did challenge patriarchal gender structures and expanded mothers' roles as mothers have been more actively involved in political spheres since the revolution.

"Motherhood in Armenia is very isolating process. Most young mother we used to work with they complained about the same thing – that they would lose their social network, they would lose their friends, confined in homes mostly. Taking care. And during this revolution. It kind of helped them with this isolation of motherhood… I think that this helped them to first also connect with other mothers. Because I would see them talking on the streets and talking about different issues that bothers them. A part of political issue. It created a kind of connection. Broke this isolation very abruptly. So, there is no going back." (5)

Participating in the Velvet Revolution is argued to have significantly impacted mothers' quality of life and horizontal social networking. Breaking their confinement to the private sphere and shouldering a new role in the public as politically engaged mothers led to mothers breaking the isolation of motherhood,

now able to talk about stigmas, and identifying shared experiences of oppression of motherhood with peers. As such, mothers' activism increased mothers' well-being, helped identify and unmask structural challenges of motherhood, and inspired future political action.

"But then I think that also this kind of symbolism that if you are there, if you are on the streets if you are out protesting the regime that means that your able and you have that agency to bring changes into your social circle and your family." (3)

Conversely, several interviewees (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8b) describe how mothers' and women's public participation in the Velvet Revolution challenged not only the patriarchal system on a state level (public sphere) but also patriarchal systems on a personal level (private sphere). As a result, women have gained more agency in their everyday lives or in their homes.

"Men are used to think that men are the head of the family are the leaders of the family. This thinking and this cultural perception is there but I think now much is changing, this kind of discourses is very much criticized. Women are more visible now in various spheres. And maybe it is not the change that we are happy with, I would like to see more radical changes." (3)

Patriarchal norms of motherhood still exist in Armenia, but mothers' participation in the revolution has led to more public criticisms of these norms.

"The revolution itself has changed the perception of our social participation into certain aspects of our common lives. Normalize in away participation of women to social protest actions. Unfortunately, it was not followed up by significant change of the government cabinet, women are still only leading on lower levels." (2)

Despite women's and mothers' active participation in the revolution, women's representation in official political bodies increased only limitedly. Women are still excluded from key government positions.

These findings reveal that mothers' norm-breaking actions during the Velvet Revolution helped redefine mothers' roles in Armenia. They challenged traditional social hierarchies and norms of motherhood, exposed patriarchal gender structures, and gave women more agency in their everyday lives.

5.6 Discussions of Findings

What is evident in the findings presented is that even as mothers are oppressed under patriarchal gender norms in Armenia, the motherhood role also comes with some normative benefits or resources, which mother activists utilized during the revolution. Mothers were described as 'untouchable' during the revolution, as it would be an immense shame to hurt a mother. These findings reflect how Armenia's shame culture is deeply internalized in society across genders, controlling how people act and think, nonetheless, the state apparatus. Mothers' untouchable status during the revolution can also be understood from politics being practiced as an extension of family in Armenia. Even though mothers traditionally are not seen as the head of the family, motherhood gives them a certain degree of status as bearers and preservers of the family, which can explain their untouchable status during the revolution.

Despite societal norms of motherhood confining mothers to the private sphere and defining motherhood as non-political, mothers were not deterred from joining the revolution. For most of these women, political protest was something new; many did not identify as feminists or necessarily as activists. Instead, what motivated these mothers to join the protests initially was to remove Serzh Sargsyan from power. However, and arguably more significant, besides wanting the old regime gone, mothers' motivation for joining the protests often started from their traditionally defined roles as mothers. Mothers saw it as part of their caretaking responsibilities to become activists. Interestingly, the state's intensification of mothers as responsible for as bearers and preserves of family backfired as mothers saw overthrowing the regime as part of their responsibility to protect their family. Along the same argument, it was first when the state became viewed as illegitimate in the views of the public that some mothers felt the responsibility to protest as an

extension of their motherhood role of the nation-family. This highlights how the traditional gendered distinction between the public and private spheres can become blurred during times of crisis or social revolt, further allowing this divide to be questioned. As the findings showed, the two spheres interacted during the Velvet Revolution, which allowed the mother activists to oppose their confinement to the private.

During the protest, several mothers' public governance goals expanded into feministic as they aimed to reject not only Serzh but also male control, both on a state level, in one's home and everyday life. This illustrates how re-performing motherhood in a new context can uncover underlying social hierarchies and injustices and motivate activists to also engage with or oppose these. This also illustrates how feministic consciousness can be a process of activism. Accordingly, activists' interests and consciousness are not static and non-exclusive as mother activists can fight for their rights within assigned gender roles while simultaneously challenging these gender roles and confronting patriarchal gender structures and their own and others' conceptions of such.

Mothers, who became aware that the police would not use violence against them, actively employed this as part of their protest strategies in two ways. First, mother activists used the knowledge of the police being less violent with them to sustain and mobilize their activism, feeling safe that the police would not use violence against them. Second, they actively used this knowledge to protect other protesters from violence, mediate in conflict situations, and intervene in police arrests, which sustained and mobilized other protesters' engagement. Through these acts, mothers were defying the idea of men as the protectors of women. Instead, they were appropriating the roles of a male protector, protecting not only their children but also men and women. As such, their acts were arguably challenging patriarchal gender structures. Mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution also contributed to legitimizing the Velvet Revolution. It challenged the narrative that only 'bad' women participated, which mobilized and legitimized others' participation in the revolution.

Mothers, as such, played a significant role during the Velvet Revolution by using political motherhood as a protest strategy. Mothers used political motherhood as a protest strategy to sustain, legitimize, and mobilize their and the movement's political resistance. To justify their political actions, mothers relied on their respectability as mothers, rendering their political actions invisible by justifying their activism as an extension of their roles as mothers to claim political space. Mothers, as such, used or utilized the patriarchal perception of motherhood as driven by biological instincts rather than political goals to sustain their political resistance.

Political motherhood was also employed to delegitimize mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution. Mothers were met with resistance for their activism from their families, the police, their social circle, acquaintances, or strangers. Norms of motherhood, as non-political and private, were used to discourage mothers' activism. Other actors used political motherhood against mothers' activism, portraying them as 'bad' mothers who were acting unnaturally and unmotherly. Reflecting patriarchal narratives that there are 'good' and 'bad' ways to be a mother, and activism is not considered a 'good' way. These findings demonstrate how political motherhood can be employed by actors other than mothers and for patriarchal goals. It also demonstrates how motherhood is used to control women's actions and thoughts.

So, to answer the first research question, *How were norms of motherhood used as protest strategies in the Armenian Velvet Revolution of 2018?*. The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that mothers' usage of norms of motherhood as protest strategies played a crucial role in enabling mothers and other protesters to claim political space and mobilize political resistance. It also finds that norms of motherhood were utilized by actors other than mother activists, as state authorities and others used political motherhood to deter mothers' activism.

So, in answer to the second research question, *How did mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution of 2018 affect other protesters' activism?* this study finds that mothers used their respectability to protect other protesters from violence, enabling them to sustain their activism. Also, mothers' participation in the revolution

recruited other protesters as it challenged narratives that only 'bad' women participated and made other protesters feel safer to join.

Mothers who were involved in activism during the Velvet Revolution redefined and challenged the traditional social hierarchies and injustices that existed around motherhood. Through their activism, they highlighted that motherhood is a social construct and expanded traditional norms of motherhood. This helped to expose patriarchal gender structures and break the isolation that mothers traditionally faced. As a result, mothers became more involved in the political public sphere, and their participation in protest actions became more frequent. The participation of mothers in the Velvet Revolution challenged patriarchal gender systems on a state, family, and personal level, giving women more agency in their everyday lives. Mothers' involvement in political activism also helped identify structural problems of motherhood. However, despite these changes, patriarchal norms of motherhood still exist in Armenia, and women's representation in official political bodies has only changed limitedly.

The third research question of this study is, *How did the mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution of 2018 challenge patriarchal gender structures?*. The study concludes that mothers' norm-breaking actions during the Velvet Revolution helped redefine mothers' roles in Armenia as they challenged traditional social hierarchies and norms of motherhood, exposed patriarchal gender structures, and gave women more agency in their everyday lives.

One interesting finding that this study cannot answer is why attempts to discourage mothers' activism did not stop their activism. This is interesting as state authorities and others were acting according to the nation-family norms that citizens should address women's inappropriate behavior, and shame generally is effective in controlling women's behavior in Armenian society. Why was it that shame did not work on these mothers? This study cannot address this question sufficiently. It is possible that some mothers felt that protecting their children from an oppressive regime was more important than avoiding shame for their activism. Or it could be that mothers had feminist consciousness and, therefore, saw through the argument

that they were bad mothers. Another possibility is that the unity and support among protesters encouraged mothers to continue their participation in protests.

6. Concluding Discussion

This section will discuss how the thesis's pivotal findings relate to previous research and suggest implications for future research.

This study confirms that mother activists can use norms of motherhood as a protest strategy for political resistance, which has also been found by previous scholars such as Schirmer (1993), Howe (2006), Karaman (2016), Mhajne & Whetstone (2018), and Ray (2018). This study finds that the perception of motherhood as non-political, driven by biological instincts without any impacts on the political and society, can render mother activists' political actions' invisible' and non-threatening to the state, which has also been found by Mhajne & Whetstone (2018). Similarly, this study confirms Mhajne & Whetstone's (ibid.) finding that states' identification of mothers as worthy of state protection can backfire as mothers can use this to mobilize their activism and protect other activists. As such, this study confirms Mhajne & Whetstone's (ibid.) findings that political motherhood is effective because motherhood identifies mothers as non-political actors who need state protection. This study demonstrates how even as mothers are oppressed under patriarchal structures of motherhood and norms around motherhood, they can use these preestablished norms to bargain with patriarchy to gain political agency, which confirms Schirmer's (1993) theory of political motherhood. This study also confirms Mhajne and Whetstone's (2018) theory that political motherhood can be used by actors other than mothers, as political motherhood was used by state authorities and others in the Velvet Revolution to disengage mothers' activism. These other groups' usage of narratives of 'good' and 'bad' mothers confirms Rich's (1986) theory of how motherhood functions as a tool to dictate women's thoughts and actions and O'Reilly's (2021) theory that breaking the dictates of normative motherhood leads to narratives of these mothers as 'bad'.

This study's findings confirm Mhajne and Whetstone's (2018) theoretical argument that mother activists' can use political motherhood to shield other protesters from violence, legitimize other protesters' participation, and mobilize others to join. The

interviews with mothers and other study participants suggest that mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution lessened tensions between state authority and protesters. Also, mothers actively used their bodies as buffers between protesters and police, which suggests that mothers' presence might have shielded other protesters from police violence and hindered or stalled police arrests. Also, mothers' participation seemed to have mobilized other people to join the protests, as their participation signaled to other protesters that it was safe to join. The high status that mothers have in Armenian society legitimized other women's participation as it challenged the narrative that only 'bad' women were participating. This demonstrates how different narratives of 'bad' women can exist simultaneously. It suggests that even as mothers were marked as 'bad' for their activism, their high status also challenged this narrative for other women. Previous studies have not widely discussed how different narratives of 'bad' women can exist simultaneously and interact with each other in social movements.

The interviewed mothers' initial motivations for joining the protest were linked to political governance or democratization goals (to reject Serzh). Part of the motivation for mothers joining the Armenian Velvet Revolution also started from their roles as mothers wanting to protect, teach, or to better the lives of their children, which is similar to other studies findings such as Schirmer (1993), Howe (2006), Karaman (2016), Mhajne & Whetstone (2018), and Ray (2018). As the protest continued, some mothers' motivations expanded from their initial motivations into also aiming to challenge patriarchal gender structures; this confirms Schirmer's (1993) theoretical argument that mothers' political activism does not need to be either feministic strategic or female pragmatic. Instead, Armenian mothers' activism simultaneously obtained both strategic and pragmatic goals and expanded from pragmatic to strategic as the protests continued. Mother activists in Armenia went from joining protests in their assigned gender roles and fighting for their rights within assigned gender roles, and then later, their activism expanded into questioning dominant gender systems. This confirms Schirmer's (ibid.) theoretical argument that feministic consciousness can be a product of activism.

The empirical findings of this study demonstrate that mothers entering the public sphere through the frame of motherhood did not place these women's political participation at a standstill, which contradicts Einwohner et al. (2000). Instead, mothers have continued their political engagement after the revolution, for example by protesting for other political causes such as mining and environmental issues or by becoming more involved in the public sphere. As such, mothers' participation in the Velvet Revolution was a stepping stone into other forms of political engagement. Mothers' active involvement in the Velvet Revolution has resulted in norms of motherhood and patriarchal gender structure being questioned. Mothers' roles have gone from being passive and confined to the home to becoming more active and political; this confirms previous studies' findings, including Schirmer (1993), Howe (2006), Karaman (2016), Mhajne and Whetstone (2018) and Ray (2018). As such, mothers entering the public sphere through the frame of motherhood can reflect an empowering movement, as in the case of the Armenian Velvet Revolution. However, patriarchal gender norms of motherhood still exist in Armenia, and women continue to be underrepresented in official political bodies. In line with these findings, this study suggests that women's access to the public sphere should not be seen as a panacea for women's political empowerment but rather as a crucial initial step among many.

This study contradicts Shirinian's (2021) finding that gender norms returned almost the same as the pre-revolution state after the revolution. This study confirms Ziemer's (2019) empirical discussion that mothers' involvement in the Velvet Revolution was seen as transpiring from their roles as mothers and that mothers' glorified role in Armenian society gave them immunity from police violence. However, this study cannot confirm or dismiss Shirinian's (2021) and Ziemer's (2019) findings that the revolution protests were hierarchical or non-hierarchical. The data from this study were inconclusive regarding whether the revolution protests were hierarchical or non-hierarchical and their effect on mothers' participation. It could be that the protests were both hierarchical and non-hierarchical.

The discussion above suggests several research avenues. There is a need for further research on how mothers' use of political motherhood can shield other protesters,

recruit protesters, and sustain and give authority to social movements. Additionally, more research is necessary to understand why political motherhood sometimes fails to achieve its aim, as this study could not explain why the use of political motherhood by groups other than mothers did not achieve its aim of discouraging mothers' activism. Furthermore, more research is needed to explore how narratives of 'bad' women can coexist and interact within social movements.

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Annex A: Interview Guide

First check-in: How are you feeling today?

Consent form:

First, I would like to briefly introduce my study and inform how this interview will be used in my research. This is an interview for my master's thesis, which I am doing as part of the International Development and Management master's program at Lund University. I am researching motherhood during the protests of the Velvet Revolution. The interview will take around 45 minutes. I am interested in your reflections, so there is no right or wrong answer to my questions. Your name, profession, and other personal information you share with me today will be anonymized as it will not be documented in connection to your statement. I will record this interview with your consent. This recording will not be stored online but only on my computer or this recording device (point to the Dictaphone) to guarantee your safety. The recording will be deleted from my computer and/or the Dictaphone as soon as I have transcribed the interview. At any point during this interview, you are free to leave or stop the interview. You do not need to answer any of my questions if you feel uncomfortable answering them. Also, after the interview, you are free to withdraw parts of the interview, certain statements, or the whole interview before the 29th of July this year (2022).

Do you have any questions about the research, the process, me, or anything else?

Do you feel comfortable conducting this interview based on what I told you?

Is it okay for you for me to record this interview?

With consent, start recording

Introduction:

1. Please tell me a little about yourself. What was your role during the revolution? How did you participate?

Personal experiences from the revolution:

2. Why did you want to join the protest?

3. What were you feeling during the revolution? Did you feel safe joining/participating in the protest? Why/why not?

4. Have you been involved in other protests or other political actions?

a) If yes – Was there any difference in the Velvet Revolution compared to other protests? Why?
b) If no – Why? What was it that made you want to join this time?

Mothers' role in the revolution:

5. What comes to mind when you hear mothers and the velvet revolution?

6. How did mothers participate in the protests? (What were they doing? Why? Does any place, slogan, or anything else come to mind?)

7. Who were you participating with? (Friends, family, organization, coworkers, classmates, strangers, children, alone)?

8. Did you bring your children to protests? Why/why not?

9. Was this the first time you brought your kids?

10. How was it protesting with your child?

11. How did a typical protest day look like for you?

12. Did you ever feel that you were protesting as a mother? Why?

13. How were other protesters behaving towards you/mothers? Why?

14. How were the police behaving towards you/mothers? Why?

15. Did anybody say something about your participation in the protests? (For example, did you feel that people around you supported your participation in the

protests? Or do you feel that people were against you participating in the protests? Whom/why? What did they say?)

16. Do you think that mothers' participation in the revolution was important? Why? Why not?

17. Did mothers' participation in the revolution change the protests or other people's behaviors?

18. Do you feel that protesting changed anything in your life? Why/why not?

19. What would you say is the role of mothers in Armenia in general?

20. Did protesting change the idea of mothers? Women? How?

21. Have you/mothers continue to be involved in political actions after the revolution? How? How is this different from before the revolution?

22. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the revolution? Or mothers participating? Or anything else you think I should know?