

**Motherhood and Russian Women: What It Means to Them, and
Their Attitudes Towards It.**

**A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for a degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Faculty of Economic and Social Studies**

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the issue of motherhood as one of the most important aspects of a woman's life, focusing on Russian women and their feelings and ideas concerning mothering and reproductive decision-making. The attitudes and positions of women themselves are juxtaposed to the prevalent cultural myth that sees motherhood in Russia as an inalienable part of female personality: indeed, as 'the essence of Russian femininity'. However, it will be demonstrated that this myth always coexisted with an opposing anti-reproductive trend, and that this is particularly influential at the present time.

The research methodology of this work is based on qualitative interviewing of women who occupy various positions in the reproductive field, both in respect of reproductive decision-making, and their 'objective' circumstances, which might or might not favour them actually carrying out their decisions. Each of these women was interviewed at length (on the whole, 18 interviews are used) and their attitudes to each others' positions were examined, as well as their broader attitudes to life, which might be expected to form the foundations of their reproductive behaviour.

It was found that although people's ideas concerning motherhood remain in some respects more traditional in Russia than in the West (which, it is argued, reflects more traditional views on the part of Russians in the area of the gender roles), Russian women have a cautious approach to biological reproduction. Most of them argue in favour of having no more than one child, and even this is dependent on conditions which are not easy to meet in their real lives. Statistics reinforce this view, bearing witness to a very low fertility pattern, which has recently resulted in population decline in Russia. In the view of the author, several factors have contributed to this situation.

Firstly, the State, throughout the entire Soviet period of Russian history, tried to manipulate women's fertility and their participation in the work force, by, on the one hand, either banning or permitting abortion, and on the other, glorifying 'heroic' motherhood. As a result of being overexposed to such propaganda in the past, women have now acquired a kind of immunity to these ideas. Abortion became an unquestioned 'norm of life'.

Now abortion is no longer completely unquestioned, both because of the propaganda of various, usually religious, anti-abortion groups, and because of reduced access to free or at least affordable abortion. This brings us on to two further factors in the development of the current situation concerning fertility: the religious renaissance, which causes women to reject abortion, though usually not in favour of motherhood but of other means of fertility control; and the current economic crisis, which influences many people's decisions in the reproductive field, in particular forcing them to restrict the number of children they have, or to postpone having them until a 'better time'.

The fourth and final factor is found not only in Russia but in the modern industrial world as a whole: concern with quality rather than quantity in respect of children, and the greater attention paid by 'ordinary' people to their own needs than to the needs of the collectivity, which in this case would be 'kin', 'the nation' or 'the population'. Thus voluntary childlessness becomes normatively acceptable, while having a large family is now seen as irresponsible behaviour.

Declaration

No portion of the work referred to in this thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Preface.

The author has an MA degree in Society and Politics from Central European University, Prague, Czech Republic. The degree was validated by the University of Lancaster, UK. The author also has held research positions at the Institute of Sociology of Russian Academy of Sciences (ISRosAN) in Moscow, Russia.

To My Daughter Tania

Introduction.

Living in Russia complicates the issue of motherhood: at least until very recently, virtually every female was growing up considering herself a future mother, although discussions concerning the bad sides of the process of mothering were very common among women of all generations. Actually, the 'material' reward for motherhood was never sufficient in Russian culture, which allowed some Western experts¹ to consider maternity as a specifically undervalued area of activity in that country. Indeed, it was usual for pre-Revolutionary peasant women to give birth to children in the fields while working, and to return to other kinds of physically hard work sometimes almost immediately after finishing with the very process of birth. This seemingly severe and anti-hygienic practice led, of course, to relatively high rates of infant and maternal mortality, but it was argued by some traditionalists that it was the main reason for the famous good health of Russian people in former times: those children who survived all the difficulties of their early childhood, beginning from the very moment of birth, would, of course, grow up into the famous Russian strong '*chudo-bogatyri*' ('miraculous giants', according to the expression of Suvorov, a prominent Russian military man of the XVIII century), who would be able to endure all the difficulties of hard work in a cold climate. The males among them were particularly valued as soldiers; and the females had to go through these ordeals not only as babies, born and brought up in severe 'natural' conditions, but then again as mothers, giving birth. All this is true, and it is well-known by contemporary mothers and would-be-mothers, who are to go through the process of birth with less risk for their lives², but still are aware of all the 'unavoidable' bad and dirty sides of this process. Giving birth remains an undervalued job in Russia in the sense of help from government, society, and often those who are in close relationships to the mother. Young females are able to listen to older ones who often tell them that there will be no reward in mothering, only problems. What, then, creates a favourable attitude to motherhood in young Russian women so frequently? Why do these women, independently of any personal and social differences between them, usually plan to give birth to at least one

¹ For example, Margaret Mead thought that motherhood was particularly lowly valued in traditional pre-Revolutionary Russia, and therefore it was so easy for the communist government to incorporate females into the work force after the revolution: for Mead, females strive for participation in activities, recognized as masculine in some cultures, in cases when activities considered as feminine in the same culture have low prestige (see Margaret Mead, *Male and Female, A study of the Sexes in a Changing World*, Penguin books, 1974);

² and usually far less often, not more than twice during their childbearing years, while in the Nineteenth century each woman, especially in the beginning of this century, could experience birth up to twenty times or even more, although usually the fertility rates of peasant mothers were

child³ in whatever circumstances their fate throws them?

It seems to be a difficult question. Some authors think that it has something to do with very deeply rooted representations of motherhood in Russian culture, which began from the pre-Christian times, but continued to develop in the Christian epoch as well. In her essay "Stabat Mater"⁴ Julia Kristeva persuasively argues that internal gratifications for motherhood existed on the symbolic level within the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, with its cult of the Mother of God, which was strong there in comparison to the Western version of Christianity. According to Kristeva, it was so at least initially, in the first thousand of years of existence of Christian religion. Within the context of the general misogyny of Christianity this cult gave a spiritual and psychological asylum to women who channeled their activity to the sphere of reproduction only, but evaluated this special form of female work very highly. The possibility of psychologically identifying with the Mother of God, Kristeva argues, provided mothers with a consciousness of the very high divine and creative value of the process of giving birth, but on the restrictive condition that a woman rejects her own sexuality, because only 'virgin' mothers could identify with Maria. Moreover, their symbolic virginity, so that males seemed to be excluded from the process of conception on the level of hidden internal representations, helped them to identify with Maria concerning the divine origin of the resulting child. Therefore the very loneliness and isolation experienced in pregnancy and childbirth became essential for receiving psychological gratification from one's womanhood in this system of values, where the heroic character of mothering to the extent of humiliation and self-sacrifice was the very condition of mothers having high self-esteem. In Kristeva's view, women could, accordingly, think of themselves as of 'higher creatures' in comparison to men, especially if they also experienced the sensation of reunification with their own mothers in the process of birth, the sensation which could provide them with a feeling of essential female immortality, or at least immortality of female kin. Giving birth to a son and identifying with him thus became the only way for a woman to experience death. The main Christian myth elaborated exactly this issue, from a woman's point of view.

Adding to the above the opinion of some researchers⁵ that maternal cults were particularly strong in Slavonic pagan religions, and the idea of conception without a father's participation, together with a corresponding belief that children are their mother's 'property', it seems to be possible to hypothesize that motherhood in Slavonic tradition provided females

significantly reduced by breast-feeding.

³ However, not often to more than one;

⁴ See Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, New York, Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1987.

⁵ for example, Joanna Hubbs: *Mother Russia: The Feminine Myth in Russian Culture*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1988;

with so strong a sense of achievement, self-esteem and even, in a sense, superiority to males, that even modern and post-modern times with all their individualist ideas, and all the possibilities of various other forms of social activities and achievements could not completely destroy this strong cultural appeal of motherhood. It is often stronger than all the efforts of propaganda to change people's minds and channel them in different directions, and stronger than the opposing cultural trends.

However, other authors think that there was nothing special in the Russian cultural attitude to motherhood, and that in Russia it gave no more to women in terms of status, prestige and self-esteem, than elsewhere (see, for example, Aristarkhova, 1995; Porter, 1976). In addition, for various reasons, not all Russian women became mothers, in all epochs, just as in all other places. This was also happening in a context in which Russian governmental propaganda usually was not 'hostile' to motherhood. Most often the propaganda agreed with the 'main cultural pattern'⁶ in the area of procreation, and additionally reinforced it, for the simple reason that empires usually rely on the mechanical growth of their population. On the other hand, different attitudes to motherhood always existed within culture as such. For example, a negative attitude towards sex included a negative attitude to reproduction in some of the Old Believers' sects. In addition, Russia was not always internationally isolated, and not immune to the various influences from other Eastern and Western national cultures in the question of motherhood and reproduction.

In contrast to the hypothetical situation in ancient times, when, according to many authors' opinions, the stress was put on motherhood so decisively, in the contemporary epoch various kinds of other activities are allowed to provide women with psychological satisfaction and the internal harmony of their being. Among these activities professional success is already traditionally acceptable in Russian culture, which went through numerous transformations in this respect during the Soviet period. Hedonism, including sexual hedonism, is newer and much less acceptable, although, in the generation which is studied here, it is possible to expect in some cases a search for pleasure even as the main purpose of life for some individuals, or even the only positively evaluated side of human existence.

In any case, for various reasons, not all Russian women became mothers, in all epochs, just as in all other places.

All the above is directly associated with the main aims of my present research. Broadly, it can be said that my intention here is, like it was in E. Ann Kaplan's⁷ research, to

⁶ if we accept the assumption that the main pattern was high evaluation of motherhood;

⁷ E. Ann Kaplan studies the representations on motherhood in American melodramatic films and novels of XIX-th and XX-th centuries (see E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation, the Mother in Popular Culture and Melodrama*, Routledge, London and New York, 1992).

study motherhood in association with pleasure and work in the life of a woman, whatever combination of the three exists in her life. Under «pleasure» I include sexuality, and, more broadly, all other recreational activities. By the way, the combination of motherhood and work without searching for pleasure was supposed to be the only decent option for a woman in the Soviet epoch. However, all this finally served just as a preliminary ‘model’ to me, since in reality the subjective context of motherhood can be absolutely, or slightly, different. Broadly speaking, this context in contemporary post-Soviet Russia (in Moscow, to be more accurate) is the ultimate sphere of my interest in the present work. Speaking more precisely, in Western sociological tradition what I deal here with is usually named the ‘childbearing decision’ of a woman, since she supposedly makes a conscious *decision* about whether or not to mother, having some *reasons* for such a *choice*. However, my approach to that is far less quantitative than is usual for the works which consider childbearing decisions. My approach is also not based on the assumption that people are absolutely rational beings: I believe that they have emotions too, and these emotions, together with reason, influence their behaviour. Therefore the very word ‘decision’ does not seem to me to be particularly appropriate here. Rather, we can speak about the broad area of the *context* of *values, feelings, beliefs, attitudes* and *ideas* about life some particular woman has. In this context childbearing *happens* or *does not happen*, and it also becomes positively *valued* or *not valued* by an individual.

The stress which I put on the area of values, beliefs and attitudes, conditions my special interest in culture and propaganda, and their interactions, since all this directly and/or indirectly influences individuals’ minds. Therefore I decided to include ‘cultural products’ such as books and films in the research, in the form of attitudes of the interviewed people to the books and films they would themselves specify as those which influenced them at some point. Consequently, I included in the interview’s outline questions concerning novels and films the interviewee likes or dislikes, since both could influence her in some way, and/or could reflect already formed views on what is ‘appropriate’ and what is not. Anyway, ‘cultural products’ presumably represent only the peripheral context for the formation of beliefs concerning motherhood within the studied age group of Russian (Moscow based) women. The juxtaposition of the individuals’ views and the representations of the surrounding culture which are ‘external’ to them, within the limits of one and the same work, seems to create the possibility of finally theorizing the dynamics of the process of the genesis of beliefs on motherhood within individual systems of views, which theorizing I intend to do in the Conclusion of Part II and in the overall Conclusion of the present work.

I decided to focus my attention on my own generation: that is, Moscow-based women born between 1960 and 1970. The initial reasons were that this would provide focus and at least some compatibility of data, and that women of my own generation would be likely to be

closer to me in their value system. During the years in which I was working on this thesis, however (from 1994 to 2000), I changed my mind, both because of new knowledge I was acquiring on the topic of motherhood in contemporary Russia, and because cultural attitudes to reproduction seemed to be undergoing considerable changes precisely during those years. I would argue that there were two significant changes: the general attitude to reproduction became less favourable, and there was more possibility for individual choice. Accordingly, I would now add to the above reasons for choosing this particular generation the following. This generation of women was growing up in 'Soviet' times, but a significant part of their reproductive lives was lived during and after 'perestroika'. Consequently, their experience of the cultural changes in reproductive attitudes was likely to have been particularly strong in comparison to that of both older and younger women. As for focusing on Moscow women, the changes in reproductive attitudes (especially that concerning individual choice) might be expected to have affected Moscow more than other cities. All the same, pressure of norms, or, the idea that it is normal to teach others how to live, is still very strong in Russia; but, probably, it was always stronger here, in comparison to the West, at least during the last few centuries. This might be due to the fact that the Russians held a stricter, Orthodox, version of Christianity; and/or to the stronger centralising and autocratic traditions of the Russian state which allowed for less individualism. It is likely that this cultural peculiarity will not disappear now, but will coexist, in a paradoxical manner, with the 'new' contemporary concept of individual freedom.

To summarize, then, the main goal of this work is to study the various attitudes to motherhood of Russian women of my generation who are based in Moscow: the different 'decisions' they have made about it in their individual lives, their behaviour in this respect, and the cultural meaning it has for them. I also intend to study the wider economic, social, and cultural context in which they have, or have not, had children, and which also influences their reproductive views.

The thesis consists of two Parts, together with this Introduction and the Conclusion. Part I contains three chapters. Chapters One and Two aim to study the cultural/discursive and, to some extent, real life context of women's reproductive attitudes and behaviour. The first constitutes an overview of Russian and Soviet views and beliefs concerning motherhood throughout history; the second represents an examination of Western theories and ideas on motherhood, which could, directly or indirectly, through the works of Soviet authors or through publications in the press, have influenced my interviewees' views. The third chapter is an exposition of the methodology of my research, qualitative interviewing and analysis of the interview texts.

Part II is concerned with the exposition and analysis of the interviews with the main

group of women under study, to reveal their views and behaviour. As a whole, 18 case studies were used. There are eight thematic chapters, preceded by a chapter which introduces the interviewees to readers. Each of the thematic chapters corresponds to one of the subject areas within the domain of motherhood, or, to be more specific, to one of the possible options/situations which woman can choose or get into in the field of motherhood. Chapter 2 examines childbearing in a situation which seems 'normal' to contemporary Russians (and not only to the women I have studied, as Chapter 1 of Part I makes clear): namely, having one or two children within marriage or a long-term unregistered relationship. Chapter 3 is dedicated to contraception and to abortion⁸. Chapter 4 concerns the relinquishment of unwanted babies by their mothers at birth to the guardianship of the State. Chapter 5 considers adoption, as one of the variants of these relinquished babies' subsequent destiny, and as one of the variants of the resolution of the problem of infertility for a woman. Chapter 6 looks at the issue of infertility in more detail. Voluntary childlessness is discussed in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 explores the problem of single motherhood. Finally, Chapter 9 investigates the topic of large families, their style of life and how they are experienced by those who live in them, and what they mean for people to whom this experience is alien. As a rule, each chapter of Part II is based on one or several interviews with women who lived through the particular experience which constitutes the subject matter of that section. These case studies are complemented, in each case, by the views and ideas held by all the other interviewees who did not have that experience. In the Conclusion of the thesis, data from the Parts I and II would be brought together, and some inferences drawn concerning reproductive beliefs and behaviour of this generation of women, measured against the cultural, social, and economic context of their lives.

Finally, I would like to explain why and in what circumstances the question of attitudes of contemporary Russian women to motherhood became the main topic of my Ph.D. thesis. It happened as a result, on the one hand, of my deep interest in feminism, the appeal of which to me is associated, first of all, with individualistic love of freedom, peculiar to some trends within feminism, which seem to have the intention of eliminating all chains and barriers. On the other hand, my own particular position in the area of motherhood played an important role here. I always wanted to have a child, but because of some health problems I had to consider new reproductive technologies in order to achieve this goal. This situation conditioned my reflexive, and at the same time very much emotionally involved, position on motherhood, as well as an interest and attention to all the various positions of other women in

⁸ Abortion was for a long time 'the other side of the coin' of Russian 'normal' one-two-children family, since having most pregnancies aborted was the main means of birth control there during the 60 years of the Soviet era.

the respect of reproductive rights. Proceeding from my strong long-term desire to have my own child, and from my love and respect of individual freedom, I now can understand the no less strong desire of some other women to never have children, and I am passionately interested in all the variants of attitudes to procreation. There are numerous options and real life situations one can get into in this field. To name just a few: one can have biological children, but not bring them up oneself; one can have many children and be a full-time mother; one can even never consider having or not having children, but live one's life without trying to control or to rationalize it; one can be able to reasonably balance career and motherhood on the same scale; one can be in a situation of wanting children, but deciding against having them because of the requirements of work or the desire to escape the fate of a single mother, or due to economic constraints; one can believe that happiness is to have a child, but without a husband, in order not to restrict oneself just to one man; one can have an unwanted child just because of social norms, or the requirements of one's husband or relatives; etc.

Feminist authors vary significantly concerning the value of motherhood. Seemingly, there is more variation in opinions among feminists in this area than in almost any other. For example, Luce Irigaray (1985) perceives motherhood in a rather negative light, seeing in it precisely a desire to imitate males in their striving towards achievements and obtaining property, while, to her, females should rather enter into more equal relationships, with each other in their search for emotional satisfaction. Shulamith Firestone (1988) asks for new reproductive technologies which would allow childbearing without wombs. Adrienne Rich believes that since a woman chooses to mother, she should have as good an experience of motherhood as possible. For this reason, the oppressive institution of motherhood, which results in women suffering from depression due to the incompatibility of prescribed ideals of female passivity and dependence, and the activity, which is required by motherhood in reality, must be destroyed (Rich 1976). Julia Kristeva⁹ believes that childbearing is a positive and strengthening experience for the woman herself. Robyn Rowland (1993) argues against the development of reproductive technologies, in the belief that the latter alienate women from the process of reproduction¹⁰. Significantly, voices in favour of motherhood, childbearing and

⁹ Kristeva is herself Bulgarian by origin, which means that she might base her reasoning, to some extent, on the Slavonic, East-European, Orthodox cultural tradition, which she was initially familiar with in her childhood;

¹⁰ in my opinion, Rowland is wrong in at least two respects; first, technologies alienate males much more than they alienate females: in the case of male subfertility, until recently, there was no other option but to use donor sperm, while for females there are various, though expensive, options for treatment of the woman herself, so that she can have her genetic child; second, Robyn Rowland has no moral right - and she is reasoning from a moral point of view - to forbid other women to try to do what she has done herself - to have a child, who is genetically her own -

child-rearing activities are heard mostly from non-white-Western-middle-class feminisms, above all African American. It is probably understandable for many reasons, one of which being that in conditions of life which are harder than those of the middle class, motherhood often (though, of course, not always) offers to a woman certain privileges not only in comparison to other women, but in comparison to men as well, for example, at least temporary rest from other, harder, work. As if in order to intentionally complicate the situation, some of the feminists who are positive in their views on motherhood hold such views partly because of the power motherhood provides, while those with negative attitudes are concerned precisely with the negative impact of this power on the child as well as on the woman herself.

In spite of the variations described above, contemporary feminist theoreticians do tend to agree on a number of points. One is that the character and meaning of motherhood and mothering should be changed, and the status of the mother elevated, rather than the whole of the experience should be rejected altogether, as was suggested by many feminists in the 1970-s. They are also united by a common standpoint of 'taking the position of the mother', that is, supporting the individual woman's conscious choice as to whether, when, and how to mother. This is one of the most important points in the feminist agenda.

The topic of *choice* in reproductive matters is a concern not only for feminists. Some historians also argue that from very early on conscious choice was made in England, while in all other cultures reproductive behaviour was not subject to conscious reasoning (Macfarlane, 1986). However, choice has now become the predominant pattern in many countries, and is one of the major considerations in academic work in the area (Rosen & Benson, 1982; Rosen, , 1982; Sweet, 1982; Wilk, 1986; Beckman, 1982; Campbell, Townes, & Roy Beach, 1982; Fox, Fox & Frohardt-Lane, 1982; Fox, 1982; Frank & Scanzoni, 1982; Herceg-Baron, & Furstenberg, 1982; Koo & Suchindran, 1982; McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1982). It is usually assumed that people make decisions in accordance with various constraints in their lives, so that their choice might be only relatively 'free'. However, it is often equally assumed that the choice is *rational*. Other approaches oppose the view that human behaviour is absolutely rational, and believe that it is also caused by unconscious (biological) drives (see, for example, discussions on Freudian and sociobiological discourses in Chapter II of Part I of this thesis).

Anthropology has developed its own approach to reproduction which provides evidence showing the relative character of many essentialist views on gender and

just for the reason that they are less lucky than she is and cannot do it without assistance; and in the case of lesbians, who want to have children, the technologies seemingly represent an inestimable option, allowing them to have children without necessarily having to have sex with

reproduction. Almost all of these views, according to anthropologists, have been determined by culture.

Finally, it should be noted that in the view of some theorists we now live in a special time, or a special 'condition', which, though it does not add any new concept to ideas on motherhood, or on anything else, has had a dramatic effect on their meaning or at least the character of their influence over people's minds. This is the '*condition of postmodernity*'. According to Liotard [see in Easthope & McGovan, 1994], the post-modern condition means the death of all the '*grand narratives*' in a sense that they all lose their legitimation. However, it does not necessarily mean that they stop existing completely. All grand narratives can be continued in non-dominating mode, side-by-side with each other. Thus they survive in a paradoxical condition of increased tolerance but persistent struggle with each other within one and the same cultural body where there are no ultimate winners.

Applying this concept to theories of reproductive attitudes and behaviour one can see, first of all, a new interest in, and tolerance towards, alternative modes of reproduction, such as sexual communes which raise children collectively; new variants of step-parenthood, inter-racial adoption; fathers adopting a 'mothering role', while the mother is working or absent; homosexual and lesbian parenting; the polygamous families of Mormons (Altman, 1996); and so on. Every variant of attitude towards motherhood, and the behaviour connected with it, seems to be legitimate now except for violent child abuse¹¹. However, not everything is perfect with this 'blossoming of each and every flower'. Tolerance is still not at all absolute, though its degree is now definitely higher than it used to be. There are still problems which can be seen, for example, in the area of social and governmental attitudes to gay/lesbian parenting and especially gay/lesbian adoptive rights in the UK. If we now turn our attention back to Russia, we will see an enormous number of problems associated with hostility of the various 'narratives' and their adherents towards each other. All the same, the degree of

men.

¹¹ However, some authors argue that in contemporary times when all the economic reasons for having children (helper in family economy, support in the old age) disappear, those children who are born tend to be born for love more often than was formerly the case, that a child becomes the ultimate source of the satisfaction of the emotional needs of all other members of the family, instead of a woman-wife-mother who now cannot fulfil this role since she works in the economy on an equal basis with man. (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Sieglohr, 1998). The enormous emotional burden which a child, accordingly, has to carry can cause this child's suffering, rather than happiness, as all feelings tend to be invested in him or her, including those previously given to the spouse, because marriage now is so unstable that it seems to be unreasonable to invest too much in any present sexual partner. Sieglohr also states that parenthood in the 1990s tends to become just one of the life choices among many others and has difficulties in competing with materialistic values which oppose it. Davies J. et al. (1993) agree with this point with some reservations (Berger B., 1993) and regrets, as this seems to them to be the result of the unfortunate state of affairs in the area of family relationships.

tolerance, or, more accurately (and unfortunately), indifference, seems to have become higher there too in comparison with the previous epoch.

One can see from this brief exposition that motherhood is definitely one of the crucial points for contemporary thought, and one which ought to be considered in a cultural context. Consequently, my attempt to investigate the attitudes of Russian (Moscow based) women in this area seems to represent the necessary study of an important problem, which, at the same time, appeals to me emotionally more than any other.

PART I.
THEORIES AND METHODOLOGIES.

Chapter 1.

Cold climate, self-sacrifice and loving neglect: motherhood, the essence of Russian femininity?

In this chapter, I intend to use various types of sources, such as, on the one hand, academic writing of different epochs (including that of Western authors who study Russia), classical literature (fiction), folklore, and historical documents; and on the other, contemporary statistics and published results of surveys. All of this serves the primary goal, which for me here is to examine the *written* ideas and representations on motherhood in Russia, in contrast to the *oral* ones which will constitute the subject of my investigation in Part II of the thesis. In some places I also use material from personal conversations with older women, and even from my own experience. The former represents a kind of folklore which influences my contemporaries in a way which is similar to that in which earlier folklore influences them. The latter is only partly relevant, and I speak about my experience only when it *adds* something to the facts which are proven nevertheless in other ways. For example, when I speak about the tax on childlessness which I paid to the State in the 1980s in spite of my infertility being proven, this can be verified by consultation with legal documents of the time which show that everyone in the same position had to do this.

All these types of evidence can be subdivided into those which provide views, ideas, and representations only (fiction, folklore, philosophical and some other academic writing, some historical documents), and those which provide *facts* (statistics, some historical documents, some survey materials). However, ultimately, no fact in the social domain can be considered an absolute truth, so, in my view, published factual material is rather an instrument predestined to promote one or other conceptual position in the area of motherhood. This concerns even the statistical data, since statistics are always true just to the degree of the precision of the methods of data collection and processing. Many events can simply go unregistered in the relatively relaxed legal and normative atmosphere of the present time. This is the case, for example, with the contemporary abortion statistics. All authors agree that they reflect just a portion of the number of abortions being performed, and no one can even say what percentage of abortions goes unregistered.

Western academic writing on Russian matters is widely presented in this chapter, too. There are several reasons for this. First, it is united with the topic of this chapter in its subject matter, namely, motherhood in Russia, and not motherhood as a whole, which more general theories concern. Second, for many sides of Russian life, Western writing represents a precious source, since in Russia even State statistics are now scarcely available if one is not ready to pay for them. Third, Western authors tend to organize the

material in a more condensed and structured way than Russian authors, and therefore present lots of substantial material in a small amount of text. This is connected to the fourth and final reason for examining Westerners' ideas here, namely, the fact that it is extremely interesting to look with an *insider's* eyes at the informed *outsiders'* views and representations.

As a whole, according to my methodological position (see Chapter III), I deal here not with facts, but rather with different *conceptualizations* of facts. Therefore in the present Chapter I will move from one type of evidence to another indiscriminately, using all of them in a similar way, as sources of *written, fixed, 'official'* ideas and representations on motherhood in Russia. I must stress here, however, that when I draw on one or other kind of historical document, including the classical literary works, it will be marked in the text as an *edition* or *re-edition* of 19..., for example (Khomyakov, ed. 1955), while if it is a work by some author of the present time, there will be just the name and the year of edition, for example (Aristarkhova, 1995). Sometimes the year of the first publication of a book which is not a work of the present time will appear in brackets, for example: Lev Tolstoy, «The Kreutzer Sonata» ([1889] 1960). In this case the word *edition* or *re-edition* will be omitted. Some historical sources were used in their first edition, such as the journal *Voprosy okhrany materinstva I mladenchestva* [Issues of protection of maternity and infancy] for the years 1926-1937.

1. Domostroy and Mother Russia: state, religion and popular beliefs in pre-Petrine Russia.

Some authors think that Russia is very special in relation to motherhood (Hubbs, 1988; Hindus, 1943, and others), since the representation of the land and the country itself as Mother Russia was very strong throughout history. They infer from this and other facts that maternal rhetorics were always influential in Russia. It begun with Pagan Mothers-Goddesses (although in the Russian pre-Christian pantheon there is only one known female Goddess, Mokosh', and abundant male Gods). It continued through epics and folklore, and Christianity in its Orthodox form. This stressed the role of Maria, mother of God, precisely as Mother of God and not as Virgin or Madonna (a ruler), as in Catholicism. In Protestantism, in contrast, the overall status of Maria was relatively low (Aristarkhova, 1995,1; Kristeva, 1987). According to this view, maternity granted women particularly high status in the Russian context during the whole of Russian pre-modern history, in the Christian spirit of self-sacrifice and self-humiliation: the more there was of self-sacrifice, the higher was a woman's status and the respect she received from others.

Obviously there really is some peculiar character in Russian representations on motherhood, to the extent that all cultures are unique and not identical to each other. However, there is another influential opinion (Aristarkhova, 1995, 1; Pushkareva, 1997; Porter, 1976) for which there seems to be no less evidence, and which stresses similarities between medieval Russian views in this area and those widespread in other Christian countries at the same time. This view emphasizes the fact that pre-Petrine Russian texts, both religious (see, for example, in Titova 1987 edition, the famous medieval 'Teaching from a father to a son on female evil') and didactic (for instance, the famous Domostroy (first published in XVI century, see 1994 edition by Kolesov & Rozhdestvenskaya)) fail to mention any other female virtue besides obedience and subordination. It does not follow from this that motherhood added anything to woman's importance in society or in the family. She was not expected to play with her children much, or even to spend much time with them. Her duties were rather those of housekeeping, which was actually elevated practically to a sacred degree: there are stories of religious women who wanted to give up all their this-worldly business and go to serve God in a monastery, but they were given the advice to stay at home, serve their husbands and children and maintain the family economy. This was said to be the best way to spiritual salvation for a woman, her predestination in this world which could most easily open the gates of Paradise for her. In addition, woman's morality, her status as a good Christian, and her final salvation were actually said by Domostroy to be not her own duties and responsibilities, but those of her husband. Equally, if a woman was really good herself as a housekeeper and a Christian, whatever the reasons for such model behaviour, it was not she herself, but her husband who was praised for it. Children were not meant to be any human achievement: God gave them or did not give them, and it was seen as inappropriate to expect anything for sure in this area, or, moreover, to plan or consciously decide anything (see in Domostroy (1994 edition): «If God will give children to someone...»). Children's well-being and strict education were repeatedly stressed as the parents' responsibilities and their duty to God, which hints at occasions of parental neglect (of which it is difficult to find actual historical evidence, as there is very little information concerning real parental practices of the period - see Ransel, 1988). However, parents clearly had more rights than children in this system. Domostroy explicitly stresses that children must take care of their senile parents properly, show respect to them and never contradict them even if they would lose their mind. In addition, children should never complain as they never could repay their debt completely: the parents had taken care of the children in their infancy, which was meant to be much more generous as an infant is more vulnerable than an old person, and less able than even a senile old man or woman to survive on its own. To contradict one's parents, and moreover,

to offend them, was one of the mortal sins never to be forgiven. The only indication, albeit ambiguous, of some latent predominance of the maternal status over the paternal one in Domostroy seems to lie in the following sentence: »The paternal curse will dry you out, but the maternal one will uproot you» (Domostroy, ed. 1994:160).

However, such an intense insistence on one's duty to one's parents could actually mean that in practice it was not always performed, as some evidence of court practices of pre-Petrine time (Panchenko, 1984) suggests.

Another, rather negative indication of the higher status of mothers in comparison to other women lies in the fact that women were meant to be closer to sinful and damnable forces, inherently evil, while man was closer to God. An unmarried woman was doomed to go to Hell, while for a man the best way to salvation lay in staying unconnected to women and the evil in them completely. Paradoxically, however, marriage was one of the ways in which he could earn eternal salvation, as it was his this-worldly duty to save a woman by marriage; while for her, it was the only way of attaching herself to the forces of Good rather than Evil (Domostroy, ed. 1994; Pushkareva, 1997; Aristarkhova, 1995, 1; see also Hubbs, 1988).

Nevertheless, for ordinary people of all classes marriage was almost unavoidable, and took place quite early in their lives, as parents tried to marry their children of both sexes as early as possible for reasons of household economy and inheritance (Kluchevsky, 1912), and because of the high probability of early mortality which was characteristic for those times. It seems that most people, girls especially, were married by the age of 15 years, as the laws of property regulations required this (Kluchevsky, 1912). Almost unavoidably, as well, marriage was followed by childbearing, so that both were seemingly seen simply as natural events and therefore not too problematic. (Pushkareva, 1997). Attempts were made to prevent and/or ease the childbearing hazards by means of popular medicine and midwifery (Pushkareva, 1997). This happened in Russia in a similar way as in other places (Oakley, 1984). Social and customary regulations, which allowed pregnant women not to bend during prayers and forbade their husbands or masters to beat them too much during this period (Domostroy, ed. 1994), and the isolation of a woman and her child for 40 days before and after the birth, helped mothers as well. However, there seems to be no mention of any easing of pregnant women's work burden in comparison to that of non pregnant women.

Both abortion and single pregnancy were serious offenses, sins to be expiated (Pushkareva, 1997). Abortion at any term was thought to be infanticide. However, the seriousness of the offense was heavily dependent on the term at which the foetus was

aborted. If late in pregnancy, it was punished by 15 years of fast; if in the middle of it, by 7 years; if it was still in the early embryonic stage, by 5 years. Midwives who helped with an abortion were condemned by the Church. If the pregnancy of a single woman was aborted, the sin was twice as great. The father was held responsible for his daughter's 'sinful' behaviour, especially if it resulted in pregnancy while she was still unmarried, a custom which continued in later eras. As Engel and others suggest, the most significant factor preventing a peasant woman in the nineteenth century from giving birth to an illegitimate child or from turning to prostitution was the protective role of her father, or simply the presence of the father in her family of origin until her adulthood. As for child abandonment or other means of disposal of unwanted babies, there is no evidence of actual social practices concerning this (Ransel, 1988), which does not necessarily mean that they did not exist. Children, though, were actually an advantage for peasant households (Chayanov [1925] 1989), and their number was necessarily restricted anyway by the practice of continuous breast-feeding and by the hard work of mothers, who worked side-by-side with fathers in the family economy and therefore unavoidably neglected child-rearing which was not seen as the most important of women's duties. Domostroy actually advised parents not to regret the death of a small child too much if they had done their duty towards this child in terms of rearing and education. All the rest was God's domain, as the still remembered Russian peasant proverb states: «God gave it [a child] to us, so it is up to him to take it from us.»

Infertility was a pitied state, which midwives attempted to cure. It was also thought that prayers to God could help. It seems that adoption was not practiced, at least by the elite, due to the importance of 'genetic' issues in inheritance; however it could have been informally practiced by the lower classes as children were necessary for parents' survival in old age and as household helpers in the meantime, in the same way that they were in other countries (Gager, 1996; Triseliotis, 1997). One can find some hints on such practices in folklore stories which often contain the plot of a childless older couple *finding*, rather than giving birth to, some miraculous child for themselves somewhere (Afanasiev, ed. 1987). In this collection of tales by Afanasiev, there also are indications that orphans were adopted to serve as additional workhands even by families which had their own children, and that neglect and abuse were practiced by step-parents towards step-children, as it was in many other countries (Bledsoe, 1995; Parmigiani, 1994).

2. Motherhood in classic Russian literature and philosophy.

In the time of Peter the Great, Russian culture both changed and diversified drastically. Women of the higher strata of society were suddenly open to the male gaze, coming from the isolation of *terem* into the intense socialization of the *assemblee* (Hughes, 1996). Peasant, merchant, clergy and artisan women continued to live lives of the same style that their mothers and grand-mothers had led.

Petrine time can also be interpreted as the epoch of the initiation of the Russian Enlightenment, although some Russian philosophers do not agree with this (see Khomyakov, [1839¹²] 1955). The state grew stronger, and its intervention into ordinary people's lives intensified. Gradually, the ideology of enlightening people reached the stage of enlightening mothers so as to make of them better educators. Some women actually did try to live according to this model which presupposed becoming as good an educator as possible, so that they were consciously creating children's personalities in accordance with some social ideals; but they were meant to do this only with their own children, as education as a profession was considered unnatural for a woman, no less than any other profession. See, for example, the memoirs of Praskovia Tatlina, a woman who lived in the second half of the XIX century, in Engel & Posadskaya-Vanderbeck's (1998) recollection of diaries of Russian women of XVIII-XIX centuries. Praskovia actually admitted that she finally failed in her educational attempts, as after devoting all her life and energy to this kind of selective education of her children according to their gender and her flexibly changing views concerning male and female pre-destination, they all defied her aims. One daughter whom she had educated for a profession married early against her mother's will and never did work. The second daughter, whom she intended for the role of wife and consequently educated only in domestic skills, never married, achieved a lot by self-education, and worked all her life. Her sons either did not achieve the positions she meant for them - meaningful and useful intellectual service to the state - or she could not find a common language with their wives.

Petrine time also signified the beginning of the classical Russian literary tradition, representations on motherhood within which are one of the main subjects of this subchapter.

As Johanna Hubbs (1988) states, classic Russian literary myth is predominantly about rebellious or confused sons who betray the Mother (Russia) by being falsely

¹² it was not a year of first official publication, but a year when his article *O starom i novom* (*On the old and the new*) started to be known to those interested as a manuscript. Many hand-maid copies of it existed.

attracted to the Father (the State), who, however, does not give them any real satisfaction, and consequently what the best of them try but fail to do is return to the Mother in an unsuccessful attempt to earn her forgiveness. The classical version of this, in Hubbs' interpretation, can be found in Pushkin's poetic novel ([1823-1831] 1978). This is the story of Tatiana, who represents the Mother Land, as she is always stressed to be «Russian in her soul», and Evgenii Onegin. The hero initially rejects the heroine, pursuing other goals in his life, and rejects the motherland at the same time as he goes traveling; then he tries to win both of them back, but is in turn rejected. She, a Mother, does not forgive, the People do not forgive the Intelligentsia, which, a product of the Petrine Enlightenment, became alien to its own country. These rejected sons can still be delighted by motherhood and the maternal in spite of understanding the fact of their own alienation. This was the case with Vasily Rosanov ('Uedinennoe', [1912-1915] 1972) who praised sexuality and reproduction in a rather Pagan way (since Christianity was against sexuality), considering sex to be sacred because it unites man to God and because it brings new human souls, children's souls, into this world from some higher world where they existed previously. This, he held, was God's intention. Rosanov wrote on reproduction (Rosanov, [1912-1915] 1972):

...The thirst for immortality, for an earthly immortality, is the most amazing feeling in man, and it is one that is quite obvious. Is this not why we so love our children, why we tremble for their life more than for our own, which is already fading? (pp. [4-5]);

Taking issue with Fyodorov ('Phylosophy of the common chore', [1906-1913] 1987), an idealist philosopher who advised people to stop bearing children and to busy themselves with resurrecting their ancestors from their graves instead, Rosanov exclaimed:

There is absolutely no need for the dead to leave their graves, because the earth is not a wasteland; on the graves, new flowers have sprung up, with a memory of the original ones... Death is not a death that is final, but merely a means of renewal: after all, in my children, I live completely, in them lives my body and blood, and therefore... My body and blood continue to live... eternally!... I work in mankind with a thousand hands, I smell all the fragrances of the world, I practice all professions, I am slave and tsar, genius and madman. What riches in comparison with any kind of personal existence! And, in general, is it really possible that the vine is poorer than a single grape? (cited by Spencer E. Roberts in Rosanov (1972 edition), p.[6]).

Maxim Gorkii (*Mother*, [1906-1907] 1954) in his practically sacral representation of the Mother and her rights in the life and death of her child, described a mother skillfully and easily killing her son who betrayed their motherland, because «only a mother knew

particularly well where her son's heart beats». (Gorkii, from the *Tales about Italy*, [1913] 1970)

For Barbara Heldt (1987, 1993), the main Russian literary myth is about the «Terrible Perfection» required from the heroine (who really becomes a heroine in this context) in order to try to *save* the male hero (who is really not a hero at all as there is no weakness of human character and nature which he does not possess). *She* is actually mothering *him* in an attempt at love, while he tries to escape love completely, to escape life, neither giving it to new generations since he does not create a family, nor engaging in sex with *her*, and avoiding any closeness to the maternal, whether it be maternal power or love. Perhaps this unification of the maternal and sexual in one and the same body is actually what frightens and averts him. The examples of such a plot are numerous and various. 'Evgenii Onegin' by Pushkin, described above, is one. Another is «Oblomov» by Goncharov ([1859] 1979), in which the hero, although initially both a kind and educated man who has various abilities, then becomes practically destitute due to his overall passivity and laziness. He never does apply his abilities to real life. His beloved woman finally marries a foreigner, a German, who, in contrast, dares to be active in all senses. The German, Stoltz, develops her educationally, and they consequently have an intense spiritual union, of which children are just a side effect. Oblomov finds himself in a degrading union with an uneducated woman which seems to be the equivalent of death for the author, since Oblomov's death follows quite soon after this union begins. Their only son is adopted by the German (Stoltz) who wants at least to educate the son properly so that he can achieve what Oblomov himself could not due to the bad start of his life. The plot is similar in many of Chekhov's stories; however, they are a variation, in the sense that his women are often as weak as the men. This is perhaps a more realistic view, less perfection is demanded and expected from women, but there is no less horror and helplessness in the situation, since the heroine seems to be simply too tired to struggle in vain for the hero's salvation and gives up. For Chekhov, sexual passion most often means tragic self-destruction for both genders, but passionlessness means a gradual unavoidable dying in any case. Chekhov actually opts for love; finally, he approves of both men and women doing so, and his heroes, as well as heroines, actually *dare* sometimes. Chekhov passes the guilt for their failure onto the social order which prevents them from achieving the happiness they deserve, and onto their overall weakness, lack of life energy, as a result of which they cannot win. One good example of this, which is also on the theme of single motherhood, is his story «My Life» ([1896] 1980), where both a brother and a sister dare to love those whom they want to love, but both fail, he being used for a while by his married lover who finally does not risk leaving her husband, she becoming pregnant by her beloved

man while not marrying him, and dying during child-birth. Her brother is left to bring up her child, who (the child) is the only life approving result of this sad story, but the existence of an illegitimate child of his dead sister actually does not seem to her brother to be a life approving situation.

This can be explained as a fear of (hetero)sexuality on the part of the author, which sometimes leads to fear and/or rejection of reproduction as well, and results in the phenomenon called 'hysterectomies' by Eric Naiman (1993). By this he means a hostility to motherhood and aversion to pregnancy which is evident in the work of some Russian male writers and philosophers, namely Berdyaev, Soloviev, Fyodorov, and Tolstoy. Berdyaev ([1949] 1991) admitted several times that he always disliked the look of the pregnant woman, and although he does not reject sexuality, he finds the biological process of reproduction disgusting and the family oppressive to the individual. Free sexual love, if it is a spiritual union, may destroy the family, but is better than the family with children, in his view. Asexual abstinence is even better. This opposing of sexuality to reproduction later found expression again in the novels by Mikhail Bulgakov, such as 'Master and Margarita' ([written 1929-1940, published 1966-1967] 1973), although Bulgakov does not explicitly state that reproduction is something evil.

Soloviev ('The sense of love', [1892-1894] 1990) considered reproduction to be the worst and lowest option for achieving immortality, which should cease when humankind reaches and accomplishes the task for which it was actually created but which cannot yet be absolutely clear. A similar idea of sexual reproduction being equal to depravity simply because it is sexual, sex being bad in itself in whatever form it takes, was expressed by Lev Tolstoy in *The Kreutzer Sonata* ([1889] 1960). The utopian view that humans should cease to reproduce themselves biologically in order to become personally immortal, was inferred from this. However, this will also mean the end of human history. All the same, for Tolstoy history must have a termination if it has a sense and a goal. Sexuality is presented in this novel as deadly dangerous and deprived of any spirituality. Children are unnecessary for the higher strata of society. Intense mothering is unnatural, as whether a child lives or dies is the business of God and nature rather than of humans. Finally, abortion is the highest sin in this offensive chain of unnecessary things. This can actually mean that the rights of the foetus are higher, in Tolstoy's view, than those of the woman. It seems that the heroine's resorting to abortion almost justifies her murder, committed for sexual reasons (female murder as the most radical form of *hysterectomy*), for the author.

To summarize, the advice being given by this group of authors is that if you do not want/need children - than the best option for you is to have no sex.

However, in his earlier works Tolstoy represented childbirth as the only basis of unification and reconciliation of man and woman. He praised earthly and natural reproduction of humans, and not spiritually elevated sexual abstinence, and he actually promoted the active participation of the father in child care (see 'Anna Karenina', [1873-1877] 1975 (Levin and Kitty), 'Family Happiness' ([1859] 1951)). The same idea of 'a man in the nursery', to use Heldt's (1987) expression, and the praise of earthly human reproduction, is also presented, in my view, in Herten's life and works (see 'Byloe i dumy', [1852-1868] 1986) in a more humanist way. He admires pregnancy and childbirth, but understands that it is the woman's glory and the woman's risk; however, he participates in this to an extent which is surprising to see in a nineteenth century man, touching the stomach during pregnancy to feel the child's movements, worrying about his wife and child in birth, thinking about fatherhood in the sense of how to incorporate a new human into one's life, and so on. Both he and his wife were illegitimate children, and consequently he is very sensitive to this issue. He thinks that any difference in status and rights between legitimate and illegitimate children is unfair, and that pregnancy is one and the same happy and high event whether it takes place within marriage or not. That society treats single mothers differently is to him a crime.

The view of motherhood as something essential, which elevates a woman, her predestination in life, was characteristic for these two 'men in the nursery' of Russian classical literature, Herten and Tolstoy. Both saw contradictions in it, because although it elevated women, made them happy and gave them pleasures inaccessible to men, it also bound their whole lives to biology to a much greater extent than was the case with men. Both thought it better for a woman to somehow overcome this binding, 'at least in old age, as a grand-mother', as Herten wrote. All the same, Tolstoy found female infertility, which he thought was inevitable in prostitutes, an offense against nature, as women are meant to be mothers in the first place. His attitude towards abortion is similar, he equated it to infanticide, an indication of which we can find in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, where the hero sarcastically exclaims:

Those shameless hussies, or soldiers' wives, throw their babies into ponds or wells, and they of course must be put in prison, but we do *it all* at the proper time and in a clean way (Tolstoy [1889] 1960:203),

thus blaming women from high society for abortion and showing that there is contradiction in social practices which punish ones but overlook the sins of the others, who actually *do the same thing*.

Dostoyevsky's heroines often seem to be free from this binding by biology, and from the 'terrible perfection' prescribed for them by the sexual role. They never bear

children while the plot unfolds, and if some of them, like Sonia Marmeladova ([1866] 1975), attempt to be maternal towards their men (although in her case it seems rather a perversion of the classical plot since Sonia is weak, a 'fallen woman' who needs salvation herself), others unambiguously require and receive mothering from men, as Nastasya Philippovna in 'The Idiot' ([1868] 1957) does from Myshkin. This does not mean that this role reversal fails if she dies and he is unable to protect her - it actually represents a full role reversal, since this is practically a mirror image of 'Pieta', the Mother of God mourning Christ, an image of eternal maternal helplessness, inability to preserve her child from dangers, as Straus (1994) noticed.

Dostoyevsky also gives examples of adoption or fostering of children which are done in order to abuse them, such as in the story of Nastasya Philippovna. For him, in contrast to Hertzen, an illegitimate child seems to be inherently depraved and evil (Smerdyakov in *Brothers Karamazoff*, [1879-1880] 1973). This may be because he considers that the child will inevitably want to seek revenge against society (or could it have something to do with the Russian peasant belief that a child damned by a mother while in her womb becomes a sorcerer?). Practically all of Dostoyevsky's men and women engage in sexual passion, which is not meant to result in children, and is full of guilt. The woman is finally on her own in this world, she tries to escape the trap of 'terrible perfection' required from her by misogynist society, she is free... However, here she uses this freedom simply to engage in a sexual relationship with a man.

3. Woman on her own.

In reality, in the second half of XIX century women did not use the freedom, if it happened to them to acquire this, just to engage in free sexual love. Many women from the intelligentsia used it rather to devote themselves to social service, or to a 'service to People', as it was called then. Revolutionary women and 'nigilistki' generally tried to avoid motherhood by abstinence from sex, although they did not reject love if it was serious. Some of them may have been aware of contraception, but most had children if they were in a relationship. These children's fate was unfortunate more often than not, as they were usually left to others' care quite early on in their lives (Engel 1985; Porter 1976). Many died as infants as a result, others were practically adopted by their foster parents and did not recognize their mothers after a while. The mothers did not usually feel very maternal; they actually felt guilty for having children at 'such a difficult time' when they should rather be struggling for the revolution (Engel 1985; Clyman & Vowles, 1996). If they had to take care of their children themselves and to support them financially, or felt

weak due to pregnancy, they perceived this as something which handicapped them as revolutionary or social activists, or even as workers trying to succeed in male professions, such as that of doctor. Sometimes they accepted their own social handicap due to childbearing, but tried to prevent their male partners from having any participation in parenting in order to free them, at least, for revolution. Single motherhood, then, meant freeing men for the fulfillment of other tasks. They might also take on their sisters' children and bring them up, so that they could free other woman, in addition to a man, for revolutionary work, if they were, in any case, already 'bound' by having to mother their own children themselves. Since motherhood was seen as so disabling, infertility would be unnoticed or considered an advantage. However, all this was actually perceived not as liberation from a burden which prevented the fulfillment of individual pleasure, but as a sacrifice of something that could actually be pleasant, or as choosing a different way of serving society's goals, than motherhood. In this sense it was a classical feminist rebellion. However, at the end of the day, these childless women or abandoning mothers, if they achieved success in their revolutionary careers, were said to be playing or attempting to play some symbolically maternal role in relation to the revolution. This was the case, for example, with Breshko-Breshkovskaya, whose nickname was 'grand-mother of the Russian revolution', or Kollontai, who occupied herself with problems concerning maternity after the revolution was won¹³. Women's task within the revolution was still to

¹³ Kollontai actually concerned herself in the area of motherhood precisely with the issue of how to combine revolutionary service with having children. As a member of the Government, she could not resolve this question individually, implying that 'other women will have children while I will be a revolutionary'. Now she felt responsible for the state as a whole, and, consequently, for the reproduction of this state's population. This reproduction could only be accomplished by women in the traditional biological way in those pre-technological times. As a consequence, motherhood for her became a woman's duty to the Revolution. However, she wanted to free women from motherhood's individualistic hardships, which could not suddenly become compatible with revolutionary service (or work for the revolutionary state, in which all women should now begin to participate). By that time, several generations of professional revolutionary women had rejected the very possibility of combining motherhood with revolutionary service already for approximately 50 years. In Kollontai's view, it was genetically unfortunate, since these women, many of whom were also sexually free and did not want to restrict themselves to a union with just one man, were precisely the 'best'. However, sexual freedom usually also meant childlessness, or the stigmatised existence of a single mother. All this concerned not only revolutionaries, but all women who wanted to be sexually free. In Kollontai's view, the social institutions were guilty in that: *'The most erotic, best women are driven into prostitution and remain childless. ... We pronounce the 'sentence of death' on the illegitimate 'children of love' who are often the more healthy, flourishing and valuable representatives of the race'* (Kollontai, 1972:16). This, however, links two important myths concerning motherhood - that it is incompatible, first, with sex, and second, with work: *'The problem of maternity further complicates the position of the working woman. It is in fact worth looking through the autobiographies of all outstanding women to be convinced of the inevitable conflict between on the one side love and having children and on the other a career and a vocation'* (Kollontai, 1972:21). Taking all this into consideration, Kollontai attempted to invent new radical modes of collective organisation of child rearing with the help

take the care of others. The maternal care of male revolutionaries (See Gorkii's Nilovna in 'Mother', [1906-1907] 1954), was said to be even more efficient since it was the sublimation of the woman's repressed maternal feelings towards her own abandoned children. Even if women had no maternal feelings to repress, society's expectation was that women, even those in revolutionary circles, should fulfill a mothering role¹⁴. Male revolutionaries, whatever their family life (and they were actually expected to sacrifice their family obligations and joys even more than women), were not said to be trying to play a paternal role within revolution (Wood, 1997).

4. The lives of 'ordinary' women.

The lives of more 'ordinary' women (as opposed to revolutionaries) had another, more 'ordinary' character in relation to motherhood and mothering. However, it is possible to assert that there was some similarity, as the customs and practices of all strata of Russian society presupposed some degree of carelessness about children¹⁵, if not of neglect. In the majority of real cases maternity was just one of the sides of a woman's life. Child rearing was not seen as the most important of her tasks and obligations, and arguably was partly or totally delegated to someone else more often than not (Engel, 1985, 1994; Engel & Posadskaya, 1998; O'Rourke, 1996; Chayanov, 1989; Clyman & Vowles, 1996; Kelly, 1996).

Women of the clergy seem to have been in a position which enabled them to be more maternal than women of the rest of society, as they had no significant tasks in their family's economy besides keeping the house, usually with help of at least one domestic servant, and no social obligations such as those of women of the nobility. They also traditionally did not participate in the religious activity of their husbands to any significant degree, although their individual study of spiritual literature was not discouraged, as they had to educate sons and prepare them for their future religious service. The status of women within the clergy was, however, high, as a daughter 'inherited' her father's parish

of the state from the very moment of the baby's birth, which would make women free from child-care on a really equal basis with men for all of their lives. It was also important to liberate woman sexually, to make her equal to men in this respect too. Neither of them should feel responsible for the consequences of sex, since society would take care of the resulting children. Birth control should be available as well, although perhaps as a temporary measure and not one chosen willingly: *'When the worker marries, the low level of pay forces the worker's family to 'regulate' childbirth just as the bourgeois family does'* (Kollontai, 1972:11) The fate of these ideas in the real post-revolutionary Russia will be discussed below.

¹⁴ The last words which were said to Vera Figner, well-known revolutionary woman of *populist* generation, by one of the examining judges who interrogated her in prison were: *'You are a good woman. Your only misfortune is that although you married you never had any children.'* (Porter, 1976).

by law if there was no male heir. Indeed, brotherless brides could use the position of parish priest as a dowry to give to their husbands (Engel 1985). Clergymen's daughters also often benefited from free or affordable education in the special 'eparchial' schools, analogous to the gymnasia where girls of the nobility studied, organized for them by the Russian Orthodox Church. However, in the spirit of Domostroy and Orthodox religious teaching, the wife of a priest at this time was still expected to be first of all obedient to her husband and skillful in housekeeping, and only then to be a good mother.

The situation in the merchant class (Kelly, 1996; Engel, 1985; Clyman & Vowles, 1996) was similar at first glance to this stratum, with the way of life remaining very patriarchal. However, there was an important difference: the family had an unambiguous dependence on its family business, and if it was necessary, and there is evidence that it very often was, women participated in it, or even had full responsibility for it (Kelly, 1996). Another peculiarity of this stratum was the strong and sometimes abusive power which a mother had over her adult children, and a mother-in-law had over her daughter-in-law. This was common in traditional patriarchal communities, but perhaps acquired a particularly intense character here, because these mothers-in-law often had skills and a taste for power which they had acquired in the course of hard-nosed business competition which they brought home with them into their family relationships. If they were not, then the old fathers of the family were strong-willed patriarchal rulers. The children's fate was obviously subjugated to the interests of the family business. However, as education spread within this strata, the sons and daughters of merchants began to successfully rebel against the too-strict rules of their parents and to enter other walks of life. They were not always successful, but the practical skills they had acquired in their families paradoxically helped them in whatever way of life they chose (see Clyman & Vowles, 1996). Even if they stayed within the family business in name, the heirs often practiced other interests instead. For example, many of them became patrons of the arts, to the advantage of Russian culture of the time (Clyman & Vowles, 1996). Merchants constituted perhaps the least stable stratum in nineteenth century Russia, as the son of the founder of the family business often preferred to spend his fortune on charity rather than to follow his father's footsteps (Engel, 1985).

Mothers of the nobility had tremendous influence on their daughters and sons as they were the predominant target of propaganda concerning enlightened motherhood, and they were responsible for the character of their children's education and, hence, their later fate in life. This was especially the case with daughters, as mothers introduced them into

¹⁵ In comparison to the European practices of the time or, rather, to the expressed European standards of child rearing in the epoch.

the adult world and usually created their marriages (Engel, 1985). However all this began only after these daughters had for many years been reared and educated by others, as they were almost all wet-nursed, and in their early years the maternal role was actually played by a nanny. When they were unavoidably separated from their nanny, the resulting trauma was later cured by a closeness to their biological mother which developed in adult life. However, this came only after a formal education stage, which education was received from the home teachers or in a boarding school. Due to wet-nursing practices, the fertility of these nobility mothers was very high. They generally bore children almost every year during the early period of their marriage, which can serve as evidence that no contraceptive practices were in use in this circle at this time. Therefore, and as a result of the weak bonding they had to their infants because they did not breast-feed them, they could be not too devastated by childhood illnesses and even deaths, since there were more than enough children left for them to mother (Engel, 1985; Clyman & Vowles, 1996). Some women of the nobility actually considered children to be merely an unavoidable cost which they had to pay for the relative freedom (including sexual freedom) and independence given them by a high society marriage (Engel, 1985; Clyman & Vowles, 1996). Others, of which there was a considerable number, remained unmarried and childless, and at least some of them, probably, did so voluntarily. The vast majority of these unmarried childless women, however, did not achieve any meaningful occupation, but rather enjoyed a calmer existence which escaped male control, at least, if they had some small means of self-support. They usually had to remain with their parents until the latter's death, which was an acceptable way of life for such women. If they had no means to support themselves they had to work, usually as private teachers, but sometimes they found work in schools. It was not an easy nor a very pleasant way of life, but it was possible. Some merchant women did better if they stayed unmarried, since they might end up running the family business; however, for a peasant woman it was practically impossible to survive on her own at that time.

The most numerous stratum of Russian society, the peasantry, had in a way similar customs, in that a young, adult woman was always meant to be able to do some other work, more important than mere child-rearing. In almost all cases she would work in the fields or, later, in a factory or in domestic service, while her children would be reared by her mother-in-law, or by other older relatives, or by her older children (Engel, 1994; Farnsworth & Viola, 1992). In some occasions they would even be reared by domestic servants if their care was accessible or affordable. All this does not mean that women did not value their children at all. As Ransel (1988) states, there is evidence of a peculiar 'loving neglect' on the part of Russian peasant mothers towards their children. They never did engage in intense mothering since they usually had no possibility to do so, but they

loved to play with their children when they could, and tried to provide for them some minimum level of care even in the most difficult situations. However, the hygienic practices of peasants were careless as a whole, and this, in addition to the work responsibilities mentioned above, and to the fact that peasant mothers did not always have the possibility of breast-feeding their children properly, brought about a high infant mortality rate, higher in Russia at that time than elsewhere in Europe (519 of every 1000 liveborn children died in their first year of life in the Moscow province in 1869-1879 (Engel 1985)).

The fate and style of life of peasant mothers and their children varied greatly in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century. In some regions, it remained more or less traditional, with both genders continuing to work in agriculture side-by-side, which meant, despite all that was said above, that there was a male helping hand available if necessary in the woman's family responsibilities. Children were an economic advantage in the peasant economy, which was organized in a community ('obshina') way, so that land was the community's property, and the piece of land for each individual family to cultivate was allotted every year anew, depending on the number of 'eaters' and 'workers' each family had. Older children, especially sons, were considered 'working hands' rather than mere 'eaters' (Chayanov ed. 1989).

Other, less traditional geographical areas represented different stages of transition towards industrial society. In some regions, men migrated to the cities seasonally for work, while their wives stayed in the village and continued to cultivate the land in their husbands' absence, performing all the most difficult tasks themselves. These families were richer, and the wives were more independent and enjoyed higher status, power and self-respect. For both of these reasons, they had better and cleaner houses. As for children, these women had less overall fertility because of the husband's absence during most of the year, and more miscarriages due to the enormously high level of strain which work in agriculture placed on them in the summer time. If they had the money to pay a hired manhand to take on the hardest part of work, they could escape such hazards to some extent. If a baby was born in August or July, it would survive only if he or she was both lucky and extremely healthy, as the mother would take a child with her when she went back to work in the fields soon after the birth, leave him or her there hanging on a tree for the whole day, and feed the baby only during breaks from work which were not very frequent. However, if the child would be born later in the year, after the harvest, he or she would enjoy a better standard of child care in comparison to that in more traditional peasant families described in the previous paragraph, and therefore would have a better chance of survival (Engel 1994).

In the next type of communities, women, although still living in the villages, would work together with men in factories situated near the village, while the family still had some of the old agricultural tasks to perform in their village household as well. These women would leave their babies with other relatives and go to work, often only breast-feeding them briefly, which meant that infant mortality here was particularly high. Married women tended to continue their factory work until they had at least three children, when it became difficult to find someone else to do the child care for them. They worked, as Engel suggests, not necessarily out of necessity, but rather because they had the opportunity to do so.

Illegitimacy was quite rare in traditional rural Russia (constituting about 2 % of all births on average throughout all Russian rural areas (Engel 1994)) as it was strictly socially punished. Illegitimate children were excluded from community property rights (Farnsworth 1992) and consequently pushed away from the village and forced to make their own way in life. Having an illegitimate child brought shame on the mother and her family (Hindus 1943), and girls tried to escape this by protecting themselves from pre-marital sex and, if they failed, trying to have a secret abortion with the help of a midwife or somehow disposing of the baby. Shelters for abandoned babies existed since the Petrine time (Ransel 1988), but the infant mortality rate in them was 80-90%.

In the more morally 'depraved' semi-agricultural factory areas, illegitimacy rates were just slightly higher than in the traditional ones (about 4%, Engel, 1994). However, they were much higher, approaching 25% of live births, in the main cities of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg. This was due to the peculiar practice of mostly married men migrating to those cities as workers, while only the most vulnerable destitute village women migrated to the cities to work. Among workers, the number of illegitimate births was higher than the number of marriages. However, the majority of illegitimate children were born to domestic servants, who were in the worst position in terms of finding a husband and keeping illegitimate babies once they were born, as their work conditions required them to be childless. If they chose to keep their babies, they lost their jobs, and could only hire themselves out as cleaners on a daily basis. Such women often had several illegitimate babies from several successive partners, since to have a male cohabitee, even if just temporarily, meant a significant increase in income and the possibility of affording meat sometimes rather than only milk (Engel 1994).

Accordingly, the majority of infants sent to the shelters were the children of domestic servants (Engel 1994, Ransel 1988). Prostitutes had very few children, either due to infertility, or to birth control, or to abortions (Bernstein 1995). Those they did have were almost invariably sent to the shelters, especially if born to prostitutes working in brothels

and not to the 'free-lancers' working in the street. Many of the children reared in the shelters tended to become prostitutes in turn, as sexual vulnerability in all senses strongly correlated with fatherlessness (Engel 1994; Bernstein 1995).

Women who worked in the factories were in a somewhat better position to the two groups described above, as they were more likely to cohabit¹⁶ with men, and had the possibility of continuing to work even while pregnant and after the birth, so that they could actually opt to keep their babies, although often no other child care options were available to them than bringing their babies to work, putting them together in a corner and paying some older woman to supervise them while they worked. Alternatively, the father and the mother could alternate both at factory work and child care, with the father taking the baby to the factory gates at the time when the mother would finish work, so that she could take it home, while the father worked the next shift in the same factory. Factory workers often had just one child with them in the city¹⁷. This was due to a number of factors. One was the practice of fostering children out with country relatives who could rear them more cheaply and use their work in agriculture (Chayanov 1989; in the city children were just an economic burden rather than an advantage, at least while they were very young, and parents often did not want them to work in the factory as this seemed to them more harmful than agricultural work). Other factors could have been high infant mortality, subfertility due to bad or harmful conditions of work, the practice of sending surplus children to the shelters, and birth control which began to spread among this stratum of society in the beginning of this century, predominantly in the form of abortion (Engel 1994).

¹⁶Cohabitation was widespread in the lower strata of the population in the main cities beginning from the last decades of the nineteenth century, in a situation where both parents in this case were deprived of important rights. A mother had no legal right to child support from the father if they were not married, at least until the law of 1902 which required such support from him if he could convincingly be proven to be the father. On the other hand, a father had absolutely no rights over his children. Cohabiting couples were despised even by ordinary people, and often they were people who simply had no better options in life - they could not afford to marry, or had overall lack of control over their own lives. Among factory workers, these consensual unions were so widespread that they became the norm, but consensual husbands took less responsibility for family income in comparison to those in married couples, and consensual wives were nervous and demanding, as they did not feel any security in their status (Engel). So they were often far from 'comradeship' unions, models of which were meant to be provided by working class family life.

¹⁷ Women-factory workers could also opt to remain childless as they at least always had the means to support themselves in the present, if not enough for old age security.

5. After revolution: the 1920-s liberalization - to whose use?

Abortion became a particularly important issue in the area of reproduction for Soviet power. The Commissar of Health Care, Semashko initiated a discussion in the years following the revolution (see Wood, 1997) following which abortion was finally allowed and made free, at least to disadvantaged or *proletarian* women. But the grounds for doing this were simply concern about the health of women-workers, since 'back-street abortions', widespread at that time, threatened women's lives. It was argued that women would inevitably seek abortion in the hard conditions of the post-revolutionary economic crisis, and that it would be better if it was performed in Soviet hospitals by approved specialists. There was, however, no concern expressed for women's rights; on the contrary, abortion was considered an immoral and unwelcome temporary measure which should not exist under developed communism in the future as there would be no economic need for it, and other needs were not acknowledged or approved (Wood 1997). Concerning this issue, as with many others, as Aristarkhova has correctly noted, Western researchers on Russian 20-s legislation on women rights tend to divide into two groups: on the one hand, there are those who consider this legislation very progressive, something which promoted women rights (Clements 1994; Goldman 1993; Buckley 1992, Wood 1997), which was very liberal, and which came about due to the efforts of Alexandra Kollontai, who had written that:

On the ruins of the former family we shall soon behold rising a new form which will involve...a union of affection and comradeship, a union of two equal persons of the Communist society, both of them free, both of them independent, both of them workers (Kollontai, 1980:179).

Lev Trotsky had also advocated the: 'socialization of family housekeeping and public education of children' (Trotsky [1923] 1972:17), and held that a woman who takes care of her child herself in her home is 'a slave, if not a beast of burden' (Trotsky [1923] 1972:20).

On the other hand, there are those scholars who think that there was a continuity of patriarchal content between even the early Bolshevik practices and those of the tsarist regime (for example, Farnsworth 1992). Aristarkhova herself, however, argues that in reality neither the first nor second position is correct. She talks of governmentalisation in the Foucaultian sense, intensifying and re-channeling patriarchal power, and re-directing it away from the private agents of the tsarist times (husbands, fathers, landlords, factory owners, etc.) to the aggregate patriarchy of the State itself. Even the 'progressive'

legislation of the twenties already served the fiscal goals of pushing overall control of women's bodies into the hands of the state, leaving nothing either to the private dealers and healers, nor to women (and men) themselves. The centralization of abortion (and birth) in the state hospitals allowed the state to control the process and to make it impossible for women to seek other, informal or secret means, especially when it was later supplemented by the intense prosecution of traditional midwives and private medical practices as a whole. The state intended finally to be able to decide whether and how intensively women would use these abortion/birth services, taking monopolist control of facilities.

Other aspects of reproduction had a similar character. Divorce was made easier and illegitimate children given the same rights as legitimate ones, which led to greater sexual freedom but actually not for women, as they now felt 'not enlightened' enough Komsomol members if they wanted to refuse sex to any men on some occasions. Women could also legally relinquish their babies at birth to the state. So it looked like the state ultimately intended to assume total responsibility for all legitimate and illegitimate children's upbringing, as was initially promoted by Kollontai, who wrote on the subject of child-rearing in the first years after the revolution:

Communist society therefore approaches the working woman and the working man and says to them: '...Do not flee happiness. Do not fear marriage, even though marriage was truly a chain for the working man and woman of capitalist society. Above all, do not fear, young and healthy as you are, to give to your country new workers, new citizens-children. The society of the workers is in need of new working forces... The child will be fed, it will be brought up, it will be educated with the care of the Communist Fatherland...' (Kollontai, 1980, 178-179);

The workers' state charges itself with the duty of assuring a livelihood to every mother, whether she is legitimately married or not, in order to permit the woman to serve the state in a useful manner and simultaneously to be a mother (Kollontai, 1980:178)

All this was meant not only to free women for work and sex, but also to give the State direct control over the future education of the next generation. However, soon these ideas of the complete severing of mother-child links were criticized¹⁸ and abandoned at the practical level, as infants' survival rates in children's' homes in the absence of a reliable substitute for maternal milk were poor, and the surviving children grew up to be

¹⁸ Vinogradskaya (in [1923] 1980:119) in *The 'Winged eros' of comrade Kollontai*. For Vinogradskaya, Kollontai is a mere theoretician, as «All questions of the rationalisations of sexual

inadequate workers due to the effects of 'hospitalism' (see *Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva*, 1926, 1927 years). So mothers were encouraged to keep their babies, and for this reason shelters for homeless pregnant women were introduced where they could stay while pregnant and safely deliver the child, and the State tried to help them get employment, and receive free infant day-care, institutions for which were on the increase (providing state controlled and invariably communist-centered education). Pregnant women also were given extended paid leave from work for 8 weeks before and after the birth (Wood 1997), and some other rights and benefits. All this would have been unambiguously to the woman's advantage, if it really was a matter of choice whether she used it or not, and if it was always available at times of high unemployment which in fact negated many of these rights. However, the tendency was for the State to arrange an identical fate for all Soviet women, which fate was increasingly a combination of work and motherhood, with both conceived as duties rather than rights, and the woman ideally should realize both with the State's help, and under pervasive state control. Men, meanwhile, in contrast to women, continued to be alienated from their families, in accordance with Kollontai's earlier suggestions. As she put it,

a woman should...look for [support] and find it not from men, but from the collective, from the state (Kollontai, 1923:67).

They were alienated both in terms of involvement (being kept busy doing state tasks) and responsibility (being free to leave without necessary obligations at any moment) (see Margolit, 1991), as the state found it convenient to control every family member separately. Arguably it means that the pattern of working-class family life, with men not feeling particularly responsible for most aspects of family life but also having no rights in relation to their children (see the above discussion on consensual unions), began to spread to the whole of society, as the new ideology idealized everything *proletarian*¹⁹. The only relationship which it proved impossible and unreasonable (for the sake of future generations' health) to completely destroy was the early mother-child bonding. The state then had to invent a more refined means to control children indirectly, by controlling their

relations turn first of all (under our conditions of poverty, unemployment, especially among women, lack of social education) into the questions of the family, of children»

¹⁹ There actually was discussion on the bad sides of proletarian family life, however, so it is impossible to ascribe this spread to an intentional Bolshevik policy; rather, the norms of the symbolically 'dominant' group of *workers* influenced all the others. This was helped by the actual proletarianisation of the population in terms of their life style: increasing poverty and reliance on paid jobs or state distribution system for income. This practice was then further sealed by industrialisation and collectivisation, which radically mobilised crowds of people from the peasant to the working-class condition. So, family practices changed somehow 'naturally'; the state then just realised what use it could make of them.

mothers' minds. The special attention which was paid by Soviet power to women, to their 'education' and their involvement in the state goals can be understood in this light.

The 20s actually were a contradictory time, and State control over the situation was by no means complete. This was not only because it allowed the introduction of the New Economic Policy which involved some independent private sector development. In fact, the state did not know how to handle the economic situation, which was in a disastrous condition after the Civil War. Military Communism, the politics of unlimited direct requisitioning of goods from their producers, proved to be impractical, as it only added new misfortunes to the devastation left by the war. Many regions of Russia and other parts of the country were in a state of unrelieved famine and disorder. It might be that Bolshevik power was not overthrown then only because people were too weak due to this famine and could not even think about doing so.

Another consequence of the Civil War and the famine was the mass homelessness of children, partly due to abandonment, partly to the deaths of their parents. There were some 6 millions (according to Clements, 1994; see also Ball, 1994) abandoned children in Russia at that time, and they lived wild lives. Some organized themselves in groups and hid from adults in the forests; other were used by criminals as prostitutes of both sexes and helpmates in theft (Ball, 1994). There were more homeless boys than girls, perhaps because girls had more problems surviving in these conditions (Ball 1994). The State was unable to handle the problem, and many children in the early twenties, as well as many adults in the famine regions, simply died from hunger. However the State tried to organize 'collective upbringing' for them in the children's homes, but the homes, which could represent real salvation in those times however bad the conditions, were unable to accommodate the enormous numbers of homeless children (Ball 1994). Therefore, adoption and fostering began to be encouraged quite early on, although this was a betrayal of the ideals of collectivist education from some Bolsheviks' point of view (for example, Trotsky)²⁰. Perhaps the seriousness of the problem of homeless children was one important incentive for the Soviet State to take such a radical step concerning abortion, for the first time in history.

²⁰ There actually were occasions of successful children's homes with collectivist education which really worked, as the example of Makarenko arguably shows. However, this was not the first example in history of shelters for abandoned children. There is evidence (Hrdy 1994, Ransel 1988), that in the first enthusiastic years such shelters were quite successful, with very low infant mortality and good care. This even occurred in medieval Italy (Hrdy 1994). When the first enthusiasm weakens, which happens sometimes after several years (Hrdy 1994), sometimes after several decades, as it was in the Soviet case, the shelters usually come to a pitiful state more familiar to those who now write about them (Waters 1992; Ransel 1988; Hrdy 1994; Triseliotis et al. 1997).

Despite the problems, liberal rhetorics continued to exist in the twenties, as it is possible to see, for example, in the journal *Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva... 1926-30*. Its discussion of many topics of reproduction included different and sometimes opposing views (for example, the eugenicist view, different attitudes towards abortion and child abandonment, towards planned motherhood, and even towards voluntary childlessness).

For example, A.N. Rakhmanov wrote in his article 'On the way to conscious motherhood' in this journal in 1926: 'In the whole world shift is occurring - men do not want family, women do not want to give birth' (Rakhmanov, N 3, 1926:3).

The same, according to Rakhmanov, was happening then in the USSR: 'it is better to climb mountains without a burden on one's shoulders', thus recognizing that in the situation of the construction of socialism children could seem a burden to the prospective parents.

Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva also discussed the appropriate degree of intervention by adults into the early children development, wrote truthfully on conditions in children homes, and so on. Nevertheless, all such discussions were, in the final analysis, subjugated to the State's interests. On the whole, the 1920s presented a variety of life experiences: extreme poverty and difficult survival for some, relative well-being for others, with the latter actually growing in the years following the War. There also was some ideological vivacity, with real concern over the plight of 'ordinary people', and yet a gradual concentration of power over these people in the hands of a minority, which then tried to manipulate private and state institutions to solve difficult questions and achieve more successful results. It concerned, for example, adoption and infant abandonment by mothers, as is shown above. Ideologically, everything private was inherently condemned and doomed; nevertheless, it was temporarily allowed to blossom until the State gained enough power and experience to find ways to deal with all this without resorting to private means. Whatever one thinks about the 1920s in the Soviet Union, even the slightest shadow of discussion, or any variety of opinions, disappeared in the 1930s, in any case (see *Voprosy okhrany materinstva I mladenchestva*, 1930-1937).

6. The 1930s: 'high' family morality.

With the new emphasis on strengthening the family at this time several important events determined the character of the epoch in the area of our interests. There was a gradual limitation of access to, and then overall prohibition of abortion in 1936; divorce was made more complicated; there was a glorification of Mother-Heroine, with medals given to women who had 10 children or more, coupled with financial incentives to those

who had 7 children or more: 2000 rubles were granted per child per year, beginning with the seventh, for the first five years of his or her life; beginning from the eleventh child, the yearly sum was 5000 rubles for the first year and then 3000 per year until he or she reached the age of five. These were substantial amounts of money for those times, people could buy a village house or a cow with them (see *Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva*, 1937). Some authors argue that strengthening the family was welcomed by the majority of the female population which was tired of male irresponsibility and did not actually have anything to gain from sexual freedom (see Vinogradskaya's ([1923] 1990) answer to Kollontai about *real-life-Eros*). Peasants welcomed it too, since they had problems in the preceding decade due to the new legislation on property rights of illegitimate children (whose equal status with legitimate children was no longer mentioned in the newer family codes) and the new property rights of women (Farnsworth 1992). Earlier community regulations were in favour of legitimacy, while now women could take half of the property with them in the event of divorce, and consensual unions were equated with marriages. This allowed some women with illegitimate children not to be drawn into destitution while left by their husbands, but other women abused men, whom they did not intend to live with for long and whom they married for a while just in order to acquire their property. However, collectivization was to make all these concerns unimportant.

The new strengthened family was subjugated to the state, which attempted to control the minds of all its members and expected them to put the State's interests first and to have no pity either for parents or children, nor, moreover, for husbands or wives if they were considered to be enemies of the people. An official ceremony of renunciation was required in this case, and it was widely performed in all seriousness. The articles in *Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva* became much stricter even towards citizens not yet condemned: for example, mothers abandoning their children were now considered criminals, and not victims requiring social help. As O. E. Kopelanskaya wrote in 1934, in *Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva*:

Having housing, and earning living, a mother who abandons a child nevertheless, follows the path of least resistance (*Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva*, N3, 1934: 33-34).

Nevertheless, even if all women suddenly became frightened or conscious enough to never abandon their children, children's homes became a routine necessity in the 1930s because of the large numbers of convicted women whose children had to be put somewhere, and this need was quietly acknowledged and addressed. Even more severe was the magazine's condemnation of women 'committing' abortion after its prohibition, and especially of the doctors helping them. In the first year after the prohibition of abortion,

official sources tried to convince everyone that fertility had increased, but for other reasons than the prohibition. As *Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva* wrote in 1937,

Our women are not afraid to give birth, since at any stage of maternity Soviet Power comes to their help (Nogina, N 1, 1937:20).

Trotsky opposed all these new measures of the state. In his 'Revolution Betrayed', he wrote (Trotsky, [1937] 1991:39):

The mass homelessness of children is undoubtedly the most unmistakable and most tragic symptom of the difficult situation of the mother.

For Trotsky, abortion was understandable and a woman's right only in conditions of want and family distress, which had still not been alleviated by the Government. Indeed, under these conditions it was her unalienable *human* right,

whatever may be said upon this subject by the eunuchs and old maids of both sexes (Trotsky [1937] 1991:44).

However, women converted this right into a privilege. Nevertheless, Trotsky acknowledged that it was still difficult for a woman in the Soviet Union to combine the roles of worker and mother which were required of her:

So long as society is incapable of taking upon itself the material concern for the family, the mother can successfully fulfill a social function only on condition that she has in her service a white slave: nurse, servant, cook, etc. (p.44)

In fact, some women could afford to have such slaves then (see below).

Yet, in spite of the changes in official ideology, the main family pattern was just slightly modified: now a man was expected to stay in one and the same family, but this really meant just 'stay'. And this requirement was also limited: he was more often out accomplishing the tasks of industrialization or collectivization in different parts of the country, while the woman, whose working hands were needed in industry too, was considered not so absolute a worker as she had to combine work with motherhood. Hence her image became more domestic, and housekeeping skills were given renewed importance (Margolit, 1991). She was now expected to provide a home, in addition, to a husband who had 'other tasks in life'. The family and children were not his concern. Thus children were sealed as a female-only business, the woman as virtual single mother whatever her marital status, and the man's role was that of *Absolute Worker* (whose work, by the way, had no direct connection with his family). All this was ruthlessly condemned by Trotsky in *Revolution Betrayed*. Among other things, he condemned the actual social diversification of Soviet life, in which a new privileged class of Party officials had emerged. Their wives actually did benefit from their husband's jobs, and to such an extent that they actually could spend their lives doing practically nothing. The cheap labour of domestic servants,

whom Trotsky called 'white slaves', was in abundant supply in the cities due to the pitiful situation in the countryside brought about by collectivization. These 'party ladies' usually did not work but had kindergartens if not nannies at their disposal, while really working women often could not obtain places in the kindergartens for their children and had to lock them in a room while they went to work. While Trotsky criticized abortions himself as legitimized murder, the consequence of sexual irresponsibility, and finally incompatible with communist morality, he attacked the Stalinist prohibition of abortion even more: it was for him evidence of failure on the part of the State to fulfill the Bolshevik claim to create the conditions in which women could bear children freely without problems and would not resort to abortions themselves. However, in Stalin's Soviet Union, according to Trotsky, women had to have abortions, as child upbringing was their unalienable task, none of their burdens were eased, and childbirth, however theoretically praised, in real life often meant the impossibility of keeping a job and hence material deprivations.

In reality, as evidence shows, abortions continued to be performed illegally, in spite of all the prosecutions of abortionists (Engel & Posadskaya, 1998), though their number may have been fewer than would have been the case if there had been no prohibition. In the first years after the Prohibition Law the birth rate did increase, however (*Voprosy okhrany materinstva i mladenchestva*, 1937), to the point that maternity hospitals were not able to accommodate such huge numbers of women simultaneously. Then people found dangerous but relatively reliable ways to induce abortions themselves, on their own or with unqualified help, using barbarous means to do so, and then calling the hospital pretending they had had a spontaneous miscarriage (Engel & Posadskaya, 1998).

Official ideology denied that this was happening, and praised motherhood higher than ever before. This definitely had something to do with the militarisation of the State, which was trying to prepare itself for war and therefore needed more population resources. In the meantime these resources would be of use in the industrialization program. Consequently, altruistic motherhood was praised, and giving birth to children was depicted as something similar to the production of tractors - both were delivered to the state at the end of the day. Accordingly, even the death of all of a woman's children, however many she had, should not serve as a reason for maternal regret, providing it occurred in an appropriate way - giving service to the State at whose disposal all citizens finally were. Maurice Hindus's praise of Russian heroic women (1943) includes an account of one such mother:

Last summer my husband died; now my two sons are gone. But I am a Russian woman - I can stand it. (Hindus, 1943)),

If a child committed an offense against the State, then a good mother was expected to condemn such a child herself, and to have no pity for her offspring.

This ideology of 'maternal heroic work' began with industrialization, which already required some human sacrifices (see, for example, an article by Bulgakova (1994) on such sacrifices), but significantly intensified during the War.

7. The 1940-s: last resort of the state, single mothers working hard in the economy.

During the war, it was an unavoidable reality for many mothers to face the deaths of their children. The state tried to manipulate this ideologically, and meet several goals simultaneously. First, maternal anger could be re-channelled against the enemy and practically never directed towards the totalitarian state; second, the powerful 'medal' image of the Mother/Motherland had a tremendous effect on the soldiers/sons, the significant minority of whom were still young teenagers and missed their mothers. This ideology presented the mother as an authority figure (to whom they actually still had a duty to obey), who was sending them into battle, and as a center of emotional attachment deeply rooted in the soldiers' childhood, and, in addition, as a vulnerable woman needing their male protection, thus appealing to their masculinity. There was no hint of sexuality in all this, as their masculine energy actually needed to be (ideally) completely absorbed by the need to protect others. Perhaps it was an ideological relic of these times to symbolically represent masculine identity in terms of 'defenders of the motherland' and feminine identity in terms of 'future mothers' in the first place. Both ideals were widely used in schools still at the time of my childhood to verbally discipline misbehaving boys and girls, in gender-specific ways. This of course means that female sexuality was denied as well, because the energy and emotions which woman have should better be directed towards children.

However real was this Mother-Motherland pattern²¹ during the war years, it was by no means the only reality, nor even the only image of motherhood in these times. Some women left for the front as well as men, while their children remained behind. Stishova (in Attwood, 1993) blames these women for not being maternal enough:

²¹ For example, Maurice Hindus states that soldiers at the front line were actually much more attached to older women serving in the Army, *matushki*, than to the younger ones. To some extent it may be true, as older women provided the last remaining element of mothering, not covered by official ideology: maternal care. They did so because they pitied soldiers as their sons.

There were women who followed their husbands to the front, or went alongside them, leaving their children in the care of people they knew - or even people they did not know. The citizen's duty overrode the maternal instinct.

However, in the 1940s the social attitude to such behaviour was different, it was praised as heroism which was needed by the Motherland (see, for example, in Hindus (1943)).

For the majority of younger women in those times war signified the need to transform themselves into *really* (and not just *virtually*, like it was in the previous epoch) single mothers of young children whom they needed to bring up in extremely difficult conditions:

they kissed their babies with bigger love...as though in them lay the strength and the solace they now needed... they were so busy working in the fields that they had no time for tears. (Hindus, 1943:374)

They also had to work, as most food and other goods was received through a system of direct distribution amongst workers, while non-working people's share was significantly lower. Teenagers and even 10 year old children worked hard for the war economy as well. As practically all men were at the front, all the hardest labour tasks had to be accomplished by women and children. However positive it could be for their self-respect and feeling of independence (although there could be no real independence in Soviet reality; in addition, in many cases this was actually forced labour which it was impossible to refuse to participate in), and however much one admires Soviet women of that time as strong, able to do everything, and as real heroines (as, for example, Hindus (1943) does), it also had destructive effects on the health of these women (and children). There is evidence that high numbers of women during the war did not menstruate due to the strain of this constant intense work (Engel & Posadskaya 1998).

Due to this, and to separation from men in the first place, fertility in the war years was half what it would have been if there had been no war (Clements 1994; Hindus 1943). An additional consequence of the war came in the second half of the 1940s, in the form of a new kind of Soviet single motherhood - this time it was birth of children to never married single women, usually several of them being impregnated by one and the same man. These mothers had no male partner, and no prospect of finding one due to the scarcity of males in those times. In addition, single motherhood was made unnecessarily shameful and difficult in those times, as a new family law made divorce more complicated, practically to the point of it being impossible to obtain, and freed men from any responsibility for their illegitimate offspring. It also required that there be a blank space where the father's name should appear on the birth certificate of illegitimate children (Alexandrova 1984). Yet,

although unmarried motherhood was not specifically praised and was portrayed as a shameful position, there were some compensations to women in the form of state benefits for their children, and in the form of a continuing glorification of motherhood per se; hence, it was implied that even in this shameful form, motherhood was more good than bad. Motherhood was conceptualized, more than ever before in Soviet history, as the most important job women could do for the state, and the most important route to self-realization. However, given the disproportion between the sexes, many women had little choice but single motherhood or absolute childlessness, and about 25 % of children were born out of wedlock in 1945 throughout the country (Bondarskaya, 1994).

The percentage of women married by the age of 25, was much lower in this generation than in those which preceded and followed it. This is clear from the figures presented in P. Iliina, *Izuchenie brachnosti pokolenii zhenshin iz semei rabochikh i sluzhashikh v SSSR*, 1976:

Year of women birth	married at age 25, %
1913-1917	73.0
1918-1922	62.0
1923-1927	68.1
1928-1932	72.0
1933-1937	77.0
1938-1942	79.1

All the same, only 6% of women of the war generation had never married by the time they reached their fifties, which is lower than in the rest of Europe. This might reflect a greater desire on the part of Soviet women to marry, even if temporarily, thus escaping the fate of a never married single mother.

As Maya Turovskaya put it, 'single motherhood here is unavoidable, but odious' (Turovskaya 1991)

On the other hand, the disproportion between the sexes might have served as a good excuse to some women who wanted to remain childless, which would have been a difficult task for them otherwise in a such a normative context²².

Those women who had children in the 1940s did not face an easy life at the aggregate level: they still worked hard in the economy as there were not enough men to do hard manual jobs (although the ruling positions were, of course, taken from women by men

²² It was possible in the thirties as women's role as workers then was heavily promoted, so some could legitimately remain childless being absolutely absorbed by work, becoming Absolute Workers as well as men; seemingly, it was socially tolerated.

after the war; they began to rule over and teach women, leaving the physically hardest work to the latter to do); food and goods were still scarce; and children of course were women's ultimate responsibility as well. The state was not too generous in benefits; unless you had three children or more, you actually had to pay taxes for *malodetnost'* (having too few children). If you had three, you did not pay anything but did not receive anything either. Benefits began just from the fourth child, increasing considerably with the fifth (Engel & Posadskaya 1998).

War left many children orphaned, and too few adults available to adopt them, although some of course did. In the orphanages, these war orphans were joined by, and were possibly outnumbered by, children of repressed parents and those abandoned by their mothers. There is not much evidence of abuse in children's homes at this time, which does not mean that it did not exist. However, for some women (and some men who returned disabled from war), work in these orphanages could actually mean the satisfaction of parental needs which were unfulfilled due to the difficult demographic situation. Such women were long remembered as real mothers by their former pupils who frequently visited them even after they left the institution.

In such a situation, although abortion was formally prohibited, many women had no other choice than to resort to it, and it was actually understandable for the authorities who perhaps just 'closed their eyes' to these practices in many cases. It was most of all still done in the same way - unqualified self-induction, followed by a call to the hospital about a threatened miscarriage (Engel & Posadskaya 1998).

As for the Soviet ladies (and in these times almost every married woman could be considered a lady compared to others), they faced a slightly more difficult time as well, as they could not feel their position secure anymore and had to intensify their efforts in the struggle against competition from other females for their men, with the prospect of more often than not finally losing the battle. This led even them to consider that single motherhood was a very real possibility (Turovskaya 1991; Alexandrova 1984), and that all women should therefore prepare for such uneventfully, by having some profession and not having too many children even within what initially seemed the most secure of marriages. This became another deep-rooted norm in the consciousness of Russian women for several generations.

8. Khrushchev's liberalization and the falling birth rate.

Consequently, since abortion was again legalized by Khrushchev in 1955, families with one or two children increasingly became the norm. Actually the birth rate fell

drastically until 1965-1969, when it reached its minimum, and then begun to slightly rise again²³ (Bondarskaya 1994). At the first glance, it could seem that all this was precisely due to the legalization of abortion again (Clements 1994). However, according to other authors, there probably were several more deeply rooted reasons, one of which was discussed at the end of the previous section: that woman felt that if they became single mothers, which was almost unavoidable, they could always manage with one child, but two would be a problem, and more than two impossible. Some scholars (Clements 1994; Perevedentsev 1995) believe that another reason for the falling birth rate was the fact that Khrushchev expanded the old-age pension to cover all strata of Russian society and therefore offered an alternative means of security in old age. A further cause was the housing shortage in the cities, and consequent difficulties in accommodating an additional child. Other reasons are, in my view, common to all industrialized countries: the higher costs and lower benefits of having many children (Becker 1991), since children now have to be provided for and educated well, rather than helping the family economy, which in any case had ceased to exist. Materialism, largely promoted as part of the ideology in Soviet society, and in the 1970s at least already spread in its westernized consumerist form, too, could also be a factor, as children consequently began to be considered just as one of many competitive consumer needs and would not necessarily win in competition with other goods (it is Antonov's, 1990, view). Women's work outside the home was obviously another major reason (Boiko 1980, 1981, 1983, 1985), as it would later become in other countries. Eventually, even some Soviet demographers finally admitted that legalized abortion was less of a reason for fertility reduction, but more a means of achieving it (Borisov 1971, 1983).

All the same, Soviet women whose childbearing years fell in the 1960s and 1970s less often remained completely childless than was the case ever before (and ever after). If more than two children was not the norm, nor was less than one. It was considered good and necessary for a woman to become a mother not only as a service to the state, but it was also seen as a worthwhile experience for herself. Having a child actually ensured that the woman would not be left completely alone in a situation in which divorce was highly probable. Beck-Gernsheim (1995) saw this as one of the motives for childbearing also elsewhere and in other times. Children met the emotional needs of the mother at least while they were young, but sometimes also when they became adult, too, since in Soviet cities many adult children still, happily or not, live with their parents (Margolit 1991;

²³ These figures are largely the result of demographic fluctuations in the generations who were to become mothers: those giving birth in the 1960s were largely born during the war with its

Sandomirskaya 1991, 2). Soviet pensions, on the other hand, especially those for women, were rarely sufficient, and the social infrastructure remained undeveloped, so women still hoped for the support of adult children in old age, even though it was in reality increasingly unavailable. On the other hand, the 1960s and 1970s were a time of relative economic stability, though at a low level, which favoured the perception of reproduction as something individually desirable (which might not be the case now, for example). Single motherhood, if not particularly welcomed, was widely tolerated, as a woman's need of a child was (and still is) recognized as her basic right²⁴ by the majority of the population. It did not lead to destitution, although it did make life slightly more complicated economically. But support from the woman's parents was often available, and child care institutions, though of poor quality, were abundant (Parker 1991). In addition, in many Russian and Ukrainian rural areas unregistered cohabitation was widespread from the early post-revolutionary years. Wedding feasts, to which everyone was invited, served as the customary means of announcing the 'marriage' and replaced church weddings, while registration in the state registry office, which was not that heavily promoted anyway by the Soviet officials during much of Soviet history, was not really aspired to. Divorce was initially too easy, then in post-war times too difficult. Both these situations actually favoured unregistered cohabitation, in the first case because the registration of the marriage did not give any additional stability or rights, in the second case because marriage seemed to be too serious a step. Furthermore, the legal status of the single mother gave a woman access to special benefits, even when the father was actually living at home (see Bondarskaya 1994). Thus the former *proletarian* pattern actually spread to the countryside: indeed, as Bondarskaya (1994) states, after the Second World War extra-marital fertility

low fertility rate, while younger women born during the relative post-war 'boom' joined child-bearing ranks thereafter.

²⁴ Consequently, the problem of infertility became visible and was seen as important at that time, while previously (although there had been some discussion in *Voprosy okhrany materinstva I mladenchestva* in the 20s on the topic) the attitude was that society as a whole, and women in particular, had more pressing problems to resolve, in which children often appeared to be more of a burden than a pleasure. In the 1960s, in addition, science became very popular and a fast developing part of the economy, so people began to expect solutions from science to some of their most difficult problems. Relatively high quality infertility treatment was available, although to very few women; it was difficult to obtain, but once one succeeded, it was free of charge, although often informal 'gratitude' was expected. Sometimes such treatment produced the desired result, but prior to the advent of IVF, the success rate was even lower than now (personal conversations with older women who had this experience, and with doctors). It is worth noting in passing that adoption, which otherwise could seem more of a solution, was not particularly rewarded: mothers of adopted children were not eligible for Stalin's Hero-mother awards. Only the biological birth of children was considered real mothering and worthy of respect. On the other hand, even those whose infertility was proven

always was higher in the countryside than in the cities, precisely due to this norm of cohabitation.

As a whole, although fewer Russian and other Slavic women of this generation in Soviet Union had large families compared with Central Asian women, there were fewer completely childless women amongst Slavic populations, too (Bondarskaya, 1993; Katkova, 1983, whose data appears in the following table)²⁵.

Republic	childless women per 1000 women over 15
Russia	252
Ukraine	233
Bielorus	237
Uzbekistan	326
Kazakhstan	346
Azerbaigan	388

Borisov agrees (in 1971:25) that

intentional refusal to have at least one child, or intentional postponement of childbirth, are not widespread.

(see also Sifman, 1976).

were obliged, until recently, to pay a tax for childlessness. I was one of them, at the end of the 1980s.

²⁵ This, however, might not only be due to the fact that practically all Russian women tried not to stay childless, but also because rates of infertility and infant mortality were higher in Central Asian republics (see Radzinsky, V.E., Kadyrov, Sh. Kh. (1988), *Ne ogranichivat, a regulirovat!*, in: *Zdorovie*, 2/1988, p.4), which could make some women childless as a result, even though they were married and using neither abortion nor contraception. The age when marriage registration was legally possible was 18 in the Soviet Union, apart from Uzbekistan and Ukraine where it was 17 for girls. Figures of fertility for teenage women did not significantly vary for women from, to give one example, the Russian Federation and Kirgizia; the main difference in the picture of fertility between Slavic and Central Asian populations was in fertility rates for older women (from 30 to 49) which were at least 4-6 times higher amongst Central Asian women, which means much larger families. The age cohort of 15 to 16 year olds was smaller in Central Asian republics in 1979 than that of women in their twenties and late teens who were already married and had children, therefore the above significant figures on childlessness cannot be attributed to the fact that these younger, yet unmarried, women were included in the sample (see *Demographicheskyy ezhegodnik SSSR* (1990), Goskomstat SSSR, Moscow: Finansy i Statistika).

9. Concern with the falling birth rate: propaganda and social policy in the Brezhnev era.

This stable but low fertility pattern was not considered sufficient for the State's goals²⁶, especially in the light of nationalistic concerns: Russia and the other European parts of the country were in danger of eventually becoming depopulated while the Central Asian population was rising. In the beginning of the 1970s, demographers and sociologists were given the task of researching the fertility 'problem' and finding a solution. This kept them busy throughout the 1970s and the 1980s as a solution proved not easy. A 'third child' formula was proposed which meant that families were to be encouraged to have three children each rather than one or two. If it had been successful, this would have resulted in a large increase in the birth rate in Russia and the other European republics, and an even larger decrease in the birth rate in Central Asia. Given that my study is focused on women in Moscow, I will look in particular detail at the campaign to increase family size in Russia and the other European republics. Ideally some demographers would have liked families in these republics to have had four children each (see the concept of '*srednedetnaya semia*' ('middle-size family') by Boiko (1980), which meant precisely 3-4 children per family and differed both from a small (1-2 children) and large (more than 4 children) family; '*srednedetnaya semia*' was considered the best of all three options). However, more than three children per family was felt to be unrealistic both from the point of view of people's values, and the conditions of their lives. This concept of 'middle' family, in contrast to both the large and the small family, seemed to put people off less than the idea of a large family. Sociologists and demographers thought that it was possible to live with three or four children in the contemporary urban flat. The family's life-style would not significantly change, they assured people, and economically it would mean less change than anticipated. It was clear that some material changes were needed, and this resulted in an increase in family allowances, especially for second and third children. These included a one-off grant of between 50 and 100 rubles for a new child²⁷, 112 days of maternity leave on full pay, a year at partial pay, reduced child care fees for large families (Attwood 1992)). But what could have really helped - better housing policy and the development of a service sphere which would ease the housekeeping burden of women - was not improved as it needed a much more significant investment of money and,

²⁶ As Lynne Attwood (1996: 143) puts it, '*The Soviet Union linked its power with its population size, which had to be sufficient to sustain an enormous army and a labour-intensive industry*'

²⁷ the benefits for a second and third child were most significantly increased, while the allowances for subsequent children were not changed (Attwood 1990:7)

especially, of intellectual and practical energy. In addition, demographers asserted that fertility rates were not influenced by income or other economic variables, but rather by more complicated changes in life-style, expectations and norms. This meant that even significant improvements in the economic situation would not drastically change the number of children being born, as only those whose desirable family size was really not attained due to economic reasons would increase their fertility, and only up to a desirable moderate level. Accordingly, demographers and sociologists tried to work out precisely what needs people have, in order to influence and manipulate their 'need for children' (Boiko, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1985; Antonov, 1973, 1983, 1990; Volkov, 1976, 1981, 1983 etc.). As a result, a propaganda campaign was launched in the early 1980s (see Bestuzhev-Lada 1988, Antonov, 1973, 1983, 1990; Borisov, 1971, 1983; Boiko, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1985; Boldyrev, 1976; Sifman, 1976; Arkhangelsky, 1988; Avdeev, 1988; Darsky, 1976; Volkov, 1968, 1976, 1981, 1983; Kusmin, 1988; Shilova, 1988; Sinelnikov, 1976, 1983, 1988; Vasilieva 1983; Katkova, 1983 etc.), in which campaign the idea of motherhood as an essential female pre-destination were used. Some (S. Nikologorsky (1991), *Chto takoe zhenskaya emansipatsia*, p.24) even defied the laws of nature in stressing the female role in reproduction:

Continuation of kin is the natural pre-destination of a woman. Men have no natural function.

The participants in the campaign, to raise the birth rate in Russia and the other European republics, tried all approaches which seemed possible to them. They made an attempt to influence sex role formation through the education system, introducing a course *The Ethics and Psychology of Family Life* in schools in 1984-1985 (see Bobrova & Simonova, 1988), which promoted heavily differentiated gender roles in relation to the family. Sections of the syllabus for this course were published in the educational press before the course was launched. An attempt was also made in the press as a whole to make sex roles more 'traditional'; this began as early as the middle of the 1970-s (Attwood 1990:165), promoting idealised images of 'defenders of the motherland' and 'future mothers'. There was also an interesting sexual dimension to this campaign: a deep imbalance was implied, as Attwood puts it, 'in male and female needs and desires. Women have maternal instincts, men have sexual instincts' (see Attwood, 1996: 151-2). Women supposedly agreed to have sex in order to have children, then, while men agreed to have children in order to have sex. As Lynne Attwood concludes about this particular educational sex roles programme in late Soviet history,

Men wield the power and decide on the priorities and needs of society. The needs of women, and the development of all-round personalities [in them²⁸], are subordinate to the perceived social requirements of a high birth-rate and a cheap source of domestic labour (Attwood, 1992:117).

This course, however, was much ridiculed in schools, and really had little influence.

The next approach to improving the fertility rate lay in attempting to increase marital stability and decrease the divorce rate, since it was believed that these efforts would help to add to the birth rate. Therefore family consultation centers were introduced (this process started in 1970), intended to help divorcing couples to find ways for reconciliation (Attwood, 1990:191-195). Divorce was also discouraged through the legal system (ibid.:200-201).

At the end of the 1980s, participants in the propaganda campaign praised themselves for bringing about what they saw as a growth in the fertility rate (see Perevedentsev, 1995 on this). However, if there was any real tendency towards fertility growth during the 1980s, it lay most of all in the area of births to single women (Bondarskaya 1994), which perhaps meant that all these weak attempts to reverse the divorce trend did not succeed. Male lack of responsibility for their families (because of alcoholism, failure to be a breadwinner, and/or leaving for another woman in the event of a minor dissatisfaction or even without any special reason) was not suddenly improved by the idea of a complementarity of the sexes; rather, women opted to give birth outside marriage which was considered such an unstable thing now that it was not worth even trying. The increase in pregnancy rate amongst single women was, perhaps, also due to a further liberalization of norms, to a new 'sexual liberation' of youth (Buckley 1992), and to financial incentives in the form of new benefits.

Most births in Russia during these decades of low fertility were to very young women in their teens and early twenties. This was heavily supported by propaganda which proclaimed that first births even to women of 25-30 years were 'late', 'unhealthy', and 'risky'. To some extent it is may be true in a country where the main means of 'birth control' is abortion, often of low quality (Engel & Posadskaya 1998; Maltseva 1984; Murcott & Feltham 1996; Remennick 1993; Sargeant 1996; Williams 1996), and which in many instances leads to subsequent subfertility. On the other hand, ideologists perhaps considered that the possibility of a woman having more births during her life span would be the higher the earlier the first birth occurred (Perevedentsev 1995). Therefore

²⁸ This was traditionally promoted by Soviet ideology for both genders; see more on this in Attwood, 1992.

propaganda about the danger of aborting a first pregnancy was launched, and this was influential, in that many women tried not to abort their first pregnancy in the fear of subsequent infertility. However, then they found it easy to abort every subsequent pregnancy, if carrying it to term was not conditioned by some special reason, such as embarking on a new 'good' marriage. Some data suggest that in spite of the propaganda, the number of abortions of first pregnancies remained high even amongst married couples (Arkhangelsky 1988):

number of abortions in the first pregnancy in the studied families:

city	1-child families	2-children families
Moscow	19.4%	7.4%
Ufa	5.6%	1.8%

Alternative means of reliable birth control (IUD and the pill) had just begun to spread in Russia in the early 1980-s, and their harmful effects were overestimated by the medical profession which did not want to lose its highly profitable abortion business (Williams 1996; Sargeant 1996; Murcott & Feltham 1996). Mothers who abandoned their children, relinquishing them to the guardianship of the state, were accused of irresponsibility; they were expected to keep the babies, as the State would help them to raise their children. However, in terms of real income the amount of State help to mothers was not sufficient, and if a single mother had no help from her own parents or the child's father, it was often difficult to keep the baby. Adoption was a very complicated process, in spite of the fact that there were plenty of children in children's homes, often in conditions of abuse and neglect (Waters 1992; Sargeant 1996). This was perhaps a residue of Soviet ideology concerning the superiority of 'collective education', as its classic expert, Makarenko, wrote: 'The Soviet family must necessarily be a collective' (Makarenko, [1937]1950:113).

A myth of maternity as something essentially heroic and self-sacrificing continued to influence many people, including perhaps the authors of the propaganda campaign themselves, who tried to touch the corresponding 'fibres' they believed existed in the souls of all women. As Lynne Attwood stressed (1996: 156):

The idealized image of the woman, linked so inseparably to that of the mother, has always had a strong coating of selflessness and self-sacrifice.

Yet in reality, people, including women, were increasingly seeking pleasure and self-fulfillment rather than self-sacrifice.

10. Women's voices: dissident feminists, Mamonova et al.

In 1980, dissident feminists - Tatiana Mamonova, Tatiana Goricheva, and others - edited an almanac «Woman and Russia», the distribution of which was soon prohibited by law. They continued their work nevertheless from abroad, attempting to deconstruct Soviet gender myths, including that of motherhood. However, their positions concerning of maternity and mothering differed widely. The only thing which united them was their unconditional refusal to accept the contemporary Soviet maternal mythology and their protest against the situation where men had become increasingly useless in the family and were being rejected as partners by women themselves (Malakhovskaya 1979). Women preferred to create 'maternal families', which had a mother as the head and often united several generations of mothers, excluding males. It did not necessarily mean that the women had never married. They often did (Alexandrova 1984) in order to accommodate themselves within society's conventions, not become vulnerable to social criticism. A wife who divorced her husband soon after marriage was no exception, in fact she was perhaps even more of a socially acceptable figure than a 'happily' married woman. Hence some women could choose marriage as a temporary option, having plans to divorce as soon as possible. Women would surely not have behaved like this if it was really possible to divide responsibility for the family with men (Mamonova 1980, 1984, 1989), instead of finding themselves with husbands who in reality wanted to be mothered themselves by their wives. In protest against such an additional unfair burden women simply pushed men away from the family, they simply could not and did not want to carry this heavy weight anymore. However, the fate of a single mother was not easy. Neither financially, nor physically was it feasible to bring up a child alone (Maltseva 1984). Benefits were low and could not be obtained automatically; child care was available only after at least a year of staying at home with the child. If one planned single motherhood, then it was better to have enough savings for at least a year to stay at home out of work. In reality most women did not plan it but rather accepted pregnancy post-hoc (Maltseva 1984; see an interesting account on how this actually happens in personal life in Parker (1991)). Therefore they experienced acute strain during the first year, trying to find money or else lacking necessities. It is no surprise that some relinquished their babies at birth. According to Svetlana Sanova (1980), many did this simply due to a lack of sufficient housing, for example, having to share a room in a hostel with several other people, or because they were minors, and the decision was made for them by their parents; however some did so because they rejected the socially acceptable overburdening model of motherhood. Some even preferred death to

motherhood since it prevented them from doing creative work. For example, the artist Tanya Kerner (Mamonova, 1980) was convinced by her two lovers to give birth, on the grounds that it was beautiful and self-fulfilling for a woman. They then left her to do all child care alone. She could not paint anymore, and finally she jumped from a window. Her two lovers subsequently organized a post-mortem exposition of her work which enjoyed a huge success.

The biological process of maternity was itself disgusting in Soviet conditions. This led some, including Mamonova (1979, 1980, 1984, 1989) herself, to an overall rejection of giving birth. She interpreted it as the basis of woman's subjugation, suffering, and self-sacrifice. Instead of participating in creative work she had to care for men and give birth to men who would then use her and forget her. A woman's human side was rejected and denied self-fulfillment precisely because of motherhood. However, Mamonova continued, she was manipulated by patriarchy to such an extent that she wanted herself to give birth, and strongly preferred sons to daughters. Turning her attention to how humans should reproduce themselves, Mamonova's position was close to that of Firestone, since she suggested, first, technologies to replace the bodily process of birth, and, second, parthenogenesis - asexual reproduction - since men were just the secondary and not absolutely necessary gender.

Other writers stressed the atrocities, humiliation, depersonalization, and rude attitudes, encountered by women in the Soviet hospitals in the process of giving birth and during abortion (Unskova 1984; Leftinova 1984; Batalova 1979). This resulted in health problems in both mother and child. As for abortion, Maltseva, 1984, wrote: 'I believe that most women who have experienced this inhuman torture even once would refuse to undergo this barbaric operation if they had normal, human conditions in which to live.' The main abortion clinic in Saint-Petersburg was nick-named the 'slaughter house'. Aborting women were given insufficient bedding and no anesthesia. Several operations were performed in the same room at the same time, and hundreds of operations were performed in such a room every day. Medical care was only basic, no one was interested in the consequences for the woman's health, and complications were indeed frequent. The supposed 'choice' Soviet woman had represented, then, perhaps more of a punitive possibility than the Soviet version of single motherhood (Maltseva 1984). However, if she abstained from sex completely, she would not be considered normal²⁹. Consequently,

²⁹ Some women of the Mamonova's circle actually chose this way, however after quite active sexual life (Goricheva, 1980). This meant an asexual single motherhood for them, understood in religious Orthodox terms, with the only difference that they considered it as something which unambiguously elevated a woman and expiated all her sins precisely if it was single and asexual. Motherhood, conscious and spiritual in this case, motherhood of Maria, in opposition

complying to the norms involved necessary suffering, which was part of the female role in the Soviet Union (Natalieva 1980). According to the feminist dissidents whose writing we have been discussing, the very unfair gender order which existed in Soviet Union relied on women's acceptance of suffering, and it would collapse if women began refusing to do this. That is precisely what women must do, according to Mamonova and her co-authors. We will see in due course whether the young women in Moscow who I interviewed for this thesis could be said to have done so.

11. Children of Perestroika.

All of us, in the generation studied in this research project, could be named 'children of perestroika' due to the impact this epoch had on the formation of our attitudes. But in using the expression as a heading for this section, I have intended it to have a multiple meaning. It also refers to the children who were born during and after perestroika; to women of my generation, the symbolic 'children of perestroika' (who were not actually born during perestroika, but to a large extent were formed by it); and even to those children who were not born because some women in this new climate decided against having children. This section will indicate various socio-economic and cultural trends of the epoch from the 1985 to the present, trends which influenced our attitudes to childbearing, as well as all the other views and ideas we held. The deep restructuring and significant cultural changes went through us as we went through them.

Throughout the 1980-s two main cultural streams were influential in Soviet, then Post-Soviet Russia³⁰. I would name the first of them 'Westernism', since it was necessarily associated with the notion of the West for those who were affected by it. Western democratic values - freedom, respect for personal needs, but also individualism and consumerism, in all senses of these words, were associated with this Russian 'Westernism', some by its followers, others by its enemies. In any case, this 'Westernism' involved placing the stress on the individual, on his or her personal values, needs, satisfaction,

to accidental and sensuous motherhood of Eve, became something really God-like in this system (see Natasha Maltseva, 1984, *The Other side of the coin*: p. 111: *The greatest good that nature has intended for woman is for her to fulfil her purpose as a mother.*). All that was bad or difficult in it, was meant to be the expiation of her former sexual sins. This motherhood *was* creative work and self-fulfilment. However different is this position from that of Mamonova herself, it is always present in every common book of the feminists of her circle. As Tatiana Mamonova states on this issue, even *when* the technologies would allow people to reproduce in other ways which would not imply any bodily suffering, some women would possibly prefer to give birth and to care for children in the 'ancient' way, considering this a valuable and unalienable experience for them. However, Mamonova personally would prefer an alternative technological option.

³⁰ See an interesting account of cultural trends of this epoch in Stites (1992:178-203).

achievements. The notion of duty had rather a negative meaning from the point of view of this ideology. The general agreement was that all of us, Soviet people, were tired of always feeling a sense of duty to the State, especially since the State had in the past wanted so much from us.

The second stream, which I will call 'nationalism', differed from 'Westernism' precisely in its appraisal of this notion of duty, and in that it valued the State, or the Nation, or the Divine, more than it valued the individual. Post-Soviet 'communists' actually agreed with this movement in many respects, first of all because of its conviction that it was necessary to have a strong national state, and also because it placed the individual's needs below the individual's duties.

Orthodox religion was a very important feature of this new ideology in Russia, being actively used by nationalists and statists, since they thought that it provided a strong new ideology which could join the Russian nation together again on a new basis. Since communist ideology proved unable to do this anymore, many 'communists' now spoke very positively about Orthodox Christianity, in the sense that it represented a positive cultural inheritance accumulated by 'ordinary Russian people' during the course of many centuries. However, the situation with this contemporary Russian Christian 'renaissance' was not so simple. Russian Orthodoxy had enjoyed something of a revival since the 1960-s, when it started to be favoured by dissidents who were rebelling against the Soviet Union (see, for example, Mamonova, 1980). Then, in the early 1980-s, it became common for young people from the 'intelligentsia' (the educated strata of society) to go through a period of personal 'ideological searching' to find some alternative to communist ideology which they could then choose to believe in, or even belong to. It was almost inevitable that for Russians these 'searchings' would include Christianity, and very often this was the point at which an individual's search would stop. As a result, although it may be impossible to call these new Russian Christians 'traditional Christians'³¹, for many of them a deep interest and involvement in religious life are characteristic. For rather more people, embracing Orthodox Christianity gives them the opportunity to celebrate holy days, take more time off work and have more pretexts for parties. It also provides them with a feeling of belonging, which is important in our time of weakened social links in other spheres of life.

The revival of Orthodox Christianity, however widespread, is just one of the outcomes of the 'searchings' for a new ideology. As mentioned above, these were

³¹ However, the same would apply to any contemporary branches of Christianity - all of them are sufficiently distant from early Christian faith, and, probably, bear more signs of the contemporary era than of 'genuine' and essential Christian tradition. This does not mean that there is no 'unity' or 'core' of Christianity in any of them - on the contrary, it definitely exists in all of them, including the new Russian Post-Soviet Orthodox version.

particularly common from the early 1980-s among the intelligentsia, who had better access to dissident information and so were more informed about dissident ideas. However, from 1985 they spread to the population at large, affecting millions of people. As a result, various versions of 'spirituality' appeared, one of which was the belief in the personal energy of the 'folk healers' Chumak and Kashperovskiy, who supposedly 'treated' and hypnotised the whole country during specially designed TV programmes (see an account of this in Stites, 1992:190-191). It seems, however, that this kind of phenomenon represented a short-term mass-reaction to the new freedom of belief. Now, at the very end of the twentieth century, Orthodox Christianity seems to be trying to gain the place in mass consciousness which communist ideology previously held - and this, it could be argued, is happening partly due to the efforts of the State. The attempt is having some success, though Orthodoxy is still a long way from enjoying the degree of influence communism once had.

It is important to mention here the fact that essentialism and the idea of pre-destination both came from Russian religious and popular traditions, as well as from the late Soviet official 'teachings' which appeared in the Soviet press in the 1980-s. These concepts often appeared as explanations of human behaviour in the interviews I conducted and which I examine in Part II. In many of the cultural trends which have appeared throughout Russian history, including those whose adherents were sworn enemies of one another (for example, the adherents of national 'tradition' versus the revolutionaries of the nineteenth century), the human being was viewed as a creature who was pre-destined for some 'higher goal' fulfilment, and not as the owner of his or her own life. It was considered to be people's life task to find or to understand the goal for which they had been 'thrown' into the world, and not to invent or to choose this goal for themselves. However, in some cases a person's pre-destination was already known. This was the case with women, whose main pre-destination was - at least according to men, regardless of their ideological position - to give birth to children.

It is possible to see the development of 'nationalism' over the past ten or fifteen years in the Russian mass consciousness. Now, in 2000, many of those people who had more of a 'Western orientation' in the late 1980-s have turned back to national ideology. However, it would seem from my interviews that people generally combine consumerism and pleasure-seeking with religious feelings and nationalism in a more or less contradictory manner.

All this cultural development has happened against the background of a deep economic crisis, which was the unintended result of Gorbachev's attempt to 're-structure the economy'. The crisis came about because Gorbachev had inherited such an inefficient

system, because people were not used to acting under market conditions, and because of excessive corruption in the administration. Due to abuses in the process of privatisation of the economy, some people ended up having much more control over the economy than others. Many enterprises stopped working, since their products were uncompetitive not only in the international, but also in the national market. Millions of people became unemployed or 'covertly' unemployed, since such enterprises often preferred not to close down officially. At any rate, their workers did not receive salaries which were sufficient to cover their living expenses. Remaining officially employed by such a 'depressive' enterprise helped just to preserve the status of having a job rather than actually being employed, and it was necessary to find other means to provide oneself with an income. This difficult situation does not help to fulfil consumerist intentions and is probably one reason for the revival of hope in the notion that there will be rewards to be enjoyed in the next world. In this world, reality for most people means not having stable employment; not having a stable income; having just short-term unofficial jobs; seeing their savings disappear because of the inflation of the national currency; not having social guarantees; and experiencing abuse at the hands of private entrepreneurs who sometimes do not pay their workers the salaries they originally promised them because the private sector often operates under informal unofficial agreements and employees have no means to press their employers to pay them if the latter decide against doing so. Private entrepreneurs also often over-exploit their employees, and, in the case of women, sexually harass them. Social self-help networks, including the traditional inter-generational ones, have weakened (as will be seen in interviews in Part II, when my respondents talk about their own mothers not being as good in the role of 'babushka' as women of the previous generation were). The housing system is even less able to meet people's needs now than it was before. There is no longer the realistic possibility of receiving housing from the state; one has to buy it or build it, and this is too expensive for most people to do, so they do not even consider the possibility. The majority of young families are therefore forced to live with their older relatives - and the latter are not always happy to be loving and self-denying 'babushkas' since consumerism has had an impact on them too; they find it particularly difficult to adapt to the new market conditions and do not always want to divide their scarce resources with other people, even their own grown up children. Many people of the older generation still do try to help, but because they have so little money the situation is still very difficult.

Other young families manage to rent separate accommodation, but often they have to spend all of their salary on this rent, leaving them with no hope of ever saving the money to buy their own flat. Meanwhile, the standard of living of wealthy 'new Russians'

risks, so living in comparative poverty becomes harder to tolerate; people feel obliged to try to correspond to the life styles of the well-to-do.

The new market gives few opportunities to women. The only new widespread female profession associated with the 'free market' is that of 'chelnokhiki' - literally 'women-shuttles' - that is, the private traders who buy goods in places where they are cheap and then, after transporting them in huge bags on their own shoulders, sell them in places where they are more expensive. But this trade is very hard physically, carries many dangers and risks, and seldom provides the women with a huge income. The criminal 'law' of the new market economy does not make it attractive for the majority of women. Meanwhile, other women are turned into objects of sexual pleasure by this new market. Incidentally, this new objectification of women presupposes them having no children, in contrast to the old Soviet version (see Attwood 1992, 1993; Lipovskaya 1991, 1994; Voronina 1994, 1,2.). Still others, and there are many of them, find that they have become 'superfluous persons', not required in any sector of the market. However, some commentators argue that women seem to adapt better than men, so that for the majority of men the situation is even worse (see Kiblitkaya, 2000; Ashwin, 2000). The economic crisis affects even the small proportion of "well-to-do", since they often lose their jobs, business as a whole is insecure, and the banking crisis in August 1998 has shown to them how little overall security there is now in the Russian economy³².

As a result of this uncertainty and insecurity, new reproductive attitudes have developed. One, which stems from the 'Westernism' ideology we looked at earlier, is that the only reason for having children is to meet the needs of the individuals who will be their parents - and for most individuals it is now too expensive and generally economically unadvantageous to have children. The other, which is influenced by nationalist and religious considerations, holds that children are a woman's 'pre-destination' and duty, if not to the State, which seems not very interested now, then to God. Since some combination of the two ideologies exist in most people's minds, they decide to have a child, but just one. We will see the impact of this 'one-child family norm' on the behaviour and ideas of the women I interviewed for this research project in Part II.

From 1985, various Western theories concerning motherhood became relatively well known in Russia, when the works of some prominent authors in the field were published in translation (for example, Freud, 1989, 1990, 1, 2; 1991; and Lacan, 1995; see the exposition of their theories in the next chapter). However, some Western theories are

³² For more detailed accounts of the impact which the introduction of the new market economy had on women see Attwood, 1996,1; Azarova, 1995; Koval, 1995; Lissyutkina, 1993;

likely to have had some influence on Soviet people for a much longer time. The functionalist sociologist Talcott Parsons was first translated and published in Russia already in 1972 (in: Osipov, G.V., ed. (1972), *Amerikanskaya sotsiologiya*, Moscow:Progress), and his methodology was widely accepted by Soviet sociologists, and could have influenced people's opinions, if not directly, through the work of Soviet sociologists. Other Western writers were also presented to Soviet readers, either directly through translation, or indirectly through the works of Soviet authors. According to O.D. Zakharova (1996), the ideas of Becker, Easterline and Caldwell were, for example, disseminated to a large extent in the Soviet Union through the work of the Soviet sociologists Borisov and Antonov, both of whom specialised in studying demographic processes (see Borisov, 1971, 1983; Antonov, 1973, 1983, 1990), and both of whose work (especially that of Antonov) was widely published in the press in the early 1980-s³³. Since 1985 psychology as a discipline has become extremely popular, with all new Universities offering it as a specialisation, and with many new colleges of psychology opening. Freudian, and psychoanalytic ideas in general, were discussed in the books of some Soviet psychologists even before perestroika³⁴, but since 1985, many translations of Freud's work itself have appeared (see above), in relatively large print runs: about 40,000 to 50,000 per each of the works mentioned. People's interest in Freud was possibly associated with the new emphasis on sexuality which had appeared in Russian culture (see Attwood 1992, 1993; Lipovskaya 1991, 1994; Voronina 1994, 1, 2.).

Also from the early 1990-s, the press was replete with attempts to explain problems connected with childhood (as well as other social problems in Russia at that time) in quasi-

Mezentzeva, 1994; Pankratova, 1995; Bridger, Kay & Pinnick, 1996; Bridger, 1992,1; Bridger, 1992, 2; Bridger, 1992, 3; Buckley, 1992,1; Buckley, 1992,2; Einhorn, 1993.

³³ See, for example, Antonov, A., *Dvukh detei malo*, in: *Meditinskaya gazeta*, 27 September 1985, p.4.

³⁴ see, for example, M.G. Yaroshevsky, *Psychologiya v XX stoletii*, Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1971; and Andreeva, G.M., Bogomolova, N.N., Petrovskaya, L.A., eds., *Sovremennaya zarubezhnaya sotsialnaya psichologia: texty*, Moscow: Izdatelstvo MGU, 1984.

Freudian or directly psychanalytic terms, looking, for example, at the 'powerful mother' or the 'neglecting mother' issue³⁵. This added a new dimension to the rather traditional approach in the Soviet and post-Soviet press which held women to blame for all of the problems in society. Indeed, women were most often represented in the early post-Soviet press in a negative light, first of all as prostitutes, or as 'cuckoo-mothers' who abandoned their children (Voronina 1994:142). In the case of 'cuckoo-mothers', their behaviour was invariably explained either in essentialist biological terms, that is as psychopathology, a deviation from normal female development which caused an abnormal lack of 'maternal instinct'; or in essentialist moral terms concerning their 'guilt'. It was never explained by reference to social reasons. For example, Elena Grosheva, writing about mothers who abandon their children, exclaims: 'how could their crazy mothers exchange this happiness [of motherhood] for sleeping around and drinking? Is it really the case that drunken sex is more necessary to them than the love of their children?' (Grosheva, E. (1988), *Nenastoyashii dom*, in: *Semia i shkola*, NN 11-12/1988, pp. 28-31; see also articles by Bogdanova, L. (1988), *Lubi mena bolshe vsekh!*, in: *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, pp. 28-29; see also a full account of the changes in the press images of abandoning mothers in the late 1980-s and early 1990-s by Waters, 1992,1).

Often the same articles also included offensive terms about disabled people when they discussed the phenomenon of children who were relinquished by their mothers because they were disabled. For example, Grosheva uses the term 'mothers of child-monsters' (Grosheva, 1988; see also Shkolnikova, V., 1988, *Gde brat' genialnye umy zavtra?*, in: *Zdorovie*, 11/1988, pp. 4-7; Bogdanova, L. (1988), *Lubi mena bolshe vsekh!*, in: *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, pp. 28-29). On the one hand, authors called for pity and charity towards these disabled children; on the other hand, they considered the disabled to be a burden on the state and society.

Many articles in the popular press proclaimed that the main reasons for infertility were early sexual life, promiscuity, and/or having the first pregnancy aborted (Bogdanova, L. (1988), *Lubi mena bolshe vsekh!*, in: *Rabotnitsa*, 9/1988, pp. 28-29; Manulilova I.A. (1988), *Ne abort, a kontratsepsia!*, in: *Zdorovie*, 3/1988, p.2; Botneva, I.L., Maslov, V.M. (1988), *Vitia + Olia = liubov*, in: *Zdorovie*, 7/1988, p.26). Such attitudes might have reflected a general social view of these groups of people, or helped to form such a view. In any case, we will see in Part II that similar ideas were expressed by the interviewees in this research project.

³⁵ See, for example, Korchagina, 1996

The press articles in the late 1980-s also developed a campaign to persuade women to prioritise the family over work, which had started in the Brezhnev era in response to the demographic crisis. At that time there was a labour shortage, and so a high level of female participation in the labour force was essential. This was no longer the case; in fact, the onset of unemployment meant that it would now be useful to remove some women from the work force. Accordingly the authors argued in favour of at least a partial 'return to the home' for women (Bestuzhev-Lada, 1988). However, if women were to stay at home, this meant that men had to be able to provide for their families, and this was not possible for much of the population. Hence no 'return home' occurred, apart for a temporary one resulting from an extension of maternity leave which was introduced at the 27th Party Congress in 1986: women could now take up to three years for each child, although half of this period was unpaid. Of course this meant that the length of time a woman stayed at home was dictated at least partly by what she or the family could afford. Part-time work and flexible working hours were also encouraged, but these did not become a widespread practice due to resistance on the part of enterprise and factory managers and to the economic crisis which resulted in desperate women agreeing to work under any conditions. The 'back to the home' campaign seems to have virtually ended by the mid 1990-s.

It is also important to note that press publications of the perestroika era had another more positive impact on women's attitudes, since their proclaimed 'openness' (*'otkrytost'*) and 'glasnost' - the fact that they now promoted criticism of Soviet institutions, published stories about the 'dark' sides of Soviet life, that their authors often tried to proceed from a 'democratic' position, and so on - were felt to be a real liberation by people who were used to publications of the Soviet era.

In conclusion, the epoch initially promised change for the better, such as more freedom of choice, more material well-being, less institutional oppression. To some extent these changes did come about, but only partially. Material well-being in particular became even more difficult to achieve now than in the Soviet epoch; on the other hand, freedom of choice did become a reality, but only for those with sufficient income. As for freedom from institutional oppression, institutions turned out to be indifferent to people's needs, including those of mothers and children.

12. Contemporary Russian feminists.

It should not be surprising, after reading the preceding section, that the current generation of Russian feminists and feminists in the West initially encountered mutual misunderstanding. The women involved in these movements had very different historical and cultural backgrounds.

As Claire Wallace (1994:3) puts it:

nobody really listened to their ideas because these ideas did not fit easily within western feminist perspectives...[their] views often emphasized maternity, the possibility of a 'feminine' alternative...- things which did not fit very comfortably with western feminists who had been struggling for many years to oppose these things.

But greater mutual understanding was soon attained, since some Western feminists have begun to criticize women for an excessive career-orientation:

In their exhilaration at finding themselves in higher positions in the work hierarchy, western women have adopted men's values as their own, along with their salaries and their company cars (Wallace, 1994:7),

In the former 'communist' reality, on the other hand:

In the informal world of social relations the family and family networks held a prominent place and here women's participation had far greater value. The family really was the haven in a corrupt and heartless world, representing one of the few sources of meaningful relationships (Wallace, 1994:8).

Wallace argues that it partly worked in such a way for men too. However, now the situation is significantly different, since

as men can go and perform and achieve in the public sphere, the family becomes not such an important source of identity and self-esteem (Wallace, 1994:9).

Nevertheless, in post-communist conditions, the full-time housewife represents a new *leisured* image to many women:

the idea of becoming a full-time housewife seems rather attractive and... appealing to women worn out by production and reproduction (Wallace, 1994:10).

Differing from dissident feminists in many respects, this new generation was, above all, less militant, since there no longer was Soviet Union to rebel against. Many women-related issues (such as violent Soviet abortion practice), which seemed impossible to openly discuss in the early 1980-s, became now common place in popular press publications. Thus, new feminists could focus on the other issues. However, the new generation of Russian feminists do not differ much from their predecessors in their attitudes to motherhood. Motherhood does not seem to be an important dividing point from the point of view of the current generation, or even an important issue worth to focus on. They concentrate, most of all, on the issues of power in society, and therefore on the political representations, and the obstacles which society creates for females' career promotion, trying to use women in harder nonqualified work, the only change from the

previous epoch being in massively transferring them from (at least, in representations) road construction to prostitution. In the contemporary situation women in Russia are objectified and experience discrimination in the paradoxically 'joined' areas of sex and work. The glorification of 'Virgin Mary' was transformed ³⁶ into the glorification of 'Mary Magdalene', 'Mother Russia' into 'Miss Russia' (see Attwood 1992, 1993). Authors of various backgrounds, and not only the second-generation Russian feminists, concentrate on this topic: Bagrationi-Muhraneli (she is the only one who presents an account of prostitutes who are also happy and caring mothers) 1991; Buckley 1992; Goricheva 1991; Einhorn 1993; Lissyutkina 1993; Klimontovich 1991 (his view is full of misogyny and hostile towards both the *Mother* and the *Prostitute*); Lipovskaya 1991, 1994; Mamatova 1991; Mamonova 1989, 1994; Voronina 1994, 1, 2. Prostitution, beauty contests, sexual harassment at work, the difficulties older women have in getting work because of their lower competitive 'sexual value' which now seems essential in the contemporary Russian female job market, all these and similar problems are now seen as political issues in the gender field. The power struggle now lies in this 'newly discovered' area of sexuality, which is being used by Russian men with their recently restored masculinity, as a 'consumer item'. In other words, men are active users of women who are passive sexual 'goods.' Mythology is different, it tries to represent women as active users of sex in their own right; but this merely is one of the means to manipulate them to the men's advantage.

Returning to the second-generation feminists, it is important to mention that, after all other topics which seem to them to be more prominent, few words were said by them on maternity. New feminists think that mothering in its present form prevents women in Russia from achieving real success in life, since only work in production or creation is really *the* work, while everything is biological in motherhood. It is intellectually too easy, but physically and socially too hard; as a whole, motherhood is of a low prestige and gives no power in society:

Reproduction, however, is a function that connects us with the whole of the living, animal kingdom - nothing more (Lipovskaya, 1994:130),

and

The motherhood of Holy Virgin is just a myth, whereas the reality for Soviet mothers means hard daily labour' (Lipovskaya, 1994:129));

According to Olga Voronina (1994:55), protective legislation for women as mothers in the work place in reality serves as the basis for their discrimination:

³⁶ as Lynne Attwood wrote in this respect (1992): *'if women represent the motherland, then prostitution indicates that the whole country is up for sale.'*

all measures to improve [women's] position ... aim to anchor them even more firmly to their traditional family roles.

Nevertheless, the conclusion for the current generation of Russian feminists is that the State should help women with mothering, but in a 'proper', not manipulative, way. The female burden of juggling both work and family is really heavy, but they should not try to ease it by 'returning home', as it would make them too dependent on men and consequently open to abuse. Rather, women should aspire to include men and the state in the circle of their domestic, currently all-female duties and responsibilities, and to change the norm compelling all women to mother. During late Soviet times, to quote Lipovskaya again:

Throughout her life the childless woman bears the stigma of being defective, and it is no coincidence that there are so many single mothers in our country. In this sense, in our social and cultural development we are close to the primates, where the pack is divided into two groups: female and their young and, separately, the males (Lipovskaya, 1994:128).

All this makes the new Russian feminists very close to moderate liberal feminists in the West in their attitudes both to work and motherhood. The initial tendency of the time of *perestroika* to evaluate home life as a *leisured* one is now in the past. Motherhood is not seen as the essence of the female role, and the choice in reproductive matters is promoted.

As a whole, in the contemporary situation in gender relations the discourse on children seems not to be important. Birth rates are low in any case, and, a new development in Russia, no one now seems to really be concerned about this.

13. Conclusion: population decrease, or child as luxury.

Lev Gumilev's theory of *passionarnost* is sometimes offered as an explanation for the current fall in the Russian birth rate. This theory sees nations as biological bodies; like other biological bodies, they have a certain life span and then they die, or at least weaken and lose any historical significance. When a nation is young, it undertakes serious and sometimes unreasonable enterprises, like the Mongol invasion of the whole of Eurasia or the European colonization of the American continent. They do so simply due to the 'vital juices' boiling in them, to their young spare energy. This is what Gumilev named *passionarnost*'. Then this energetic level gradually falls, and finally the nation loses any incentive to thrive, just like any old animal. However, since a nation is not one animal but many, its lack of desire to thrive finds its expression at the social level rather than simply on the level of individual health. It takes the form of suicide epidemics, the prevalence of

voluntary childlessness, and other decadent features (it is striking that this theory was invented by a son of two prominent poets of the Russian Silver Age, a fairly decadent epoch).

On the basis of all the above, the present low fertility in Russia, which recently fell below the replacement level (Perevedentsev 1995), can be explained by the old age of the nation. However, other reasons sound no less convincing. There is the worsening of the economic situation, and the destitution of masses of people who lost their low paid but stable jobs with Perestroika and did not, for the most part, acquire anything to replace them, or else they still keep these jobs symbolically, but are not paid and have to survive by some other means. They have no social security as all the new 'market' opportunities do not offer anything stable, and everyone has to think how to survive in their old age as pensions do not offer anything real. There are difficulties in forming stable relationships as everyone has to survive on his or her own. There are even more serious problems with housing than ever before, coupled with higher expectations concerning living standards because of the pervasive examples of the 'new rich'. All this has intensified the negative fertility tendencies of the previous era (Sargeant 1996).

Whatever the reasons, the statistics represent a picture of low and falling fertility rates. One can see from the following figures what is currently happening in relation to childbearing as a whole (from *Russia's State Committee for the Statistics, Materinstvo i detstvo v Rossiiskoi Federatsii v 1992 godu*, Moscow, 1993) show:

birth-rate per 1000 of general population in Russia was, on average:

1985	1991	1992
16.6	12.1	10.7

in Saint-Petersburg it was 7.6 in 1992, in Moscow 7.7;

infant mortality per every 1000 of births was

1985	1991	1992
20.7	17.8	18.0;

maternal mortality in 1992 was

in Saint-Petersburg 55.6 and in Moscow 35,0 per every 100000 children born;

the pregnancies outcomes in 1992 were: births at term 91.5 %, premature births 3.7 %, miscarriages and abortions 4.8 %;

abortions per 1000 women aged 15-49:

1990	1991	1992
114	100	95 (without

		vacuum sucking)
--	--	-----------------

The number of disabled children per 10000 of all children:

1985	1991	1992
26.2	59.4	80.9

In 1985, 21905 children were under state guardianship in children homes; in 1992, there were 22503 places, but just 17657 children in the homes (seemingly due to adoption being made easier).

The percentage of women who give birth when they are under 20 and between 35-39 years has grown; so has the percentage of single mothers in all age groups.

56% of children born in Russia in 1992 are first children, a further 30% are second children, which means that the one-child family, not the three-child family, has taken the place of the two-child family, in spite of all the demographers' efforts in the Soviet era.

Now many women who would like to have children tend to postpone giving birth until the situation improves (and in the years 1994-1997 fertility was higher in Moscow where the economic situation seemed relatively stable during those years). If it does not improve, some of them will perhaps not have children at all, as always happens with postponement; on the one hand, fertility over the years can become *sub*-fertility, if not *in*-fertility, and on the other hand, people become used to a childless style of life, and voluntarily decide to have no children. Now, however, there are women in Russia who decide not to have children at all from the start, and try to pursue other goals in life, such as a career or whatever. If formerly they did not admit to such a lack of desire for motherhood openly from a fear of being condemned for not complying to the norms, now they can easily say this in a loud voice, as norms in this area have weakened. Even the old women who sit by the entrances of apartment blocks, formerly the very embodiment of the maternal, of the «Mother-Motherland», can now be heard to say: «It is stupid to bear children nowadays».

Many people now simply cannot afford children (Sargeant 1996) either as single parents, or even in a couple situation, if they are officially or latently unemployed. Abortion is still available, and birth control means are now in wider supply, but paradoxically they are not available precisely to the poor who need them most (Murcott & Feltham, 1996; Williams 1996). Abortion is not necessarily free anymore: for example, in Moscow it is free only for those who have Moscow residence registration, while many people from other areas live in Moscow without such registration. Birth control is not free either, and there are still widespread prejudices against it (Williams 1996). Consequently, some women relinquish their babies to the care of the state (see Radionova 1996; Brutman

et al., 1996), and the children have to live in poor conditions in children's homes. Adoption has been made easier, however, so more of these children are adopted now (Sargeant 1996). Foreigners are allowed to adopt only children with some deficiencies, who were proposed to many Russians and rejected by them. Consequently, only about 600 out of per 25000 adoptions involve foreigners in Russia (Sargeant 1996). However, Russians, who live in bad conditions themselves, cannot afford to adopt more than one child, just as they cannot afford to bear more than one, and sometimes even have to return a child to the children's home when their own situation worsens (Sargeant 1996).

On the other hand, relatively well-off people do bear children, and can even afford to pay, if necessary, for infertility treatment as up-to-date as IVF, which is available in Russia and is actually cheaper than in many other places in Europe, though the cost is rising. And it is this stratum which has actually realized the dream about 'women returning to the home'. Men do business, women have one or two children and stay at home with them, not working, which would in any case be difficult nowadays to combine with motherhood, because there is no longer reliable and affordable child care. However, they also do not have large families³⁷. The norm of the large family became outmoded long ago, and people understand that the more people in the family, the less share each has in the income, especially in a situation where children do not work and there are no significant benefits accruing for each child. In some poor families children do work or beg in the streets, because now everything possible is done for the sake of survival. In this case, children constitute capital, they are worthy, and they would not be relinquished at birth. Gypsies, for example, almost never abandon their children in Russia (Radionova, 1996; Brutman et al., 1996).

Nevertheless, it seems that the childbearing patterns of the Soviet times now belong to the past, and we witness the start of some new phenomena in this area. Young people now feel themselves culturally part of the whole world, and consequently international values have an influence on them, for example in the area of birth control (which they increasingly accept) and abortion (which they reject or condemn more often than would be expected). According to many studies, they still claim they desire to have children sometime in the future, but think that there need to be appropriate conditions first (Murcotte & Feltham, 1996; Attwood, 1996, 2). Some women say they would prefer single parenthood, but the majority consider a male partner to be necessary to meet not only the economic, but also the emotional needs of the woman (Murcotte & Feltham, 1996). Reality

³⁷ Or even the 'middle' ones. The idea of the 'third child' seems completely alien to Russians. In practice, some families now, for cultural or other reasons, do intentionally have more than two children, but this is invariably considered 'many', a 'large' family, not a 'middle' family.

is often sadly different as relationships often serve some external 'business' goals rather than fulfilling emotional needs, or women are expected to support men since the latter are exhausted and overworked in the new 'masculinity games'. Nevertheless, Russian young women seem to have many things in common with their peers in other parts of Europe (Murcotte & Feltham, 1996), and there seems now be some cultural unity in spite of political and economic differences. Consequently, one might expect that birth patterns will become similar, albeit with obvious differences due to economic circumstances. On the other hand, might the Russian picture remain different because of specific traditions discussed above?

CHAPTER 2.

WESTERN THEORIES OF MOTHERHOOD.

In Western tradition, motherhood can be seen from the point of view of different disciplines and various theoretical approaches. This chapter is dedicated to an exposition and brief analysis of these approaches which seem relevant to Russian reality, and were sufficiently well known in Russia that they may have had an influence on the interviewees' views on motherhood. At the end of the chapter various options which are available to a woman in the area of motherhood, taking into consideration biological and other constraints she can meet on her way towards her 'chosen' goal, will be considered within the appropriate theoretical context. This is done in order to juxtapose the views stemming from Western culture with the ideas held by the Moscow-based Russian women I interviewed on the same topics, and hence make some comparison between the situations of women who hold the same positions in relation to motherhood in these two different cultures. In my opinion, the main options, or positions, in the field of reproduction for a woman are as follows: normative family; voluntary childlessness; adoption; the need for reproductive technologies; disability and motherhood; large family; lesbian motherhood; single motherhood; abortion; and child abandonment.

1. Theoretical approaches to motherhood.

1. Christian ideas on motherhood.

Christian religion enjoyed a significant renaissance in Russia in the last two decades of the XX-th century. Accordingly, it would seem inevitable that its views on motherhood would have had some influence over the opinions of my interviewees. Therefore I will start the discussion of theoretical approaches with the Christian concept of motherhood.

Christianity had a major influence over Europeans, including Russians, in what is often called the 'pre-modern' era, that is, the period up to the industrial revolution. There was enormous diversity between Christian peoples, both in terms of culture and religious dogma; yet all the same, this religion introduced the idea of a self-sacrificing God as a role model to all Christians. Christianity presented motherhood as both a self-sacrificing and self-evaluating activity for a woman, which was to a significant extent shaped by the cult of the Mother of God (Aristarkhova, 1995 [1], Kristeva, 1987, Pushkareva, 1997). This cult, and the implied cultural value of motherhood, varied enormously from culture to culture. All the same, the continuing view of motherhood as a 'higher' female activity comes from Christian religion.

The view of maternity as an activity which stands in contradiction to female (hetero)sexuality, constituting a female 'desire' for virgin motherhood which excludes man, has been examined in relation to the XX-th Century by Helene Deutsch, and later by Julia Kristeva in her essay 'Stabat Mater'.³⁸ Kristeva argues that the cult of the virgin Mother of God was stronger from the beginning in Eastern Orthodox religion than in the Western wing of Christianity, and that it resulted in higher prestige for motherhood in the East of Europe³⁹, provided that mothers stayed at least symbolically virgin, that is asexual. Symbolically, in popular customs and beliefs, sexuality as desire was practically forbidden for women, and the maternal and the sexual in women's lives were strictly separated. Excluding sex and - at the level of representations - a male partner from the process of birth made it possible for the earthly mother to be similar and close to the divine one, and the child could be considered as an analogue of the Holy child, as a spiritual achievement for the woman, because she could be considered God-like in her self-sacrifice for others. Moreover, all the other achievements being common for both sexes, this one was open only to women, thus allowing mothers, or at least those 'virtuous' among them, to consider themselves the highest species in comparison to all other humans. However, it could also be said that all this meant simply providing women with a symbolic or 'moral' reward, at the same time making them very much immune to 'this world's' temptations and unwilling to obtain 'this world's' rewards. Indeed, according to this concept, the worse and the less rewarding the experience of motherhood was for a woman, the better, and the higher became the symbolic status she thus acquired. Thus motherhood becomes primarily a moral activity, which makes the person undertaking it morally higher⁴⁰.

However, while thinking about motherhood, it is difficult to stay on the level of moral reasoning related to Christianity, without associating this at least in some respects with the unconscious or the social. In history, the moral view of motherhood, which arguably succeeded earlier concepts⁴¹ (these latter concepts rejected the idea that motherhood had any special value whatsoever), gradually yielded some of its influence to other discourses.

³⁸. See Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, New York, Guildford: Columbia University Press, 1987.

³⁹ However, feminist reasoning on motherhood also exists within Western Christian tradition (see Hebblethwaite, 1984, who speaks about how day-to-day practices of motherhood are connected with the higher spiritual experience of communication with God; by the way, God for her is *She*).

⁴⁰ According to L. Kohlberg, who developed a theory of moral development in the mid XX-th century (see an account in Maccoby, 1967), a gender-specific female morality will necessarily include motherhood and nurturing as positive values. However, for Kohlberg, there are six stages of moral development, and the majority of humans never reach the two highest.

⁴¹ Of course it is some simplification to unconditionally label this latter concept the 'earlier' one; the two mentioned beliefs, probably, coexisted in many cultures and during several

2. The 'Enlightened Mother': mothering as civil duty.

The Renaissance, followed by the Reformation and Enlightenment eras, ushered in a new view of motherhood, epitomised in the work of Rousseau. His ideas are relevant to Russian views on motherhood because, particularly in the Stalin era, Soviet state propaganda concerning motherhood was, in spite of its proclaimed Marxist character, very similar to the ideas of Rousseau. I mean this in the sense that motherhood, and to a lesser extent mothering⁴², were considered to be a civil duty both by Rousseau and by the Soviet state ideologists. (See the collection of texts "Mama", edited by Serebrakova, to see how this propaganda worked).

This is not surprising, since Stalinist ideology was not only communist, but at the same time statist, so that propaganda about the various duties of citizens towards the State was probably an even more important part of this ideology than explanations of life phenomena in marxist terms. Rousseau is usually considered to be the author of the concept of the responsible 'enlightened mother' in its most complete form, and it is very likely that Stalinist propagandists took his works as a source for their own views, given the overall positive evaluation of this notion in Soviet official thought. Accordingly we are going to examine the concept of the 'enlightened mother' in more detail in this section.

According to the view of a number of researchers⁴³, from the onset of the Renaissance and the Reformation, mothering was required to be increasingly responsible, since 'better quality' children were needed. This concern with quality led to a change in attitude towards wet-nursing and the gradual re-location of child care and early education with mothers themselves. At the time of the French Revolution, the new concept of motherhood acquired the additional colour of representing mothering as a civil duty for women, as they now were made responsible for the formation of good citizens, so motherhood was re-considered as a special female form of political activity.

Maternal duty was seen as so influential that it started to grant huge power to women in relation to their children, something which had not been stressed in the Christian concept of motherhood. But as many authors have emphasized (for example, Travitsky, 1976; E.A.

epochs. However, the Christian one definitely originated later than the view which denied any meaning and importance to the maternal.

⁴² There was a significant difference, however, in that Rousseau advised women to only be mothers, while Soviet ideologists had to persuade them to combine the roles of mother and worker. All the same, the stress put on mothering gradually became much stronger than the stress put on the worker's role (see chapter 1; see also Attwood, 1990).

⁴³ see, for example, E. Ann Kaplan (1992), Hays (1996), Polakow (1993).

Kaplan, 1992; Ryan, 1975; Margolis, 1993), only the status of woman as mother was raised by this concept. This nevertheless led to the reconsideration of the importance of female education. An improvement in female education was strongly advised by Rousseau, so that they would become better quality mothers. The 'new woman' was supposed to put all her personal potential into motherhood, into which she would thus safely channel all her otherwise competitive abilities. This required the development of the notion that *separate spheres of activity* were *natural* for the two sexes, a concept which is also usually associated with Rousseau. Thus, the sexes were conceptualized as radically different. This, according to some researchers, prepared a basis for the male fears of Woman as Other, Alien and Dangerous, which came to the surface in later epochs. This concept replaced the earlier Aristotelian view, which thought of woman as of an undeveloped man, but one who does not possess any specific features which man does not have.

The new image of the mother can also be linked to the religious reformation. Protestantism, even in the form of Puritanism, brought about a more relaxed view on sexual activity (and other pleasures of life). There were strict limits to this relaxation, but all the same, the Puritan concept of sex as a conjugal duty would seem very sinful to an Orthodox Christian. The Orthodox confession presupposes that sex should be avoided by any means possible, even within marriage; and when permitted for the sake of reproduction, it still must be subjugated to many rules concerning the time and the positions allowed (see, for example, Pushkareva, 1997). As well as having a new approach to sexual pleasures, the new Protestant view also valued emotions more positively, and consequently the mother's emotional closeness to her children was now praised.

Influenced, again, by the work of Rousseau (*Emile*, 1762), European culture focused on the child, and on childhood as a special period. Motherhood was considered essential for a woman. Though initially the new attention to motherhood was conditioned by the fact that early male education was in female hands, Rousseau stressed that female education was even more important than male education because it constituted the preparation of mothers of future generations, whose influence over them would be so essential. In Rousseau's view, the woman's function of cementing the family together through her skills in the realm of emotions and relationships was 'natural' for her, since she was a *complement to*, a *pleasure for*, and the *mother of*, man. Consequently, the woman should learn only what could improve her performance of these roles. Thus the public/male, private/female split was strengthened and sealed.

Many authors agree that the wide acceptance of these ideas was economically conditioned, and led to the transition of mothering into its modern form, within the nuclear family, where a woman of the middle-class raised her children in isolation. Her working-class contemporary, on the other hand, was playing an ever larger role in the labour force, and was therefore increasingly considered an inappropriate mother. Yet in due course it was found that the isolation of the mother and children within the nuclear family, and the extreme closeness which developed between them during the process of intensive and careful education over many years, had some negative aspects. These were thought through and elaborated on in subsequent theories of motherhood. The most important criticisms of the nuclear family are associated with Marx and Freud.

3. Marxism, structuralism, systemic functionalism, and Marxist feminism: functioning for the system as alienated labour.

It might seem obvious that Russian women of the generation I have focussed on had particularly strong exposure to the influence of Marxist ideology since it was the proclaimed ideology of the Soviet state. However, most people never read Marx himself. Even those who studied his books at the Universities were exposed to the official interpretations of his ideas by Soviet ideologists, rather than to those of Marx himself. Furthermore, these interpretations varied according to the current 'general line of the party' (i.e. the ideology which, it was decided by the high officials, was to be promoted in a particular epoch, or even in a particular year). Thus the Marxist thought familiar to ordinary Russian people was mixed with and mediated by various other concepts. All the same, most of them were based on the 'rational' approach and 'rational' understanding of human beings.

That probably explains why the economic theory of fertility was so widely accepted by Soviet demographers and sociologists from the 1960-s (see Zakharova, O., 1996). According to this theory, childbearing is understood in terms of costs and benefits rather than duties or instincts. This approach began with utilitarian philosophy and with Malthus and neo-Malthusians, and was further developed in the XX-th century by the economist Gary Becker (1991) as one of the applications of his utility theory. However, it is, of course, important to consider here the views of Marx himself.

For Marx and Engels, his collaborator, the reproduction of the human labour force was one part of the reproduction of the means of production. Consequently, in capitalist society, it was as alienated from the worker him/herself as any other kind of labour. The woman gives birth to children not for herself, but for society, which would later exploit

them in productive, destructive (as in war) or reproductive labour. The institution of the family was, according to Marx and Engels, built upon the institution of private property, with children, as well as wives, being considered men's private property by society. In the Marxist view, the increasing alienation of labour would eventually lead to a situation where workers could no longer tolerate the situation, and would have to appropriate the means of production. Thus alienation would be eliminated. This would constitute an economic revolution.

Later developers brought many new insights to this view⁴⁴. Marcuse, following on from both Marx and Freud, explained reproduction as a 'life instinct', which was, in his view, more characteristic for women, and was the opposite of the destructive 'death instinct' which was more characteristic for men. If one developed this concept, one could infer that humankind could do all the worst and most harmful things to itself and to nature and yet rely for its survival, and for repairing this damage, on women's urge for life, including reproduction. The 1970s feminist Shulamith Firestone (1978) added to the picture an element 'omitted' by Marx, that of a sexual revolution against patriarchy. Neither of these concepts can be found in Marx's writing. However, Firestone simply developed Engels' ideas: according to the latter, the first division of labour was between production and reproduction, and the division of labour is the basic reason for its ensuing alienation. In Firestone's view, patriarchy was a system of dehumanized forces, just as capitalism was for Marx. Both systems were initiated by humans (in the case of patriarchy, by men), but later they escaped human control. Accordingly, the sexual revolution would consist of women's expropriation of the means of reproduction (their own bodies), and to achieve this end they would have to temporarily completely withdraw from childbearing, thus acquiring control over the means of reproduction that patriarchy had put into men's hands. In this utopian view, childbearing as such should finally, with technological development, be replaced by artificial reproduction outside of the womb, and ultimately biological reproduction would be rendered unnecessary, or at least very different from its present version, with the development of humankind into the Universal Cosmic Consciousness.

Firestone's approach can be seen as an example of the unhappy reaction of individuals who feel seduced by inhuman (although formed by humans), depersonalized, objective, collective forces. However, a happier reaction, of harmonious conformism with these forces, also developed. Talcott Parsons developed his classic sociological theory of the family in accordance with his approach to society as a system with system-originated functions which

⁴⁴ some of them, like Marcuse, became relatively widely known in Russia only after 1985; but some, like Shulamith Firestone, are still unknown.

have to be fulfilled in order for the system to maintain its existence on different levels and to produce desired outcomes Talcott Parsons⁴⁵. For Parsons, the family is a system of social positions which (especially in the case of parents) can be occupied by only one person, each of which embodies and fulfils specific functions necessary for the existence of this system. The man-father has to fulfill an *instrumental* function, which maintains a successful system interaction with the larger world. He is the *instrumental leader*. The woman-mother must carry out an expressive, *emotional* function, which helps to maintain the internal integrity of the system. She is therefore an intersubjective, *relational leader*. Such a division of leadership helps the system to function normally, and this system is supposed to be the best adaptation to modern industrial conditions. Children identify with the system as a whole, the family itself, and with the parent of their sex, because of social conformity and the internalization of social roles which usually occurs 'naturally'. Thus the system's goals become their own. According to Parsons, conformism is the easiest type of behaviour in comparison to any other option. Therefore, being consistent, considering the human being as a system, and contemplating the principle of the economy of the resources as universal, Parsons asserts that children will follow the behavioural pattern which is appropriate for their gender just because this is the way of 'least resistance to the environment'. Thus the last family function, to prepare children for appropriate social roles within the larger social system, is fulfilled. A girl acquires mothering patterns of behaviour through conformity to her mother. The inclination to mothering is thus socially learned⁴⁶. According to Parsons, the girl has no identification with her father because there is no systemic need for it; the boy, on the other hand, has an identification with his mother as well as his father because all family members are necessarily involved with the emotional leader.

In its further development, Western sociology of the family attempted to make this gender *complementarity* principle more flexible, and to substitute the principle of *supplementarity* instead⁴⁷. According to this principle, emotional and instrumental functions are not so strictly divided among leaders, and man and woman can substitute for each other if necessary. However, it could be argued that this just means allowing variation for the sake of the better flexibility and adaptation of this same old systemic whole. Nevertheless, as

⁴⁵ see his *Family Structure and Socialization of the Child*, in Lee & Stewart, 1976;

⁴⁶ One of the particular developments of social theory in its application to motherhood is social learning theory, which examines the process by which future mothers learn about motherhood through *interaction* with their own mothers at an early age. This concept was developed by A. Bandura (see an account in Attwood, 1990).

⁴⁷ as the works of Rhona Rappoport suggest - see, for example, in Chetwynd & Hartnett, 1978, and Rappoport, Fogarty & Rappoport, 1982.

social reality for the majority of Western families now implies the mother's participation in the work force (as was the case for the majority of Soviet families over a much longer time), contemporary authors try to incorporate variation into systemic sociological theory of the family in different ways ⁴⁸ (Lamb, 1982; Rapoport, Rapoport & Fogarty, 1982; Sweet, 1982; Wilk, 1986; Koo & Suchindran, 1982; Utting, 1995; Beck, 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Cigno, 1991 (a variation of Becker's economic theory which attempts to incorporate mother's work in it); Berger, B., 1993; Bjornberg, 1992; Lechner, 1994; Blossfeld, 1995; Bradburn & Kaplan, J., 1993; Brannen, 1992; Carlson, 1993; Collyer, 1991; Cowan et al., 1993; Davies J., 1993; Fox & Fumia 1993; Lewis & Lewis, 1996; Miller & McLemore, 1994; Fox, 1993; Gelles, 1995; Kiernan & Estaugh, 1993; Kincade Oppenheimer, 1995). Most of them do not succeed in doing this properly, as the fact that women are in paid work outside the home seems to represent a serious contradiction to one of Parsons' basic assumptions, and therefore the familists either proceed with regrets about the pitiful state of the family today, or suggest some means to 'repair' the situation. This does not necessarily mean 'returning women to the family where they belong'. Often the authors suggest, instead, the development of state-run child care facilities and family-sensitive market adjustment for both mothers and fathers, since male participation in child care is now promoted by many contemporary authors from various ideological backgrounds (Bell, McKee & Priestley, 1983; Rosen & Benson, 1982; Burgess & Ruxton, 1996; Burgess, 1997; French, 1995; Hood, 1993; Hudson & Jacot, 1991; Huinink, 1995; Lloyd, 1995; Moss, 1995). Some familists do not believe that options have already been conceived which will help to repair the situation. Still, to them the only possible 'salvation' lies in trying to find the mechanism for such a repair job.

4. Darwin and further biological views on mothering: survival of the species.

Though Darwin's theory was formulated in the early nineteenth century, its implications for sociology as a whole and for the problem of motherhood in particular were first developed only in the second half of the twentieth century. Neo-Darwinism explains human reproductive behaviour in purely biological terms, not allowing for any conscious choice in this area. It holds that an understanding of animal behaviour, especially collective animal behaviour, can be applied to human behaviour as well. On the basis of articles appearing in the press which adopted a biological approach to reproduction, and comments offered by my respondents, I would argue that neo-Darwinism contributed to the formation

⁴⁸ including the incorporation of 'non-traditional' families into the system - gay/lesbian, communes, etc. See, for example, Fox & Fumia 1993, Rappoport et al. 1982.

of the 1980-s Soviet essentialist ideology of women's primarily 'domestic' role (this, arguably, can be inferred from Attwood's discussion of Soviet views concerning sex roles (1990)), and had a great influence on my generation, the focus of my study.

Neo-Darwinist theories (sociobiology, biosociology, and ethiology) concerning reproduction and motherhood assert that reproduction should be and is selective, so that the biological success of an individual is measured by his or her reproductive ability: in other words, by the quantity and quality of his or her offspring. In connection with this, some promoters of population control advise that only the 'best' people should be encouraged to reproduce themselves (see Calne 1994). This notion of the biological success of a person resting on his or her reproductive ability was also developed by an economist, G. Becker (1991), who held that a shift occurred in people's minds during the process of industrialisation and urbanisation, from a stress on quantity (having more children) to quality (having better children).

Another idea which is central to the neo-Darwinism develops around the discussion on whether maternal nurturing behaviour is an adaptive feature of the species, necessary for its survival. If this 'natural' order of life is challenged, the species could perish, because the biological balance would be broken. In classical Darwinism, all adaptations of the species allow for variations of this adaptive feature, so that in changed conditions the species could adapt anew in a different way. Neo-Darwinist applications, on the other hand, generally do not allow for variation.

Further developments in biology led to attempts by some thinkers to explain female nurturing behaviour and male aggression as essential traits conditioned by chromosomes or hormones. On this basis, two new ambitious disciplines were later created,, namely biosociology, developed by A. Rossi (who also described herself as a feminist), and sociobiology, founded by E.O. Wilson.⁴⁹ Even though their implications and evaluations of the facts differed enormously, the main points of these two theories are identical. First, all social features of human behaviour can be explained by biology; and, second, there are essential differences between human males and females. A. Rossi thought that although many other human biological features can be explained by social factors, the capacity and predisposition of the female to nurture, as well as the lack of aggression peculiar to her, are essential, positive, superior, and in need of re-evaluation by society, since these features are

⁴⁹. See the more detailed accounts of both in Tobach & Rosoff, 1979.

better able to serve society's needs than the male feature of aggression, even though it is also essential.

Although initially neo-Darwinist theories were often offered as a justification for keeping women at home, seeing them as people who need protection and had a duty in relation to their offspring upbringing, and thus in relation to the survival of the species, later development made these theories increasingly similar to feminist views of motherhood. Hrdy (1994), Parmigiani (1994), Daly (1994), Oliveiro (1994), and vom Saal (1994) would differ from feminists only in one point: they would not support the view that motherhood is socially constructed. For these new thinkers, all the variations in the reproductive behaviour of men and women can be exhaustively explained by reference to biology. They argue that a 'fitness trade-off' and selective infanticide of some children by their parents (which does not mean that the same parents will not care well for their other children) are actions peculiar not only to humans, but also to many animals. According to Hrdy, when a child is born the parents engage in a process of evaluation of this particular offspring in terms of their ultimate reproductive success. This means that if the child is weak, or if the mother has many reproductive years ahead of her, or her life conditions are bad, or the possibility of male support is low, or simply the child's presence means she cannot engage in another activity which is more biologically profitable for her at that time, the chances of this child's survival are low. However, if the mother does not have too many reproductive years left the value of the offspring is much higher for her, and Hrdy gives examples of really self-sacrificial maternal behaviour in such cases, with the mother risking or sacrificing her own life for her child. We will see reflections of these approaches to motherhood in the explanations provided by the respondents for their reproductive behaviour.

5. Freud and his followers: desire for the suffocating mother.

I have already mentioned the fact that Freud's ideas, often in a simplified version, have been widely used in the Soviet press since 1985 as explanations of human behaviour. Since Russian culture is currently much preoccupied with sexuality and the unconscious, this should not be surprising. Given the popularity of psychoanalytic ideas in Russia at the present time, it is important to turn now to the Freudian view of motherhood.

Although Freud did not pay much attention to the figure of the mother in terms of her own feelings, this figure is of extreme importance in his work, with all the other 'characters' being related to her. Both boy and girl children are initially, at the pre-Oedipal stage, merged with the mother, and must then separate themselves from her. They do this through identification with the father in the post-Oedipal stage, after the fearful Oedipal stage when

they experience his power and fear castration (or regret the 'loss' of the penis, in the case of the girl). Children of both sexes need to reconcile themselves to the father's predominance in terms of his sexual rights over the mother. A boy learns to sexually desire other women and not his own mother, and therefore strives for achievement of the power and status his father has. A girl experiences 'loss' of the penis and penis envy, which she can then satisfy in several ways. The first is to accept her passivity and objectification, and to desire the love of a man (initially of her own father, an attachment she will need to later overcome) and a child from him. Both her child and her own body can substitute as a penis for the woman. The first variant leads to the masochism of the 'normal' female, which, because of the inherent threat to their ego, women usually allow themselves to satisfy only in the socially accepted ways of childbirth and motherhood⁵⁰. The second option leads to the narcissism of the 'normal' female who loves her own body, the same thing which her man loves. Such 'female' desires as greed and materialism come together with narcissism. However, Helene Deutsch considered motherhood as probably the more normal form of female sexuality than female-to-male sexuality itself.

It seems that there can really be a contradiction between the two in some cases. My own research, along with many other studies, proves that voluntarily childless women often are intensely sexually active with men (see account of my interviews below; see also Veevers, 1980; Campbell, 1985; Wilk, 1986).

A woman can also identify with her father, husband or son, loving herself in him and his achievements. The latter was identified by Karen Horney as maternal narcissism, the projection of unfulfilled desires and unresolved problems of a mother onto a child. In the next variant of personal development, a woman acquires one or another variant of masculine identification, and therefore strives for phallic power, often embodied in her child whom she will try to manipulate, or in younger lovers, or in an imitation of men's achievements. For Freudians, all the females who want a career are placed in this group. In the last variant of personal development, a woman is so handicapped by the 'loss' of the penis that in reaction she becomes over-passive, i.e. frigid. This is not considered to be normal⁵¹, probably because it is perceived as resistance (albeit passive resistance) to patriarchy, which needs, like all power systems, collaboration. Thus, all over-indulgent, indifferent 'frigid', and 'phallic' super-powerful mothers, blamed by Freudians for all the problems of their children,

⁵⁰ this concept was fully developed by Helene Deutsch, see *Motherhood and Sexuality* in Lee & Stewart, 1976.

⁵¹ Although it is at least *almost* normal for Helene Deutsch, as it means for her actually legitimate re-channelling of sexuality into maternity.

basically result from the same identification of a child with the phallus. In the first case this is joined together with the mother's identification with her child; in the second case, with a depressive feeling of failure in the world due to having no perceived connection to a phallus, and consequently to a child; and in the final case, with an attempt to manipulate the child and thus realize phallic power over the world. The mother for Freudians is almost unavoidably 'suffocating', or 'devouring'⁵², trying to prevent her separation from the child and the consequent loss of power⁵³, while the child, for his or her own sake, should try to separate from the mother. This can be achieved with the help of the father. Some authors think that the Freudian concept is a necessary consequence of the embodiment of the Rousseauian principles within the bourgeois over-isolated nuclear family, because mother-child interactions within its confines were unavoidably too intense (Kaplan E.A., 1992).

Later, Lacan added to this theory one element which is more flattering for women than all earlier Freudian views, namely the desire of an adult child for the lost mother, for the pleasure of early togetherness, fusion. In Lacan's view, later identification with the phallus/father was forced, not chosen or preferred⁵⁴. In addition, all males have partly female identity which is what remains to them from this early happy fusion period with the mother. These remains of initial female identity cause anxiety in the man, and therefore, in order to maintain the integrity of the male identity, which was acquired with enormous difficulties, the man forces himself in defence to maintain a clear distinction between his self and the mother and women as a whole. This is the cause of misogyny with all its derogatory representations of women, that need to be constantly renewed.

Lacan named this fusional pre-Oedipal pleasure *jouissance*, which describes the specifically female sexual pleasure, the bodily ecstasy which is not the same thing as the male orgasm. *Jouissance* lies outside of the phallus; thus Freudian phallocentrism becomes

⁵². However, Melanie Klein's powerful concept presupposes the existence of two imaginary mothers, one being enormously good and another evil, proceeding from the early experience of maternal breast either giving milk or withdrawing it. Kristeva subsequently applied this to horror films, which are often based on unconscious fears of the lack of separation from the imaginary evil mother, and on her concept of '*deject*', an adult who failed to separate from his/her mother psychologically and lives in the horrible state of non-separateness from everything around him/her, and has the feeling of being possessed. The good imaginary mother was equally exploited by fiction, although of different genres.

⁵³ alternatively, she is a bad or indifferent mother in the early infancy of the child, when *he* really needs her closeness very much.

⁵⁴ This concept became a very popular starting point among feminist theoreticians of arts and literature, including Kristeva, 1980; 1987; see also Kaplan E.A., 1992; Wilt, 1990; Sieglöhr, 1998. However, they often add to the picture their own maternal desire, which is freed from repression and/or positively evaluated, which contradicts classical Freudian theory.

destroyed. The same word signified, on a different philosophical level, rare, enormously happy, and enormously dangerous moments of direct experience of the Real, while usually humans live in the Symbolic or in the Imaginary, which they gradually construct in order to enable themselves to deal with the world, beginning from the moment of first recognizing their own image in the mirror.

The concept of the mirror stage is very important in Lacan. It is necessary in the development of every human and peculiar only to us in all the animal world. The child begins to form his/her integrated identity in recognizing his/her image in the mirror, so that this identity actually becomes absolutely imaginary; without the mirror it is possible to experience only a fragmented identity, a fragmented image of one's own body. At this stage, the child remains with the mother, at the same time being one whole with her, and beginning to separate. The mother becomes the mirroring object for the child, necessary in the formation of the child's image of the self.

French feminist-psychoanalysts, although rejecting some of the very sexist Freudian phallogocentric ideas, accepted and developed others, so that at least some principles usually remained intact. For Luce Irigaray (1985), maternity fills in the gaps of the repressed female sexuality, and is therefore not necessary. In addition, mothers simply repeat the masculine pattern of jealous possession, closing the truly feminine pleasure of *jouissance* to themselves. A daughter can turn to her father not due to a lack, but due to an abundance of maternal nurturing. The father leaves her empty, but at least gives her space. Only in lesbian relationships can women harmoniously receive all that they need, happily coming-together-as-one. A child is necessary only for heterosexual love, representing a this-world outcome, an achievement, the need for which is unavoidable for heterosexuals. The child embodies the inescapable distance between the heterosexual lovers, a distance which does not exist between lesbians.

According to Monique Plaza (in E. Ann Kaplan, 1992), a child compensates for the general female frustrations in other areas, rather than opening up any new possibility on its own; and the blaming of the mother for her tendency to manipulate her child, which is so peculiar to Freudianism (Plaza believes that mothers really are guilty of this), has its true reasons in the existence of patriarchy. Plaza also considers all the 'abnormal' (for Freudians) cases of mothering as the result of an understandable search for reward by an oppressed woman in a situation where she is not supposed to get a reward.

For Helene Cixious⁵⁵, a mother is a voice, she introduces a child into the language in its Semiotic form, fluid and alive, in contrast to the more rigid and rational and stagnant masculine Symbolic language which is to be learned later, with the father. In other words, the mother actually introduces the child to the culture in its living form. For Cixious, there is no struggle with the mother for separation: she liberates the child herself.

However, for many contemporary women, interaction with a child within the Semiotic would not be sufficient, and they want the continuation of the relationship within the rational Symbolic (see E. Ann Kaplan (1992)). Julia Kristeva conceptualizes the specifically maternal fear of castration, not as a loss of a part of the body, but as a loss of the totality of the child, as the whole living being.

The Freudian ideas received humanist and sociological development in Nancy Chodorov's theory (1978⁵⁶). She found that a girl's pre-Oedipal identification continues later, into adult life, her identification with her father simply being added to it, to allow her to love men in her adult life. So, a woman retains the initial triangle of bonding with both males and females. The boy, on the other hand, needs separation, being in this radically different from the girl. He consequently becomes relationally deprived for his whole life, but rejection of the female part of his identity, and therefore of emotions and attachments as symbolically connected to femininity, is necessary for the formation of the masculine self. Proceeding from a similar concept, which they call 'the male wound', Hudson and Jacot (1991), however, came to a different result - to the concept of masculine superiority in the 'abstract passions'. That means that passions for art and science become safe mother substitutes for men, since the former are not acting and alive Others, but abstract objectified continua. In addition, if the real father is absent in the man's family of origin, the abstract world constitutes an imaginary father to identify with⁵⁷.

Nancy Chodorov, like many anthropologists who studied motherhood using Freudian methodology (see, for example, Malinovsky's account on the family and kinship patterns of

⁵⁵ See Gasbarrone, 1994.

⁵⁶ As well as all the above mentioned French psychoanalytic feminists, see those cited by E. Ann Kaplan (1992).

⁵⁷ Another theory of masculine identification in the absence of the father is presented in Roger V. Burton & John W.M. Whiting, *The Absent Father and Cross-Sex Identity* (Lee & Stewart, 1976): they think that it can happen from *status envy*, so that a child identifies not with an over-nurturing parent who is present, but an absent one who withdraws resources, associating control over resources with power and identifying with the more powerful person.

the Trobriand Islanders⁵⁸), suggests that different identity patterns could appear in both genders if males would take part in the care of small children.

2. Summary of the views concerning reproductive options.

Most of the theories which have been discussed in this chapter and in the introduction to the thesis were concerned with the *conventional* family situation, that of a *couple with a small number of children*. In the Rousseauian view, this is the ideal, or the only normal situation for children to be born and grow up in. In addition, this concept presupposes a strict 'natural' division of the spheres of activity between genders, when the mother is responsible for the home and the emotions, while the father remains outside, being only the provider. This view was further developed by Parsons and ethiologists, in different ways but along similar lines. However, the nuclear family seemed to Freudians to be highly problematic as the setting for bringing up children. They pointed at the deficiencies of the system, which were due to the relationship between the mother and her offspring being too intense. For this reason, children often grew up having different developmental problems. However, the mother's own problems were not considered here. She was only blamed for every problem her children had, and to such an extent that women who believe in Freudian ideas should surely reject motherhood for themselves completely, as something frightening, unattractive and doomed to failure.

Anthropologists have shown in what different forms the 'nuclear' families and 'natural' division of labour existed in various cultures of the world. This first challenge was later developed by feminist thinkers, who concentrated on showing the negative sides of the 'Rousseauian' model for women. Some feminists advised a complete withdrawal from motherhood for this reason. Others, however, called for the reform of the nuclear family, so that it could become a better place for women to become mothers in. First of all, such a reform presupposed revised views concerning the 'natural division of the spheres of activity' between genders, so that men would take more responsibility within the home, while women could be more active outside. The father's increased participation in birth and child care (which always existed in the 'pre-modern' world, according to some authors) was promoted. However, later it was emphasized by some authors that there are some internal satisfactions which a woman can receive from being a full-time mother for a while if she chooses to do so and if mothering becomes less intense than it is unnecessarily made now.

⁵⁸. See his *The Family in Father-Right and Mother-Right, The Complex of Mother-Right*, in Lee & Stewart, 1976.

Abortion, as one of the contemporary reproductive options, which is no less normative and taken-for-granted in Russia than the conventional family with a small number of children, gave rise to a huge discussion in the West. Feminists as a whole struggle for abortion rights 'on demand' (Petchesky 1986, McKegan 1992, Weddington 1992, Baehr 1990, Merton 1981, Staggenborg 1991, Kamm 1992, Dworkin A., 1983, Dworkin R. 1993, Field 1994) for all women. Usually the feminists suppose that women would behave responsibly and would not have an abortion every three months just due to carelessness or caprice. The Catholic church and the other 'pro-lifers', on the other hand, oppose abortion unconditionally as murder of the foetus, which is considered a person: see Barry (1992), Bynnes (1992), Heaney (1992), May (1992), see also Beckwith (1994). Pro-choice ideologists do not consider the foetus a person, or it becomes a person for them just at some moment in its development, usually in the third trimester of pregnancy. In between these two extreme positions there is a lot of more moderate ones, including 'pro-life' or at least moderate feminists, such as Luker (1984), Porter (1994), Ginsburg (1989), who often oppose pre-natal selective femicide (Hoskins 1984) or selective abortion of disabled foetuses which would mean an abuse of disabled people's rights (Saxtons (1984)); and 'pro-choice' church women, who allow abortion in case of rape or incest or severely deformed foetuses who would be unable to survive anyway (Tickle 1990). According to investigations, the majority of American people tend to be in the ranks of these 'moderate' people, as they oppose abortion on demand as opening a way to 'female irresponsibility' but consider several cases when abortion is unavoidably necessary (pregnancy resulting from rape, handicapped child, threat to a mother's life), and some other cases when it should be possible (economic reasons, single pregnancy). Nonetheless, it is precisely the extreme feminist position which coincided with the actual practice in the former USSR. Now this practice has changed in Russia in a sense that abortion is often not free of charge and therefore difficult to obtain for poor women who also do not have the means to bring a child up. An additional important issue of who actually controls abortion, women themselves (Baehr 1990), or their male partners (Rosen & Benson, 1982; Kauffman, 1984; Dworkin A., 1983), or the state and its institutions (Kaufman, 1984), arises within the abortion discussion.

Child abandonment, in my view, is most interestingly viewed in contemporary sociobiological theories as a form of selective infanticide of the offspring by parents who choose to bring their other children up. According to the theorists, this pattern of behaviour exists everywhere in nature, being moderated in humans by 'civilization', which transforms it from direct infanticide, which now 'legally' exists only in some Amazonian tribes (while

illegally it still happens throughout the whole World, for example, female infanticide was widespread in China at the height of the one-child policy), into the milder forms of 'parental neglect', or 'diminished investment in the upbringing of some particular child', according to Hrdy (1994). In the primates, a female herself, or some related or (most often) unrelated male would kill the unwanted offspring. This also seems to have been the custom in the beginning of human history. Later, other less harsh ways of disposing of unnecessary offspring developed. Hrdy (1994) mentions several of them, such as abandonment, fostering out, wet-nursing, etc. Which means would be chosen in a particular case would depend on the customs of that particular culture and time, and on the possibilities open to the unwilling mother. However, there is a continuum of parental behaviour which gradually changes from the extremity of infanticide, to the other extremity of self-sacrifice for the sake of the offspring, through all the other milder behavioural forms. Any or all of this can happen in the life of one and the same person at different life stages depending on the conditions of a particular pregnancy and birth: availability of food, of male support, other meaningful activities in which the female can meanwhile engage. There seem to be differences in men's and women's behaviour in this respect: while the latter are more likely to dispose of their first children, born to them while they are still young, the former tend to keep the first child or children and then do not need any subsequent offspring (Hrdy (1994) gives examples from Italian medieval city life). The health of a particular child is also important. Hrdy tells the story of Taleiran, famous French XIX century politician, which story, she thinks, was fairly typical for that epoch. He was given to a wet-nurse at birth and forgotten about, but when his older brother died, he was reclaimed, since the family now needed him as its heir. However, while in the wet-nurse's home, he had experienced a leg injury which was poorly treated and crippled him for the rest of his life. He had been neglected by the wet-nurse to such an extent because his parents did not pay his upkeep. Because he was disabled, when his mother bore another son, a family council decided that this new-born would be made the official heir as he could better represent the family interests than the disabled child. The latter, it was decided, would make his career in the Church.

Adoption in the Western world is now extremely difficult, since with reliable birth control and legitimate abortion fewer really unwanted babies are born (Howe, 1998; Triseliotis, 1997). As for the children of single mothers, with new welfare options and a more tolerant social climate, single women now tend to keep their babies. The only ways which are now open to would-be-adopters are: a long wait for a scarce white baby with the prospect of probably never being able to acquire one; adoption of an older child, maybe with some health problems, and/or a child of another race whose parents may have been deprived

of their parental rights by a court order, or who may be uncontrollable him or herself; or private/intercountry adoption which usually means interracial adoption as well. In addition, it costs a lot (Howe 1998, Marcenko & Spencer 1995, Triseliotis 1997, Walby 1990, Humphrey 1993). *Surrogacy* contracts are another alternative, they are close to adoption in their meaning, especially when a woman agrees to get pregnant with the sperm of the male partner in the couple she has the contract with but her own egg, rather than the egg of the female partner of that couple (Ince 1984). However, this is also costly.

All the private alternatives evoke a negative attitude in adoption professionals. Adoption in Western countries is now meant to resolve the welfare problems of the child, and not of the infertile couple. In fact, infertile spouses are considered not to be the best candidates for adoption because they have too many 'unresolved psychological problems' of their own. Paradoxically, since the most important problem, from the point of view of the adoption professionals, is how to place older 'special needs' children, people who agree to adopt them are even given some special adoption allowance. For this category of children, especially teenagers, even though the specialists admit that one needs special skills in order to be able to deal with such children, virtually anyone can be considered as an adoptive parent, even gays and lesbians, either single or in couples, who usually meet many constraints on the way to adoption (Triseliotis 1997). Nevertheless, most people, when they want children, actually want babies or at least toddlers, and therefore they prefer to try and adopt inter-country if they have even a small possibility of success, or to use reproductive technologies.

In the past, adoption was meant to take place primarily in the interests of the adoptive parents, and all single mothers were pushed to give their babies up for adoption (Triseliotis, 1997; Walby 1990; Howe 1998; Howe & Sawbridge 1992). Now many of these formerly relinquishing mothers very much regret having done so, and struggle to gain access to the birth records in order to find their children. Concern with the relinquishing mothers' grief is now very widespread among adoption professionals, these mothers are given special treatment, and open adoption is recommended, so that the birth parents can have access to their natural children (Franks 1998, Howe & Sawbridge 1992, Mander 1995). On the other hand, this means yet another restriction of the adoptive parents' rights. However, not all relinquishing mothers later desperately search for their 'lost' babies. In the UK, only a small proportion of those half a million women who have given up their children in the period after the Second World War have engaged in this activity. This reminds us of Hrdy's (1994) view of infant abandonment as a softened variant of the disposal of an unwanted baby. There always were unwanted pregnancies throughout human history, and still now there are

some really unwanted babies whose mothers prefer to forget about them. Obviously this is now less widespread due to greater access to abortion and birth control.

To summarize, it seems that adoption now practically does not serve the interests of one special group of potential adopters, the group which traditionally constituted the majority: the infertile couples. Therefore, the constantly increasing demand for *reproductive technologies* should surprise no one. Once a person has a desire for a child, it can be such a strong need that it can only be compared to hunger, whatever those who do not experience such a desire think.

Reproductive technologies, however, do not represent an easy alternative. Feminist critics point to many problems associated with them. Technologies are seen as dangerous and alienating women from their own wombs, instead of giving them the means to control their bodies. In reality, control has passed to the medical profession which is seen as inhuman and oppressive, like all institutions. Meanwhile, women became mere 'egg snatchers' and 'vessels' for reproduction, their own bodies being carelessly harmed in the course of so called 'treatment' (Arditti, Klein & Minden, 1984; Ince, 1984; Corea, 1984; Klein, 1989; Katz Rotmann, 1984; Murphy, 1984; Hanmer, 1984; Oakley, 1984; Stanworth, 1987; Rowland, 1993). Nevertheless, some feminist writers continue to support (or, at least, do not reject) a pro-technology position for various reasons. The first argument is associated with Firestone's idea that, since traditional motherhood is biologically oppressing for women, it needs to be substituted by out-of-womb reproductive options, or ectogenesis (Breeze, 1984; Thomasson, 1995). The second argument comes from feminists who are themselves infertile and want a child (Doyal, 1987; Lasker & Borg, 1987; Harris, 1994; Pfeffer, 1993, gives an especially exhaustive and convincing account of all the pros and cons of technologies from women's point of view). However, their own infertility was not the reason for the pro-technology position of all feminists (see Klein, 1989). On the other hand, many anti-technology feminists advise infertile women to see such an 'unreasonable' individual desire for children as socially constructed and not essential to the interests of women as a group (Rowland, 1993; Petchesky, 1986). The third argument in favour of technologies concerns the fact that it gives new reproductive possibilities of self-insemination to lesbians (Hornstein 1984, Lewin 1994, Saffron 1994), although this has been made more complicated by recent pro-family laws in many countries which require mothers, if they apply for welfare, to name the father who would then have to provide child support. Sperm donors in the official clinics are exempted from this, but official clinics tend to refuse their services to women who are not in a long-term heterosexual partnership (according to Saffron, 1994), so lesbians most often use a friendship network to obtain

sperm (Saffron 1994). Some feminists (Ritchie, 1984; Pfeffer, 1993) even see the possibility of taking control of reproductive technologies and using them for women's sake as a reflection of the classical feminist position on abortion (Petchesky, 1986; Baehr, 1990; Field, 1994; Kauffman in 1984 actually wrote about the realities of institutional patriarchal control over abortion) and birth (Rich, 1976; Oakley, 1984, 1986, 1990, 1992; Romalis, 1993; Hubbard, 1984; Jowitt, 1993; see also in Cosslett, 1994).

The position of the family theorists concerning the reproductive technologies issue is usually more moderate, since they look at reproductive technologies from the point of view of family relationships or new forms of kinship (Walby, 1990, Ulanovsky, 1995, Stacey, 1992, Edwards et al. 1993, Franklin, 1997; Achilles 1993, Almond, 1995, Cole, 1995). Of course there are purely ethical issues to be raised (see in Boyd, Shotter & Callagan, 1986), such as the alienation of reproduction from sexuality, the moral side of using donor insemination, implied secrecy about children's origins, bodily harm to women who go through technologies, etc.. However, all these issues are actually not specifically limited to technologies alone, but concern other aspects and varieties of more traditional reproduction as well.

We should not forget that the technologies are first of all meant to help infertile people to have children. As an infertile woman who was desperate to have a child, I would argue that this is their human right, albeit difficult to actualize in this case. If the technologies can help, this already gives them a huge moral credit. However, they often fail and are very costly, so not everyone can afford them, and even those who can do not necessarily succeed in having a child. Yes, there also is possible harm to the woman's health, but hormonal contraception can bring about the same kind of harm as well. The actual treatment of infertility is difficult to obtain and is even less successful than technologies which do not treat infertility but go round it or deceive it (Pfeffer, 1993). It is interesting to mention in this respect one of the variants of a myth stating that female sexuality contradicts motherhood. In relation to infertility, this myth asserts that it is widely or even exclusively caused by sexually transmitted diseases due to 'irresponsible' sexual behaviour or even prostitution (for example, Waters 1992, Bernstein 1995). This, perhaps, is associated with the social stigma inherent in the condition of infertility. In reality all the various health problems beginning with appendectomy and ending with cancer, which have no connection to sexual behaviour, or 'misbehaviour', of a person, can cause this person's 'barren' state.

Male infertility is on the rise, but treatment for it is rarely provided and the means of this treatment are undeveloped (Pfeffer 1993): infertility is the woman's problem, so it is a

fertile woman who is being treated for the 'male factor infertility'! Many other reproductive hazards, which can eventually also lead to actual involuntary childlessness, such as repeated miscarriages, stillbirths, etc., only receive attention from nurses (Hense, 1994, Brady-Fryer 1994, Diachuk 1994, McGeary 1994, Moulder 1990), and none from social thinkers.

One other reason for the stigma associated with infertility is that it is a biologically 'defective' state, and therefore people who suffer from it can be considered 'inadequate' by others. This reason for stigmatization connects the discourse on infertility with the discourse on *disabled parenthood*. Fortunately, disabled people are not forbidden to bear children, but instead of being helped on this way, which is actually more difficult for them than for the able-bodied, they meet with many constraints and hostility on the part of the doctors who are supposed to help them, their own relatives, and society as a whole. The best option for disabled parents, according to many authors, is to organize self-help groups to help each other (Campion, 1990, Finger, 1984; Saxton, 1984; Wates, 1997).

As was noted above, *voluntary childlessness* in women is often found by researchers to be associated with well-developed heterosexual activity, contrary to what some Freudians assert. It is also found to be linked to atheism (feeling that everything that exists is here and now) (Veevers, 1980; Campbell, 1985). Unresolved problems of pre-Oedipal maternal identification actually lead to an ambivalent position about childbearing, while a bad attitude on the part of a woman's own mother to men paradoxically leads to rejection of childbearing completely, but not at all to rejection of heterosexual sexuality (Wilk, 1986). Voluntary childlessness also means preference for a freer and more pleasant childless style of life. Such people are named *affectionados* by Veevers (1980). Sometimes this preferred style of life can mean a career or some other more or less meaningful pursuit, but quite often it simply presupposes the traditional housewife's existence, though in this case in its 'nicer', not overworked, form. For some childfree people, an additional strong argument against having children comes from the disgust they feel towards children (Veevers (1980) called such people *rejectors*). In this case usually the decision to have no children is stronger and articulated earlier. Compared with the general population, a slightly higher proportion of the voluntarily childless are the only children of their own parents, and come from difficult family backgrounds⁵⁹ (Veevers, 1980; Campbell, 1985). However, researchers have usually come to the conclusion that the actual childhood profiles of the voluntarily childless are not significantly different from those of the general population.

⁵⁹ but almost every family background can be considered abnormal from some point of view, as it is possible to see from the above account of Freudian theory.

An interesting issue of *ambivalence* about whether or not to have children arises in this respect. Such ambivalence can exist within a woman herself and/or between spouses/partners. It appears that in the present time of reasonably reliable contraception and influential anti-natalist ideology⁶⁰, doubt concerning reproductive issues tends to be resolved in favour of childlessness. In a 'natural' situation pregnancy and birth are often not planned for, or consciously desired, but rather gradually accepted post-facto (Burghes, 1993; Veevers, 1985), although very often with joy, sometimes with enormous joy (Burghes & Brown, 1995; Radionova, 1996). If all pregnancies are to be planned, as some suggest (Day, 1992; Calne, 1994; see also Burgess, 1997 about male contraceptive pills which would make life much more complicated for those women who want to become single-mothers-by-choice (Renvoize, 1985), or 'by default' (Davies L. & Rains, 1995)), then it is quite likely that a huge number of 'ambivalent' (Wilk 1986) people would never experience the childbearing which would bring huge joy to a significant number of them.

It would seem that the desire to remain childless can be explained within the limits of biological or ethiological theory as well. Parmigliani, Hrdy and other contributors to the collection, edited by Parmigliani (1994), do not attempt to do so; however, other authors do. Lev Gumilev in his theory of 'passionarnost' of nations asserts that when this biological energy in people constituting a nation becomes exhausted, they simply naturally want to die as a national body and do not reproduce themselves (quoted in Sargeant, 1996; see also Gumilev 1987, 1994, 1998). Similar ideas on 'race suicide' were expressed in the 1940s in England by McCleary, 1945 (quoted in Oakley, 1984).

Discourse on *single mothers* is now complicated and influential in the West. Feminists state that a new phenomenon has arisen, that of single-mothers-by-choice, of women who intentionally give birth to children without relying on male support, in order to evade patriarchal norms, and also because they do not see any advantage for themselves and their children from living with men (Renvoize 1985). However, other authors argue with this view, stressing that in reality even those women who undertake single motherhood consciously and responsibly often accepted and enjoyed the pregnancy and the child post-hoc rather than intentionally trying for it. Nevertheless, perhaps both varieties of single mother exist, as well as a third one: the 'unwed mothers', women who absolutely do not enjoy their unexpected motherhood, but just lack control over their lives and therefore become single mothers (Lamb, 1982).

⁶⁰ and in this better educated and rational strata of society where the voluntarily childless more often belong (Campbell 1985, Veevers 1980) the influence of both these factors is stronger.

This last category may constitute the majority, or at least they are the most visible because of their poverty and reliance on welfare. Therefore one of the predominant discourses on single motherhood concerns poverty (Kissman & Allen 1993, Rodgers 1990, Hardey & Crow, 1991, Polakow 1993, Burghes 1993, McDermot & Garnham 1998). These single mothers also tend to be young, often teenage, and social policy now aims to eliminate teenage parenthood since it closes other life opportunities for young women. However, some authors think that to forbid teenage motherhood completely, or to surround it with punitive practices, would constitute a violation of teenagers' reproductive rights (Speak et al., 1995, Trawick, 1984, Burghes & Brown, 1995, Coyne 1983).

The phenomenon of single motherhood '*by choice*', discussed above, has initiated a discourse on fatherlessness. Some authors consider this an advantage (McLanahan 1994, Bortolaia Silva 1996, Chant 1997, Renvoize 1985), others a disadvantage for the children. Before the 1960-s it was overwhelmingly conceptualized as a disadvantage, and therefore single mothers, especially if white, were pushed towards relinquishment of their babies for adoption (Kunzel 1993, Solinger 1992) and not entitled to welfare (Gordon 1994). The fatherlessness discussion also led to the formation of the discourse on fathers' rights (Bell, McKee & Priestley, 1983; Rosen & Benson, 1982; Burgess & Ruxton, 1996; Burgess, 1997; French, 1995; Hood, 1993; Hudson & Jacot, 1991; Huinink, 1995; Lloyd, 1995; Moss, 1995; Kiernan & Estaugh 1993).

Another related issue in the domain of single motherhood is the topic of *unregistered cohabitation*. This is on the rise in Europe, so that many children who are officially 'illegitimate' in reality have two parents. It is seen as a controversial phenomenon, which in some cases results from a free choice of free minds, and in many others is the unwelcome consequence of poverty (Kiernan & Estaugh 1993).

Finally, *lesbian motherhood* should be considered here as well, since, though it is not necessarily single, it is always independent from men. Lesbian motherhood can be realized in several different ways, all of which are problematic. The first way is when a woman comes out as a lesbian after she was in a heterosexual marriage or relationship where she had children (Fox & Fumia, 1993; Griffin & Mulholland, 1997; Ali, 1996). This can make her vulnerable to child custody issues since, despite the greater flexibility of behaviours generally permitted in the postmodern era, lesbians are still often considered inappropriate mothers (Lewin 1994; Griffin & Mulholland, 1997; Ali, 1996). The second way is when she

becomes heterosexual and a mother after being a lesbian⁶¹, the desire to have children even being one of the motivations for heterosexuality. Third, she might always be bisexual and sleep with men from time to time, which can put her at odds with both the 'straight' and lesbian communities, but she can try to insist on being accepted as such (Lewin 1994; Griffin & Mulholland, 1997; Ali, 1996). The fourth option is either intentionally having sex with some man with an agreement that he helps her to get pregnant, or (and this seems to be actually more widespread now) using artificial insemination in private, usually with some gay man, either anonymously with the help of friends, or in agreement on further co-parenting with the biological father (Hornstein, 1984; Saffron, 1994; Griffin & Mulholland, 1997; Ali, 1996). However, this last option is made more difficult in England now as the recent (1994) Child Welfare Act requires that a mother names the child's father so that child support can be taken from him (Burguess 1997); failure to do so results in her state benefit being twenty per cent less. The fifth and final option is adoption. In the contemporary situation it tends to be inter-country adoption, as such 'inappropriate' parents as lesbians would not usually be considered for scarce white babies intra-country.

As Lewin (1994) shows (and others agree, see Griffin & Mulholland, 1997; Ali, 1996), motherhood as such makes lesbians alien to both the straight and lesbian communities, since the majority of both communities' members consider lesbianism and motherhood to be incompatible. On the other hand, and for this very reason, lesbian motherhood represents a possibility to challenge society in one additional way. However, motherhood often becomes the prevailing identity of lesbians who opt for it, and consequently makes them more similar to heterosexual mothers than to childless lesbians. Nevertheless, lesbian mothers perceive their motherhood as an option which allows them to cross or even to destroy boundaries between identities which are socially considered to be incompatible, and therefore gives them an additional gratification. Besides, many lesbian mothers tend to form groups so that both they and their children would be able to socialize with similar people and to help each other (Saffron 1994).

Discourse on large families as such is practically non-existent in the Western literature. Just one study, conducted back in 1969, considers large families in Britain in detail (Land 1969). However, they are sometimes mentioned in relation to other topics. In opposition to Malthusian suggestions, the poorest, and not the 'best', are now inadvertently being encouraged to reproduce in contemporary Western welfare states. Many authors agree that the poor often do have more children since they receive welfare for them, and because

⁶¹ see the paper by Pauline L. Bart (Wilkinson & Kitzinger C., 1993).

they often cannot achieve a better position in life or do not believe that they can. They tend to have more children than others even when they are encouraged to reduce their fertility by various means. The research shows that this is perhaps due to the fact that they often do not believe in their ability and/or their right to exert real control over their lives (Land, 1969; Oakley, 1992), including birth control (which they often anyway lack access to). In this respect, there are few or no changes since the beginning of this century when this lack of control represented the main feature of the reality of the majority of working class families, according to Margaret Llewellynn Davies (in *Maternity. Letters from Working-Women*, [1915], 1978).

However, it would be wrong to think that this is the only reason for the existence of large families today. Often the parents opt for this and have many children intentionally, or accept them with joy (Land, 1969; Oakley 1992). There are additional, religious reasons for the existence of large families. For example, as we noted earlier, the Catholic Church still does not allow most means of birth control and opposes abortion.

In any case, really large families have now become such a rarity that in many countries (including Russia) three to four children per family seems to be many. However, in such and even in slightly larger families birth control is actually used at some points, it does not already represent an absolutely 'natural' fertility, but increasingly a calculated, chosen one (Cartwright, 1976; Fox, 1982; Fox, Fox & Frohardt-Lane, 1982; Beckman, 1982; Herceg-Baron, 1982; McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1982; Rosen & Benson, 1982; Frank & Scanzoni, 1982; Campbell, Townes & Roy Beach, 1982). At any rate, according to some thinkers (Hartmann, 1995; see also Oakley, 1992), it should be considered one of the important human rights to have as many children as one needs or wants to. Others (Petchesky 1986, Day 1992) disagree with this position and see it as irresponsible from the ecological point of view.

Conclusion.

The intention in my research is to investigate all the above described diversity of women's positions in the area of motherhood, which are supposedly made 'legitimate' by the contemporary 'post-modern' condition. As for the concepts of motherhood and mothering as such, which constituted the main body of this chapter, they are relevant for individual reproductive 'decision-making' and acquiring one's actual position in the field in the first place. I do not suppose that the Russian women of my generation whose positions I will be investigating would construct their views of motherhood only on the basis of the theories outlined above, but I also would not eliminate the possibility that all or some of these ideas

could have had an influence on them. No country can be really absolutely closed culturally, however hard it tries, especially in the contemporary world. On the other hand, in the area of our interest, as in any other, there always exist (and these definitely do exist in the case of Russia) some culturally specific representations and theories. The public, or official, views and ideas on motherhood in Russian culture were investigated in the previous chapter; private 'everyday' theorising on motherhood of women themselves will constitute the subject of Part II.

Chapter 3.

Simply speaking to women: how all this was done.

The Methodology of the Research Project.

1. Introduction: why qualitative?

I decided to undertake qualitative research on attitudes of Russian women to motherhood because all my sympathies lie with qualitative, rather than quantitative research, and despite (or, maybe, because of) the fact that it is still not very welcome in Russia, especially by the older generation of sociologists. As Hilary Pilkington (1996:8) correctly notes,

Traditionally Soviet sociology has been heavily quantitative, reflecting the desire to show uniformity, conformity and objective 'progress' rather than difference, diversity and the individual experience... today the fierce competition for external grants necessary for survival means that many researchers still have little choice about their direction.

However, many sociologists of various ages and experiences in Russia have long felt somewhat dissatisfied with a strictly quantitative direction. They came to the conclusion that sometimes the complicated mathematical apparatus used there becomes a kind of art for art's sake. Some mathematicians prefer to use it just because they love mathematics, and they do not care much about sociological implications which can be drawn from their formal exercises; in other cases, the final interpretation of the quantitative data is very simplistic or even obvious, the conclusions are of the character which could be given not only by a simpler kind of research, but perhaps by common sense knowledge without any additional investigation. Besides the bias which is due to mathematical preference, this probably has something to do with the unavoidably simplistic nature of quantitative empirical data, which must be obtainable in large numbers and in unified form, so that one and the same questions are to be posed in one and the same form to all different people. Moreover, their answers often are to be expressed in numbers suggested to them rather than in words. Obviously the real richness of what they have to say on the subject of investigation is lost during this process. On the other hand, the unquestionable advantage of most quantitative research is that precisely such large numbers of people can be interviewed, since, although qualitative research can also involve large populations, the number of texts thus obtained would make subsequent interpretation and analysis all but impossible, or at least only manageable with the resources of the biggest research

institutions. In addition, qualitative research usually unavoidably involves some kind of quantification, it just is not statistically interpreted and/or is not seen as central.

According to Jennifer Mason (1996), qualitative research is

grounded in a philosophical position which is broadly '*interpretivist*' in the sense that it is concerned with how the social world is interpreted, understood, experienced or produced [italics mine],

and it

aims to produce rounded understandings on the basis of *rich, contextual, and detailed* data [italics mine].

In such a form of research, emphasis is put on 'holistic' forms of analysis and explanation, rather than on examining surface patterns and quantifying trends and correlations.

The academic nature of the research in this case is to be proven by its *systematic* and *rigorous* character, its author must think *strategically*, be *flexible*, and *reflexively* use all the richness of *context* (Mason 1996).

2. Ontological issues of the research.

In qualitative research, social reality is understood in terms of social processes, relations, practices, experiences, and their interpretations.

In my case, the ontological components of the study are the various phenomena connected with motherhood, and women's ideas on it. There are two ontological levels of investigation which I aim to integrate: the individual level of personalities, which are understood here as discursive constructions; and the level of discourses as such which are the products of individuals with all the characteristic peculiarities of their personalities, their motivations and desires, all playing a role in the resulting construction of the discourse.

To specify the ontological components further, the main area of my interest in social reality concerns what is sometimes called '*the childbearing decision*' of women (Rosen & Benson, 1982; Rosen, , 1982; Sweet, 1982; Wilk, 1986; Beckman, 1982; Campbell, Townes, & Roy Beach, 1982; Fox, Fox & Frohardt-Lane, 1982; Fox, 1982; Frank & Scanzoni, 1982; Herceg-Baron, & Furstenberg, 1982; Koo & Suchindran, 1982; McGillicuddy-DeLisi & Sigel, 1982), or how they come to whatever particular views and feelings they hold in the area of childbearing, especially as it concerns them personally - namely, do they have children, and how many; did they/do they want children, and how many; are there any particular factors which would have influenced their views on having children (they would want to be married, have sufficient income, adequate housing, etc.),

and have they actually had children in these conditions, or in spite of the absence of such conditions? One special kind of constraint which particularly interests me in this area concerns biology, or bodily constraints - those of infertility, subfertility and disability. Another special area of constraint lies in sexuality; lesbians encounter additional barriers on their way to having children if they want them. These are not necessarily bodily constraints (many lesbians arrange to have sex with a man in order to have a child; some lesbians, who are presumably bisexual, have heterosexual encounters from time to time anyway (see Ali, 1996, or Griffin & Mulholland, 1997)). They are more often social or psychological constraints, as many members of both hetero- and homosexual communities are still prejudiced against lesbian/gay parenting (see, for example, Ali, 1996, Griffin & Mulholland, 1997).

Nevertheless, whichever the preferred option, my initial hypothesis was that in reality, and in Russian reality especially, whether a woman has a child or not does not necessarily coincide with the *decision* she made, and that she may have made no decision at all. There is in any case the wider context of the life in which individual's child-bearing behaviour takes place, and which influences her views and feelings. This wider context includes things which are usually of immediate concern to a woman who considers having a child, such as her desire or lack of desire to have children, the role of the child's father in the process, her work/career plans and prospects, her age at the time and her life situation; her attitude to children in general and to the biological aspects of having them: pregnancy, birth, and breast-feeding. In complicated cases, there are also health problems, such as infertility and the woman's attitudes to the various ways of dealing with it - reproductive technologies, more traditional treatment, adoption, or acceptance of childlessness. In case of disability, social attitudes to disabled mothers are important, as well as the attitudes of disabled women themselves towards the risks involved in childbearing. There is, in general, the issue of the naturalness/artificiality of childbearing, and the problem concerning the importance or otherwise of genetic links with one's own children. The motivations for having children - maternal and paternal instincts, rational cost-benefit accounting, etc. - are also relevant, as are the issues of responsibility for the well-being of the off-spring, on the one hand, and contraception and abortion (and from some point of view even child abandonment), on the other. The woman's attitudes to/relationships with men throughout her life, and her links with other 'significant others' such as friends, parents, and so on, form part of this wider context. And, finally, there is the overall life 'philosophy' of a woman, her views on how things should be done in general, which influence her life situation. Because of this attention towards the interviewees' general views I am interested, for example, in the political and religious ideas of the people I am

studying, and also in their more general opinions, such as moral and normative views, attitudes towards power, time, and towards life and death. I am interested in their views on mother-child interaction, early education and the mother's role in it, what general image they have of maternity, and what it means to be a mother, personally for each of them. In connection with the last point, I am interested in the literary images of women which the interviewees like or do not like, or even perhaps (if literature proves to be important to them) what images they can or cannot identify with.

The outline of these research topics, which became the basis of the interview plan, of course changed at successive stages of the study. Some proved to be of little significance for women's attitudes in the area of motherhood, or for their lives as a whole. This, for example, was the case with political attitudes. Other topics were added when the women themselves touched on them during the course of the interview. For example, the issue of the preferred sex of the child proved to be important. The actual sequence of the topics varied according to the context of each interview. This leads us to the issue of my epistemological position, or what and how I think I can learn about my ontological components using the methods I considered to be appropriate for these goals.

3. Research epistemology and the characteristic features of the interview method.

I chose 'conversations with a purpose', as qualitative interviews are sometimes called (Burgess, 1984:102), rather than structured interviews, since for epistemological reasons, I believe that the kind of social reality outlined above cannot be addressed otherwise.

According to Mason (1996:38), qualitative interviewing represents 'in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing', and this corresponds to the epistemological position which seems appropriate in the case of studying what is largely the discursive reality of individual experience. According to this position, the most or the only legitimate way to generate data consists of interaction with people, since people themselves are the main source of information concerning their own experiences. I believe that the 'ultimate truth' about people's experience is not fully accessible by any means; all we can have is just their interpretations of this experience, and the best account of this interpretation can be received through the process of qualitative interviewing, which provides large amounts of text, generated in situations of purposeful conversations, within the context of genuine concern for people's lives, for further analysis. If one holds the position that knowledge and evidence, in social science at least, are contextual, situational

and interactional, that calls for use of a distinctive approach to getting what one really wants to know from each interview. That implies interest in the ways in which people work out and articulate their understandings and responses to the questions posed by the researcher, who finds it important to follow the interviewees' specific responses along their own lines, and to develop the issues the interviewees themselves want to discuss during the conversation, even though these issues were not anticipated by the researcher in advance. On the other hand, the '*purposeful*' side of the '*conversation*' means that the interviewer introduces the topics, prepared in advance, into the conversation when they seem relevant, or when it becomes clear that the discussion is in danger of going past them.

All interviews, including structured ones, are actually social interactions, and it is inappropriate to see these interactions as 'bias' on the part of the researcher, and to attempt to eradicate them. As Mason (1996) states,

It is better to try to understand the complexities of the interaction, rather than to pretend that key dimensions can be controlled for.

This position, that interviews as individual accounts are the best available way of trying to find out what is going on inside people's heads, implies a corresponding view concerning what actually constitutes the data sources. Here, the data sources are the people themselves, and their accounts of their experience, the ideas and emotions connected to this experience, and their morals, practices and relationships, since it is believed that the social world actually consists of individual interpretations of it. Contextual richness is essential, since these phenomena cannot be properly understood if cut off from it. If the context is 'circumcised' in one or another way, then an objectification of human experience takes place, and in the best case the separated 'portions' are being 'prepared' from an initial continuity of experience.

The lack of numeric expression of the final analysis, as well as the lack of a mathematical attempt to ensure that the sample is representative, make it rather difficult to generalize from qualitative data. However, there are ways which can make some kind of generalization feasible here. One of these ways lies in the area of sampling.

4. Theoretical sampling and the 'snowball' technique of access.

If the sampling is *theoretical* (a concept taken from the *grounded theory* approach, see Glazer and Strauss, 1967, Strauss, 1987), which means that the theory in construction in the particular research project defines its character, then generalizations on the basis of this theory are possible.

A theoretical sample is designed to encapsulate a relevant range of units in relation to the wider universe, but not to represent this universe directly. Such a sample is usually

created with a strategic purpose in mind, which would mean in my case an attempt to cover all the possible or the main variants of the relationship between women and motherhood.

According to Mason (1996),

in its more general form, theoretical sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to your research questions, your theoretical position and analytical practice, and most importantly the explanation of the account which you are developing;

a theoretical sample is basically

a sample, which is meaningful theoretically, because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test your theory and explanation (ibid.)

Theoretical sampling presupposes the possibility of using the case study method, but all the cases in the research can represent important standpoints within the continuum investigated. My intention was to interview several Russian women, based in Moscow⁶², of the generation born between the years 1960 and 1970 (my own year of birth being in the middle of this period, so that it is basically my own generation, and we share many basic ideas and cultural practices), all of whom occupy different positions in the field of motherhood. One woman has a child and is happy about it; one has a child whom she did not want and is still not glad about this child's existence; one has a child and tries to combine motherhood with a meaningful career, both being equally important to her; one has voluntarily had no children (which will enable me to address the issue of whether voluntary childlessness is necessarily connected with the desire for a career); one has no children and is not sure whether she wants them or not; one has no children due to infertility but wants to have them and is trying to overcome the problem using infertility treatment; another has the same problem but has resolved it by adoption; one has relinquished her new-born baby to the guardianship of the state and possible adoption; one has a child in spite of the 'counter-indication' of disability; one has a child in spite of the 'counter-indication' of being unmarried; one is a lesbian mother; one is a mother of two children (which represents, in my view, the disappearing norm of the previous epoch); and, finally, one is the mother of many children (defined by me as being more than two, which reflects the common view in Russia), which has been far from the norm for a long time already in Russian cities. As a whole, the totality of these standpoints aims at saturation of the entirety of all possible positions Russian women can have in the area of motherhood. Some positions are

⁶² For the reason that these women are based in Moscow, I should not generalize about the whole of Russia, since Moscow is very much culturally specific.

intentionally skipped as they seem to be less problematic, for example women who do not want children and are in positions which do not socially and practically favour motherhood (infertile, lesbian, disabled). However, a woman who is simply single and childless was not considered to be in such an unfavourable position because of the widespread social acceptance of single motherhood in contemporary Russia. This does not mean, by the way, that if a single woman chooses to have a child, she has no problems with the people around her; actually, it seems that for a single woman both choices are problematic now. Equally the seemingly most normative choice of having a wanted child within a stable marriage that has no significant economic problems is also not unproblematic in Russia now, as it is such a rarity. Finally, this sample was open to the influences of the process of finding the appropriate interviewees, so that some unanticipated important positions were sometimes added, and some anticipated positions were sometimes found to be represented by more than one person (the latter situation added a new interesting dimension to the research, as the cases unavoidably differed in many respects, while still being similar in the others). Both of these things happened during my search for interviewees by means of what could be called the 'snowball' technique, when I asked all my acquaintances whether they knew people of the kind I needed, and then asked all the interviewees to whom I already had spoken the same thing. The reader can find the more detailed description of the interviewees and of the ways at which I found them in the **Chapter 1** of the Part II.

While doing the fieldwork, I was also using reproductive technologies myself, trying to resolve my own infertility. Finally I succeeded in getting pregnant. This added an interesting dimension to my interviewing, since, on the one hand, I lived through motherhood while researching it, and was sharing some of the experiences of my interviewees, which eased my communication with them, as I always tried to suggest an open style of conversation, being open myself and presenting my own experience to them. On the other hand, their particular perceptions of myself at the different stages of my motherhood reflected their own attitudes to this. During the first interviews, when I was still childless and married, a single mother said to me

Do not worry, there is no perfection in the world: I have a child, but I do not have a husband, while you have a husband, but you do not have a child.

A career-oriented woman put it another way: 'So, you did not give birth?', implying that it was my choice for the sake of a career. And the mother of four sons just wished me to be successful in my attempts.

Then, when I was already pregnant, I interviewed a voluntarily childless woman and an adoptive infertile mother soon one after another, perhaps with four days interval.

Their reactions to my large stomach were absolutely opposite. They both actually tried to please me, saying nice things; but the first said that my stomach was very small and impossible to notice yet, so that it did not particularly spoil my 'beauty'; and the second said that it was already very big, and very obvious at the first glance.

Finally, when I interviewed a disabled mother, and the relinquishing mothers, I was already the mother of a baby myself, so I could use this experience in conversation practically in the same way as any other mother would, without necessary reference to my previous experience of infertility.

Consequently, as a result of all this, the number of interviews (30 were actually done, but only 18 were actively used) was determined both by considerations of theoretical saturation, so that all the positions outlined above should be represented at least once, and of feasibility, that is, how much of the interview material I would be able to process with no one to help in the period which I had ahead to work on my Ph.D. When I started the text analysis, I realized that I could apply a particular approach which widened my sample by not seeing individual people as sampling units, but rather envisaging the particular experiences they have as such units. These experiences 'cross-cut' through the different cases, even though the main purposes of these cases were initially different. For example, a woman I selected because she was infertile was also trying to become (and she later succeeded in this) a single mother by choice; a woman I selected because she had two children was in the process of divorcing her husband and consequently became a divorced single mother. This happened in all other areas of the research, and therefore some comparison of the experiences was actually possible. As a result I received a much wider totality of quota targets than just one person per each particular experience, while staying within the limits of the feasible sample of 18 interviews.

5. Problems of generalizability, feasibility, and verifiability.

According to Mason (1996:104),

There is little point in inventing a highly sophisticated and detailed set of quotas if you have no practical method of filling these.

Restrictions of space and time result in limits to the number of interviews which it is feasible to analyze. However, verifiability is to be improved by transcribing interviews in full, as I already mentioned, and carefully analyzing them. In the same way as all other methods, these latter provide only a limited degree of verifiability; nevertheless, this seems to be an unavoidable feature of any research in the social sciences. This does not seem particularly problematic if one accepts an interpretivist paradigm. The extent to which, in drawing my conclusions, I can make claims applied to general populations, as well as

theoretical claims, consequently relies on the above discussed features of my sample, which is theoretical, strategic, and aimed at saturation.

In addition, examining the individual cases in detail demonstrates that (according to Mason (1996)) it is at least possible for such processes to happen in a specified way. Having an explanation of how and why it happened in this particular case provides us with lessons for other cases.

The rigorous and detailed analysis of the data strengthens claims for the wider resonance or *generalizability* (possibility to generalize) as well. On the basis of this analysis, strategic comparisons can be made, which enable one to test and develop theoretical and explanatory propositions, since sampling units of a particular kind were included in the study. It can be considered that these units express the key dimensions of the subject area of my research, or interesting possibilities to 'test out' in some way. Another option to improve the generalizability of qualitative research consists in testing the developing explanations by trying out alternative explanations and looking for negative instances, those which do not support my views. This definitely happened in the area of voluntary childlessness in my research, as my initial hypotheses (that the reasons for childlessness lie in the domain of choice between motherhood and career) were proven to be of not much significance, while other, unanticipated reasons, which are connected to bodily issues and to materialist values, were found to influence people's attitudes much more. Another unanticipated finding was the fact that mothers of large families, despite deriving much enjoyment from their families, still want some place for themselves in the situation, first of all, in the form of wanting to work outside of the home. This desire was satisfied in two of the three large family cases in the study.

Use of aggregation, numbers and counting in a meaningful fashion can help to improve the chances for generalizability as well. For example, if the majority of the selected people had some particular form of experience (for example, almost all of the selected women, whatever their attitude to motherhood as a whole and to their own motherhood in particular, had a very bad experience of birth in Soviet style maternity hospitals, and with the medical establishment in a wider sense), it means something especially if they were selected on the assumption of being particularly unlikely to have had this form of experience which would unite them.

On the basis of studying other qualitative research on maternity carried out elsewhere (Oakley, 1986, 1992; Mander, 1995; Field & Marck, 1994, Coyne 1983; Land 1969, etc.) it is possible to make some feasible cross-cultural comparisons. In my view, the investigation of the Russian case is, at the end of the day, just a case study in a world perspective on motherhood.

6. Analysis of the texts of the interviews: what method to choose?

My intention was to read the interviews in the interpretative sense, trying to understand what it is possible to infer from them about something outside of the interview interaction itself. Transcribing in full and following detailed text analysis within context were defined in advance as features of the method of analysis I would use; but the question remained as to what method of text analysis, more precisely, I would apply to my transcripts. Therefore I undertook some small study of the options available; the following represents a brief overview of my findings.

As Klaus Krippendorff (1980:120) puts it, 'computer and scientific analysts are alike in imposing their own structure on the input text', while Michael Stubbs (1983:175) thinks that

We can never learn everything about anything, but it is possible to study with some precision the ambiguity and indirectness which are central to social interaction of any significance.

These two quotations, in my view, represent the two main directions in the area of the analysis of the texts: the first is 'content' analysis (or, the investigation of the texts with an emphasis on 'what' they are about); the second is 'formal' analysis (or, the investigation with an emphasis on 'how' a text is constructed, or organized). There are many old and recent traditions of use of both approaches from the different disciplinary and conceptual positions. The specific forms of analysis of text are elaborated and exist in history, sociology, linguistics, literary critique, mythology, anthropology, psychology and psychiatry, philosophy, women's studies, life history and auto/biography, political science and economics. They all differ in the types of analyses used (content-analysis, structural analysis, specific forms of textural analysis). Variants of 'structural' analysis can be very different; some of them are aimed at better understanding of the content through definition and transformation of the text's structural organization; others are concerned with understanding the texts' organization itself. The types of analysis also vary in the definition of the data considered appropriate. Such data can consist of written texts (different in theme and, consequently, in organization), oral conversations, oral narratives (for example, oral folklore, or autobiographical narrative). The different schools have various representations of what state of data can be considered 'material' ready for analysis: units, extracted from the primary, 'raw', text by means of some transformation (for example, codification according to the pre-elaborated coding list, omitting all the pieces of text which are in no relation to the pre-elaborated codes), or this raw, unmodified, text itself. Structural analysis differs from the content analysis in that it places its emphasis on the mutual relations between 'units', which

nevertheless are first obtained through 'normalization', or formal transformation, of the raw text. So, surprisingly, the whole approach can be understood as an attempt to create a textual analogue of Frankenstein's monster: first, one 'cuts' a living text, then one tries to make it seem 'like' something whole and alive by constructing this whole according to one's representations of what the whole is in 'its essence'. To summarize, it seems that content analysis and some types of structural analyses lose that part of *content* embodied in the texture, or the specific individual text organization. Yet their proclaimed goal is to study precisely the pre-defined 'main essence' of the texts, without paying too much attention to the varieties of content, embodied in the details of the texture.

Textural types of analysis aim at understanding the text in itself, without cutting it, exactly in the form in which something was said. They see the most important and usually lost features in the 'how'. Some of them focus on the detailed and concrete content, like studies of imagery in literature. Others study the *formal organization* of the text 'in and for itself', as does conversational analysis.

Types of analysis also differ in the scale of examination and specific nature of the details considered.

In my own opinion and for my own goals (and it seems to me that every kind of analysis is supposed to be purposeful, so almost everything in the result as well as in the method is 'subjugated' to the goal of the author), in every type of analysis there is something interesting or useful. The types of analysis also differ in interpretations and explanations which they draw from the data. This depends on the discipline concerned and on the basic philosophical concepts used. It seemed to me during the course of my study of the literature that no one avoids giving one or another *external* interpretation of the texts themselves, except, perhaps, linguistic discourse analysts, but they consider their method (as do the mathematicians who often have the same claim) to be an *apparatus* for other disciplines.

Speaking about approaches to the analysis of the texts, it seems impossible to avoid at least a brief mention of the philosophical perspective of *hermeneutics*, especially since it significantly influenced my own position.

Some authors see a reaction against positivism in the 'linguistic' philosophy presented in the work of Wittgenstein and Peter Winch⁶³. One of the main points of their position is that the concepts of social science are linked to those of everyday language more closely than positivists would consider. There is no clear break between scientific and everyday concepts. Such an approach allows the pre-interpretation of the world by the objects of inquiry

⁶³ see, for example, William Outhwaite, *Concept Formation in Social Science*, Routledge, Boston, 1983, p.10-11.

themselves. Within this paradigm a single human action or a typical pattern of such actions are considered as a preferable object of knowledge, for the reason that only such a single pattern can be *phenomenologically* 'understood'. The 'hermeneutic' account of explanation is intimately related to *description*. For the authors of this perspective, an explanation cannot be provided by pure logic or by tests of statistical significance, in the way which seems appropriate to positivists and realists. The criteria for the adequacy of interpretations are to be found in the *full participation of the researcher in the meaningful reality of the empirical subject or his/her culture*. There the philosophers meet a classical problem which Gadamer calls a '*melting of horizons*', a process of mediation between our own interpretation and those of the others, who may include the people being interpreted.

The above brief analysis of the approaches to analysis of the texts seems to be sufficient for my goals in the present thesis. However, the informed choice of the option for my own work in analyzing the interviews for this research only became possible after a more detailed study of various theoretical and methodological perspectives. I will only note here that the *feminist approach*, *life history* and *auto-biographical* perspectives, and the *discourse analysis* of the texts influenced my own final position more than the other options (*content* and *structural analyses*, *conversational analysis*). The reader can find a more detailed exposition of the reasons for, and character of, this influence below.

Actually, the choice of method for my own research seemed not to be made easier, but more complicated after this investigation of various options. However, some things were made clearer. First, my position was not realist. Even positivism was closer to me than realism, because of the lesser claim it has on understanding what lies *behind* occurrences. This meant that content analysis and structural analysis were not appropriate for me. On the other hand, I felt I had more concern for the *content* of conversation than was the case with conversational analysts. I equally felt that an important part of the content was embodied in the exact verbalization, that for my goals it would be wrong to try to extract some 'main part' of the content at the cost of the 'excision of texture'. Consequently, *discourse analysis* seemed to have basic assumptions (see in Appendix II) which were the closest to my own position, at least to the best of my contemporary knowledge. Some perspectives within the *feminist account* were, probably, even closer, for different reasons: first, because of their specific form of articulation of the role of personal experience and emotions in the researcher's work; I do agree that it is impossible to construct any theory separate from one's personal habits, superstitions, emotions, the events of one's past life and the features of one's contemporary situation. The idea that the researcher and the text could have an equally 'active' role within

analysis⁶⁴, or, rather, 'reading', and that the whole process of this reading is transformed in a play of interactions between the texts and the interpreter whereby these interactions themselves form another active part in this play, seemed to me to be a very attractive picture. For me, it is even *personally* interesting to look at the *personal* side of events, whatever the public or the private ones.

This led me to an acceptance of some important properties of the *auto-biographical* approach. As a result of the complicated interactions of different approaches within my mind, the following formula emerged: I would aim to examine people as texts, and texts as people. So, the texts of the interviews themselves would play an active role in my reading, I would try to consider them as alive and equal subjects. On the other hand, I intended to stay equal as well, neither 'more equal', nor 'less equal'. I did not want to become 'dead' as an author, simply because it was not appropriate for my active nature. Consequently, I would still have some right to my own understanding of the texts, as one of the participants in the 'conversation'. However, I was not sure that for my goals it would be suitable to try to distinguish between inhalations and exhalations, as well as to note every occasion on which the participants coughed. My attention would be focused mainly on the verbal aspects of communication, yet I intended to recover at least this verbal part in precise detail. I understand that non-verbal aspects of communication can contain a significant part of the content which is meaningful for the goals of understanding the *organization* of conversation. Nonetheless, my concern would rather be with *content*, while the *organization* of my data seemed to a large extent *given*: the interviews were *contrived* conversations, although there, as everywhere, an important naturally occurring part remained. Although some authors discussing conversational analysis think that such data still are appropriate for this method⁶⁵, the broad consensus is that they are not. Finally, it seemed better to choose the most natural option, as the tradition of *qualitative* research actually presupposed a particular form of *qualitative* analysis of the texts, which, on the one hand, took all the above exposed forms into account, and on the other, skipped most of the complexities and details which seemed not to be appropriate for analysis which actually aimed just to be *an* interpretation of the *content*.

⁶⁴ this approach was presented in Stanley, 1985.

⁶⁵ "Conversations occasioned by the researcher are hardly less natural than those freely entered into". James A. Anderson ed., *Communication Yearbook*, vol. 11 1988, *On conversation: The Conversation Analysis Perspective*, Don H. Zimmerman, p. 429.

7. The chosen option: a combination of cross-sectional and non-cross-sectional qualitative analyses.

There are two forms of qualitative analysis aimed at the interpretative reading of texts. The first of these is the *cross-sectional* analysis, or *categorical indexing*. This is based on the creation of a complicated set of levels of categorization, which is done on the basis of first indexing and retrieving text, or 'slicing' the data set, possibly several times in different ways for different purposes (Mason 1996).

Cross-sectional analysis helps to create a systematic overview of the data, to get a clear idea of its coverage and scope as a result. As Mason wrote:

Engaging in some kind of indexing process - which usually involves amongst other things the systematic and routine scrutiny of one's data - can help the researchers to distance themselves from the immediacy of the initially striking or memorable elements, and therefore to gain a more measured view of the whole (Mason, 1996:113).

It also helps the researcher to locate and retrieve issues, topics, information, and/or examples which do not appear in an orderly or sequential, or simply easily visible manner in the data. But it is just the beginning of a process of creating interpretative or analytical categories and themes. Indexing categories should meet several requirements: they must really match the theme; 'slices' should not seem to be variables to the researcher, they are just some unprocessed resources for a variety of further uses, loose and flexible groupings primarily developed as a retrieval mechanism, but not at all end products in themselves. It is important not to try to index what cannot be categorized cross-sectionally (too complex, idiosyncratic, or too big pieces of data cannot), and not to forget the context of interaction in which each particular data came to life. Indexing categories are to be produced through interpreting what some particular piece of the text might mean until the point of saturation comes, when one sees that there are already no more categories needed for new data, and everything can be explained by the already existing ones. Then the initial categories thus acquired can be indexed or grouped several times. This actually often becomes not a mere coding, but the beginning of analysis as such. Then the author ought to think what is more and what is less important for his or her goals in the totality of categories, and make a selective coding only of what is really important in the texts.

Cross-sectional coding suggests an *analytical logic* of cross-sectional comparison, when slices from the different places are directly compared, and explanation then follows.

The second option for qualitative text analysis, *non-cross-sectional* data organization,

involves ways of seeing and sorting your data which do not necessarily use the same lens across the whole in this way (Mason 1996).

This means looking at discrete parts of the data set and documenting something about each of them specifically, seeing them as *case studies*, and searching for the particular and the holistic in the researched reality. Non-cross-sectional data organization gives a sense of the distinctiveness of different parts or elements of the data set. It helps to understand the intricately interwoven parts, in cases when they seem to be too complex to be amenable to categorical indexing, or if, for epistemological reasons, it just seems to be useless to do categorical indexing in this particular research project or with this particular data. Non-cross-sectional analysis provides the opportunity of organizing data around themes and experiences which do not appear cross-sectionally, precisely because they are very particular, even idiosyncratic.

Yin (1989:14) stresses that

the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events.

However, as Mason (1996:129) states,

You do not have to see yourself as doing «case study research» to be able nevertheless to identify case studies within your data set for analytical purposes.

That is precisely what I intend to do here: to identify the particular experiences of the interviewees as case studies. However, cross-sectional analysis is relevant too, as it will help me to construct some kind of 'mental map of motherhood'; since I actually asked the women I interviewed to evaluate each other's positions: everyone was asked what they thought about relinquishing mothers, adoptive mothers, voluntarily childless women, reproductive technologies, adoption, abortion, and so on, whatever their own 'position' in the researched 'field' of motherhood). Consequently, some combination of *descriptive* and *comparative* explanations are to be produced here (see in Mason 1996).

There is a requirement that each case study be organized around some comparable key elements. This requirement was actually met in the case of this research. However, some key elements of each experience would necessarily be peculiar to each case, which is why the logic of non-cross-sectional organization is actually inevitable.

Non-cross-sectional organization requires an analytic logic whereby explanations are derived from analysis and comparison of holistic 'units' or elements, rather than parts, slices or themes, as with cross-sectional analysis. According to this logic, first one carries out analysis of the holistic units, according to their key points; then one produces an

explanation for each unit; finally, the explanations of several units are compared with each other.

The role and use of the empirical data in the process of explanation in this case will be interpretative, which means that data are supposed to stand for something else in the interpretative sense. Interpretations of meanings, experiences, accounts, and actions will be developed into explanations and understandings. The role of the researcher in such a paradigm is to understand everyday or lay interpretations, as well as to supply social science interpretations, and to move from these towards explanation.

The empirical data and the researcher are in a relationship of mutual dependence in the interpretative research. Data are seen as the product of the processes of generation and interpretation in which the researcher is inevitably implicated. As Mason writes:

The social world is 'always already interpreted', and can only be 'known' by socially located 'knowers' (Mason 1996:140).

Theory, if there is to be a theory, comes last and is developed from and through data generation and analysis. Its building begins quite early in the research, at the stage of *theoretical* sampling construction (see above). Then it continues to develop at every following stage. This implies moving back and forth between theory and data many times. In particular, the process of moving between everyday concepts and meanings, lay accounts, and social science explanations, is essential for this tradition.

8. Concluding considerations: validity, reliability and ethics of the research.

I have a particular ethical position in the field, which is influenced by my own experience of infertility, which I tried to resolve for many years on my own, going against governmental, medical establishment's, and world policy regulations, which all favour, in contemporary time, restricted reproduction, and, if they do not intentionally create the barriers to people who want additional children (or just children, being childless as yet), they at least do not help them to achieve their goal. Anti-reproductive pressurizing on the part of many 'ordinary' people in my surrounding was added to that. Consequently, I do not agree that reproductive rights involve only abortion and contraception. There should exist state financed options which would help people to resolve the opposite kind of reproductive problems. Consequently, if it is wrong to force someone to have a child against her (or his) will, it is no less wrong to force one not to have a child against his or her will, even if there are biological constraints. In the case of abortion (*and* contraception) nature is against this too. My position implies not only opposition to forced sterilization or

abortion which are common practices in some Third World countries (Hartmann 1993), but support for availability of free or at least affordable access to infertility treatment, *including* reproductive technologies (which constitute at present the more successful option, than the pre-technological treatment, whatever the side effects; in any case, there are similar side effects from taking the contraceptive pill), to all people who need them, especially since infertility is now on the rise, probably due to ecological problems. However, my engagement in such a comparative research means that I must understand the opposite position, which I tried to do, speaking, for example, with voluntarily childless women. I hope I even managed to feel empathy for them, as on the basis of my own very strong desire to have children I could understand others' no less strong desire *not* to have them. My ethical position also involved the aspiration to 'give voices' to 'ordinary' people, to allow them to speak about their particular experiences (relinquishment of their babies, infertility, disability, and so on), to express themselves openly. Perhaps some other people with similar experiences could consequently find that this, at least partly, expressed their situations too. I also wanted my interviewees to enjoy the process of interviewing. All these goals were not necessarily always achieved, but they were my aspirations, which was my only responsibility in the process. The only more ethical option would have been to have withdrawn from the research completely, as only one who does nothing makes no mistakes.

As for reliability, which means accuracy of research methods and techniques, in this case they were qualitative, so the means of improving or ensuring reliability consisted in specifying questions, so that the interviewee could better understand what this was all about; allowing the interviewee to lead the discussion, just sometimes bringing her back to the subject, when absolutely necessary; using reformulations; giving feedback, that is, speaking about my own experience in order to create an atmosphere of confidence and reciprocity; careful listening to the interviewee, remembering what was already said, constantly having in mind everything else I needed to ask her, etc. At the next stage, text analysis was done on the basis of precise investigation of the existing techniques, so I hope that the final selection of a type of text analysis in this research was an *informed choice*. In any case, reliability as to the accurateness of measurement is usually considered not so important for qualitative research, since reliability stresses the value of tools, which are too *special*, sometimes idiosyncratic in each interview, in the qualitative research, and there are few *standards* which can provide *measures* for these tools.

Validity, on the other hand, is very important in this type of social research. Validity means that the author really does observe and identify what s/he claims to observe or identify. This is always easier to prove in qualitative study, as it allows an interviewee to

speak at length, and involves attempts to understand what she means in detail, using, for example, specifying and reformulating questions. In addition, the interviewee is allowed to speak about everything which comes to her mind, thus the actual context of the associations she has in the area is provided. An informal style, the presentation of the interview in a conversation, rather than in a strict question-answer format; a thematic, topic-centered approach, which involves elements of biography in the narrative style; the assumption that *data are generated via interaction* - all these features of qualitative research build a basis for its validity, which is usually considered to be more solid than in quantitative research.

My epistemological position, finally, rejects the *standpoint* concept, which would presuppose, in this particular research, that since I am a woman, I am better positioned to understand other women. Women's experiences, and their interpretations of these experiences, vary enormously, and therefore the essentialist view is for me a temptation which should be avoided. In addition, my special position in the field (that of an infertile woman resolving the problem by means of reproductive technologies) could actually disturb my view of some other women's position, so the best I can do is to try to look at myself reflexively, as far as possible, and to see my own experience as an additional case study on the same basis with all the others. It is of course impossible to abstract from one's own self so completely; nevertheless, I tried to take all the peculiarities of my experience and consequently my views into consideration, while reflexively interpreting the data. My view is just one possible variant; on the other hand, nor do my interviewees have a privileged claim to an absolute understanding of themselves, as their moods change, they develop over time, etc. Consequently, there is no specific reason to check my interpretation with that of my interviewees, especially since they might not necessarily be aware of 'social science slang' (the expression of Mason (1996)), or the terminology which the researcher uses. Therefore:

Validity of method and of interpretation therefore must be demonstrated through a careful retracing and reconstruction of the route by which you think you reached them (Mason 1996).

This is what I have tried to do during the course of this chapter.

PART II.

POSTMODERNITY, ECONOMIC CRISIS, RELIGION AND SELF: RUSSIAN WOMEN CHILDBEARING OPTIONS.

Introduction.

The methodology of the research was discussed at length in the Chapter 3 of the Part I. I need just to stress here again that it was a qualitative research, based on the interview method. Then the texts of all (eighteen) actively used interviews were transcribed in full and analyzed both cross-sectionally (for the typical patterns) and non-cross-sectionally (to not lose the non-typical, idiosyncratic information). A reader can refer to the Chapter I of this Part of the thesis for a detailed description of the interviewees.

Besides this first special chapter, Part II consists of 8 other chapters, which are organized thematically. The themes are expressed by the headings of the chapters and represent the main options which exist for a woman in the area of childbearing. Each chapter contains a section of cross-sectional analysis, which exposes the attitudes the interviewed women have to the theme of the chapter, for example, to abortion; and a section of non-cross-sectional analysis, where the experiences of women who live through the main issue of the chapter (for example, relinquishment of the baby) are presented in detail. The conclusion to Part II represents an interpretation which was possible to do on the basis of these two types of analysis.

Finally, I must stress that the borders between the categories of women represented in this Part of the thesis, are by no means strict. There are no strict borders between categories, because there are no strict borders in women's experiences. On the contrary, there is an intense movement back and forth between these categories: both the attitudes and experiences of women are fluent and subject to change in the course of their lives. For example, Yana was then moving from a situation of normative family towards single motherhood. Other women could even be in several 'groups' at the same time (the most obvious is the case of Galia who is both an infertile woman and an adoptive mother). One can find much evidence of both movement and overlap between categories in the text below. For these reasons, some interviewees were included in several classes, and the relevant parts of their experiences were discussed as case studies in different chapters.

CHAPTER 1.

Description of the interviewees and of the ways of finding them.

I began with the cases which I anticipated would be the most difficult to find. Therefore I started by searching for a lesbian mother, who I finally found with the help of my supervisor who put me in contact with another British Ph.D. student who was then doing research on women's organizations in Russia. This student gave me addresses and phone numbers of some members of the Moscow lesbian community, who then recommended that I talk to the only young lesbian mother they knew of the appropriate age group. They said that although motherhood was very widespread among older lesbians, there were fewer mothers among women who were younger than 35 at that time (1995). This seems to contradict the information which Griffin and Mulholland (1997) present in the Russian profile of lesbian motherhood. This particular lesbian mother, Yulia,⁶⁶ turned out to have many common acquaintances with me, as we had both worked at the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences as interviewers five years previously, though we did not know each other then.

Yulia was 25 years old at the time of the interview. Her main occupation was free-lance journalism. She had a 5 years old son from her first marriage as a teenager. She lives with her mother and grand-mother in the same flat. Her mother helps her a lot. Yulia was born and grew up in Moscow. She was close to the circles of professional writers and artists, who were part of the extreme counter-culture, on the one hand, but on the other, earned their living by writing detective stories under pseudonyms. Yulia did not have higher education.

This same British Ph.D. student gave me another contact, the leader of the organization of single mothers, called «Mummy only» ('*Tolko mama*' in Russian), which unites 50 one-parent female-headed families. I tried to get access to other members of this organization through her, but they were rather suspicious and absorbed by problems of their children's health at that time, so I interviewed the leader herself, Vera. She presented to me a very informed, multifaceted and clear account of all sides of single motherhood, which I did not anticipate and which she could provide due to her particular experience. I found communication with her extremely useful.

Vera was a professional linguist, specializing in Spanish language. She worked at a Research Institute at the Academy of Sciences, and earned additional money by lecturing in different places and by giving private Spanish lessons in the kitchen of her flat. She was

never married and had a 9 year old daughter from a short term relationship with a married man when she herself was 24 years old. She lived separately from her parents and had a complicated relationship with them, but admitted herself that they 'help a lot' with child care. Vera was 35 years old at the time of the interview. She was born and grew up in Moscow.

The next difficult case to find was that of the abandoning, or relinquishing, mother. I am grateful to Olga Maslova, a chief of the Department of Methodology of the Institute of Sociology of Russian Academy of Sciences where I work, for putting me in contact with her adult daughter's friend. This friend, a psychologist, had been working for two years with such women at one of the Moscow maternity hospitals. However, this time it was more difficult to gain access, I had to provide something in return, as a 'barter', to the research unit which existed there, and this took the form of several articles giving accounts of Western theories on motherhood. As a result this proved to be a long-term research cooperation, and I finally had more interviews with 'otkaznitsy' (relinquishing mothers) than with any other type of women. I finally used only two of these interviews (with Raya and Lidia), which seemed the most illustrative cases of what information I had on the phenomenon as a result.

Raya was 35 years old at the time of the interview and relinquished her second child, a premature son (she also had a 13 year old daughter from a husband whom she divorced long ago) from a long-term married lover who agreed to have a child with her, but left her for unexplained reasons at the fourth month of her pregnancy. Raya worked as a cashier in a State Bank, but left this job in order to hide her pregnancy (and her relinquishment of the baby) from her friends. At the time of the interview she was (successfully, in terms of money) working as a street salesperson. She was educated in a special high school as a salesperson still in the Soviet time and was one of the best pupils. Raya came to Moscow from Ryazan'. Her parents cannot help her in child care since they are so far away, and also cannot give her money, because both are old and pensioners.

Lidia was born and grew up in Moscow, but then she had neither a flat of her own here, nor official residence registration. For this reason, she could not obtain an abortion for free. Lidia lost her housing and residence rights in a criminal affair which she got into while trying to sell her flat. She also had had no help from her mother since she was 16 years old. Her mother's view was that the maternal duty is only to bring a child up until he or she reaches that age, after which the child is able to support him or herself. Lidia's father died when she was still a child. Lidia lived in an unregistered cohabitation with an

⁶⁶ All the names of the interviewees which I used in the thesis, are, of course, pseudonyms I gave to the interviewees for the sake of anonymity.

unemployed man, who was still officially married to another woman. He had a son from his wife and also one from Lidia. All these people lived on this man's parents' money, because they were themselves either unemployed or received insufficient salary. Lidia herself previously used to support herself successfully, but at the period of the interview she was unemployed too. She was educated as a radio assembler, but worked only as a street flowers seller. She now relinquished her second child, a daughter, from this same man she cohabits with, while they keep their first child, a son, then 2 years old. Lidia was 27 years old at the time of the interview.

In addition, I conducted several interviews with other 'rare' types of women at the same maternity hospital. One of them was Nina, a mother of 8 children, who came from a village; another was Uliana, a mother of three daughters, a school-teacher from Moscow, married to a currently unemployed husband and living with her entire family in a one-room flat.

Nina recently came to Moscow from a village in the Odessa region, in the hope of obtaining a flat here from an old woman, who had promised to bequeath her her flat in return for care in her old age. Nina was in an unregistered marriage with a fellow villager (it was a custom not to register marriages officially there). They had seven children together, the first of whom died from an accident while he was 1 year old. The other six remained with Nina after her common-law husband recently died. She subsequently entered into a relationship with a man from Tadzhikistan. Nina was 37 years old at the time of the interview, her partner was 28 years old. Nina wanted to relinquish the newborn twin daughters by him because he did not accept them, preferring a son. Then he changed his mind, because he had no other children, and Nina took the babies home, although they live in poverty. Nina received only 7 years of school education (the official norm in the Soviet era was no less than 8, but it did not work in villages). She worked as a milkmaid in a village. Her mother helped her very much with children and with their small family business. All Nina's family at the time of the interview survived primarily on market-gardening, in which all the children, apart from the infants, participated.

Uliana was a school teacher and an artist. She participated in painting expositions, but lived mostly on her salary as a teacher. She was born in Moscow into a workers' family. She was the first in this family to receive higher education and was supported by her female relatives in her striving to achieve this. She was 35 at the time of the interview, married for the second time, and had just given birth to her third daughter. The first daughter was from a first husband, who only paid the official alimony, which was not much. Her second husband was a driver and currently unemployed. She planned to work herself and thought he could do child care. With baby care for her first daughter Uliana

was helped by her mother; with the second daughter by her mother-in-law, while she herself was working and studying at the same time in both cases.

Since I only met both of these 'mothers of large families' later, I had in the meantime launched an appeal among all my friends and relatives asking them to find this kind of woman for me. As a result I finally met one, through another woman, Kira, whom I had interviewed. Kira was actually a person I briefly knew a long time ago, as we visited the same literary club when we were both school-girls. I never knew her well. Then, in 1995, I met her at a concert of classical music by chance, we began to speak about what had happened to us in recent years, and I asked her for an interview because she strongly represented another particular pattern which interested me very much - she was always strongly oriented towards a career in the creative arts, she was educated as a film director, and then she had a son, who meant a lot to her as well.

Kira was 33 years old at the time of the interview. She was currently a full-time housewife, but wanted to get employment. Her son was 5 years old. Her husband was studying to be a lawyer and working in business. Kira was educated as a film director and had begun to work as such, but her career was interrupted by childbirth, because she could not find reliable child care. She also was educated as a teacher, and was hoping to find work in some private school. Kira was born in Moscow. Her mother helped her, but the relationship between them was bad, and the mother's health was poor. Kira's mother-in-law lived in Ukraine.

This woman, Kira, then put me in contact with a mother of four sons, Nadia, whom I subsequently interviewed. The standard of living of her family, although nothing exceptional, according to Moscow norms, was much better than that of the other two 'large' families I interviewed. Therefore all three accounts were included into the final totality of my data.

Nadia was 34 years old, educated as a journalist in a University, but had not worked since she had her first child. She was married for the second time, all four children being from this husband. He worked as a journalist. They, both native Muscovites, lived in their own flat. Nadia's mother did not help her with children because she did not like to work with children. Nadia's mother-in-law helped her a bit, but not to the extent which would allow Nadia to work. She planned to begin to work in the weekends relying on her husband's help on those days.

A girl whom I was introduced to at the maternity hospital, who worked there with the abandoning mothers, found several interviewees for me in other places, following my request for 'particular' women, as she reformulated it. As a result, I included in my sample the case of a woman, Janna, who gave custody of her son to her husband after their

divorce. I did not anticipate including such a case in my thesis in advance, but found it to be very interesting. I also did an interview with a woman who was not sure about whether she wanted children or not, Maya. Both these interviewees were friends or school-mates of this woman I worked with. I did not ask her the details of how they related to each other.

Janna was 28 years old at the time of the interview, divorced, and a librarian. She confessed to earning additional money by prostitution. She had higher education and was even a post-graduate student. Her 7 year old son lived with her former husband. Her husband divorced Janna when he learned about her prostitution. Janna largely supported both her former husband and their son from her income. Janna and her husband were native Muscovites. Janna's mother never helped her much with child care. Janna herself was actually looked after by her father as a child, while her mother earned their living. Janna currently lived alone in a room in a communal flat.

Maya was 28 years old, unmarried and childless, a post-graduate student in social psychology. She earned additional money where she could, but it was not much. She lived with her mother who worked as a lecturer and partly supported her daughter.

Another case which initially seemed to be relatively difficult to find was that of the openly voluntarily childless woman. However I found the first of these relatively easily - Polina was one of my students at the Institute where I was teaching then, and she volunteered herself to be interviewed. She was happily married, and later I interviewed another voluntarily childless woman, Valeria, who was also married, but less happily, and who now lives with another man in a less stable relationship. This latter woman put me in contact with my first infertile interviewee, Galia (they were former work colleagues), who resolved the problem of childlessness by official adoption.

Polina was 25 years old, married, childless, a post-graduate student in sociology, and started work in a relatively large publishing firm as a social psychologist. She and her husband were native Muscovites. On his earnings in business they rented a flat to live separately from their parents. The parents would help Polina very much if she were to have children, they were well-to-do and had a close relationship with their only daughter.

Valeria was 31 years old, childless, officially married to a citizen of Pakistan who hoped to receive a permanent residence permit on account of their marriage. They had initially had a sexual relationship, but soon separated, each entering into a new unofficial relationship. Valeria also had plenty of such relationships prior to her marriage, all with Southern men and never with Russians. She received a higher education in aero-technology and briefly worked in one of the factories of the Soviet military complex, where her parents had also worked all their lives as engineers. Valeria was a native Muscovite. Currently she was working in a business owned by her official husband, doing

international trade in sport accessories, which involved Pakistan and Russia. Valeria lived in a flat, which she inherited from her grand-mother, with her current unofficial partner, a private taxi driver.

Galia was 35 years old, born in Sakhalin. She completed her studies in secondary school there, married, and came to Moscow together with her husband to work in a factory. He was a blue-collar worker, she was a white-collar worker. She did not receive a higher education. They had official residence registration and two rooms in a communal flat, which they received from the factory. Neither of their parents lived near Moscow, but Galia's brothers and sisters 'cooperate' with her in private matters, both using her position of a registered Muscovite to do some business here, and helping her with money and childcare. But she helped them with childcare, too, since currently she was on leave from her job so that she could look after her adopted daughter, aged two. Galia was infertile.

The second voluntarily childless woman, Valeria, was introduced to me by my best female friend, together with another friend of hers, Vika, who represented a case which was proving particularly difficult to find, and therefore possible to obtain finally only through close friends - that of a woman who has a child but is unhappy about it, since women are not particularly keen to acknowledge such non-normative feelings, especially to absolute strangers.

Vika was 31 years old, a full-time housewife, married with one 9-year old son. Her husband had a business dealing with whole-sale book trade. She was educated as an engineer and briefly worked, before her son was born, in an Institute which was working on the engineering projects for subsequent industrial implementation. The couple, both native Muscovites, lived in their own flat with their son. The grand-parents, though not living in the same flat, always helped with childcare a lot.

The last four interviewees were found through my husband's family. Two of them, a mother of two children, Yana, and a happily normative mother of one, Lada, married to a well-off man and not very keen to work, were his university class-mates. I did not know them before, since I met my husband in England, though we are both from Moscow. I started to gradually meet his friends only at that time, after our return from England together. The remaining two interviewees, an infertile woman trying to get treatment, Alla, and a disabled mother, Veronica (who has had a serious heart disease all her life), were introduced to me by my husband's aunt and father respectively.

Yana was 26 years old, married with two children, in a state of separation from her husband, who fathered both of them. Still, all four of them lived in one and the same flat, separately from the grand-parents, who never helped much. Yana and her husband were

both native Muscovites, as was her new partner, too. Yana was a University educated economist and had begun to work in a Customers' Association as editor of a new journal. She was determined to be independent and work in one or another way. Her husband was a geologist working in a University. Her new lover was a businessman, educated as a bookkeeper. He had one child from a previous relationship with another woman.

Lada was 27 years old, married with one six-month old daughter. Both she and her husband were University educated economists and native Muscovites. He was participating in a counseling business, which went successfully. She was a full-time housewife. They lived in their own one-room flat. Help from their parents was limited, since Lada had complicated relationships with both her mother and her mother-in-law and also because independence was a positive value for her.

Alla was 32 years old at the time of the interview, unmarried, childless, infertile, living with her parents and a younger brother. Alla worked as a school teacher. She had received higher education in the French language. She was a native Muscovite. All the family had emigrated to Germany, where Alla was unemployed, so she tended to spend most of her time in Moscow where her lover lived, while officially she was living in Germany with her parents and brother.

Veronica was 35 years old at the time of the interview, married with one 9 year old daughter. Her husband successfully worked in politics, but she herself was working too, in spite of her heart condition, as a secretary in the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences. She had received a higher education in history. She, her husband and daughter lived in their own flat in Mytishi, a big city of Moscow region. Veronica was born in another, smaller, city near Moscow, where her parents still lived. They helped her to some extent with her child, but she was doing a lot herself.

CHAPTER 2.

Normative family.

According to my preliminary view, normative family in the contemporary Russian context means having one or two children per woman in a couple situation. It is preferred, though not required, that a couple be married. Three of the women in my 'sample' fit into this category (Kira, Lada, and Yana), although one of them (Yana) just partially, as she is now divorcing her husband. Still, since she is well-off, and had her two children within what was then a stable marriage, I decided that she could represent a case study for this first category too. On the other hand, Lada knows something about the difficulties of having a wanted child, since she had a miscarriage previous to the birth of her daughter. Still, for the most part the experiences of these three women are closest to the '*norm*,' according to the views of all other women in my 'sample' (and to their own views).

As a whole, normative family is associated by the interviewees with *duty* (Lidia; Galia; Veronica; Yulia), and *normative pressure* (Vika). Vera agrees, but she, however, thinks that women who have only normative reasons to have children should resist the norm and not have them. Polina, who does not want children herself, complains: 'the norms press me, and I force myself to begin to want [children]'. For Janna, it was rather a kind of '*bargain*' - she wanted to get a husband by giving him a child in return; Valeria can imagine such a bargain in her life, too. Nadia and Uliana feel this normative pressure the other way around, since both of them have more than two children, which provokes a negative reaction in their surroundings. Other reasons for having a normative family include *security* (Valeria, Nina: 'who else will give you 'a glass of water in old age?'), *imitation* of what *others* do (Valeria; Vera). For Vika it means: 'to be like everyone else'. Janna explained:

I did not want children, but I did not know why not. So sooner or later it should have happened.

For Nina, having no children means being 'inadequate': 'what, everyone would walk with children, and I will go without?'. Alla and Yana wanted to imitate their parents whom they idealized; Maya believes that most people simply imitate their parents in this area, while ideally such imitation should be avoided. Next reason mentioned by the interviewees was *traditional sex roles* distribution: a *man is the provider* of substantial *wealth* for the family, which is considered essential for its existence (Lidia, Raya, Galia, Maya), a woman is the *intensive mother*, which is considered to be no less essential - mothering must be intense in every situation (Raya, Galia, Maya). Polina is afraid of this intense mothering which she

believes is unavoidable. The notion of '*complete marriage*' is associated with these ideas (Vika, Vera, Nadia, Nina, Uliana, Lidia, Janna, Raya, Maya, Galia). As Veronica formulated it: 'the essence of marriage lies in [children]'.

Many women whom I spoke to also note that having a family like that is simply '*natural*' (Galia, Yulia, Uliana), caused by the '*reproductive instinct*' (Valeria; Vika: 'It is put into us by nature... It is stronger than me'), *not subject to doubts* (no one around Polina, who desperately wants to stay childless, even questions her desire for a child), *comes by itself* (Lidia, Janna, Raya, Yulia).

Additional dimensions are *altruism* as a positive value (Uliana; Galia), *self-realization through children* (Veronica, Nadia, Uliana and Galia, with the latter explaining, 'Whatever her life, there should be a child in a woman's life'), and the *desire to have children* (Galia; Uliana; Nadia; Raya; as Raya put it, 'I always wanted to have the first child, the first child is the first child'). Often the desire to have a child is closely associated with *heterosexual love for a particular man* (this was the case for Alla and Maya; Polina, who did not feel this herself, stressed that according to the understanding of the Orthodox Christian church, a woman ought to have sex only if she wants to get pregnant). This is not always the case, however; sometimes having a male partner *follows* the desire to have a child, as in the case of Lidia, and Raya in her first marriage, while Yulia, a lesbian, married just *in order to* have a child. *Love of life* is another dimension (Vera, Nadia, Uliana), and love of children (Raya; Vera; Uliana), especially for those who feel positive about having children themselves.

Having *two children* rather than one seems to be both better and more problematic. Galia and Alla think that it is good for people to have *brothers or sisters*; Valeria can imagine that to some women it can seem essential to have both *a boy and a girl*. On the other hand, Raya, Valeria, Vera, Lidia and Galia, though the latter is less certain about it, believe that it can be done only in a *wealthy* situation. Uliana agreed to that view until recently, but now she has changed her mind and gave birth not only to a second daughter, but also to a third one, despite her limited wealth. In Vera's and Yulia's opinion, it is more difficult to manage with two children, and this requires a larger store of *energy* in a mother. Maya adds to that the ecological considerations:

Perhaps, it would even be much better if there were fewer people...on the earth... For ecological reasons, certainly.

Nina was the only woman in my sample who did not feel a strong normative pressure to restrict her fertility. In Nina's native village, most women have more than two children. But the echo of the prevailing norm reached these remote places, too: Nina actually tried to reduce her fertility after she had *two living children* (her first son died).

Now let us consider in more detail three case studies of women who live the norm, rather than deviating from it in one way or another, like all the other interviewees.

Yana had a much better relationship with her father than with her mother. Her father's attitude to Yana was very 'tender', although he expected her to have a 'brilliant career', and was upset that she had instead two children so early and so quickly one after the other. She also had a close relationship with her younger sister. Consequently there was some contradiction in Yana's preferences. On the one hand, she always 'knew' that she would have two daughters; on the other hand, she realized later that she actually wanted a son more than a daughter. As a result, two children seemed not to be enough.

In spite of these two competing plans which actually conditioned the desire for no less than three children, Yana thought that there were usually more problems with the decision to have a second baby, since you already had your 'immediate continuation' in the first child, and when you had two of them, it would become quite obvious that 'the children are an independent matter', that they were existing more for themselves than for you. To want more than two children was thus absolutely altruistic; while if one had two, one still could think about self-realization through both of them in different ways, at least if they were of different sexes.

All the same, Yana was not in a hurry to act according to this 'plan' of having three children or more, mostly because she was then at a 'cross-roads' in her life: her relationship with the father of her children had ceased at her insistence, and her relationship with her new boy-friend was not secure enough. Yana said that she married her husband just to have children, that she already stopped to love him by the time of their marriage, and that this marriage was perhaps a mistake. She loved her new boy-friend very much but was bitter about the fact that he was rather reserved about the issue of marriage. Although Yana held that 'every beloved man in my life induces in me a desire to bear a child from him', in her view, the mutual feeling she had with the current boy-friend was already fading and not strong enough to have a boy, since 'a male child wants to be born from some beautiful feeling'.

However, there remained 'enough [mutual] feeling for a girl' to be born, as
one can give birth to as many women as one wants to [...] for the
sake of making the world more beautiful.

Having a son was a much more serious matter, since 'people make the stakes on men, not on women', implying that parents expect achievements from their sons and not from daughters.

According to Yana, before a woman has children she must grow up herself, so that she would be able to show something of the world to children, and would be sufficiently mature in herself.

Yana always liked children, but not that strongly. She never felt disgust towards them, but neither did she have 'a sickly wish to have a child every time I saw a baby'.

However, after the birth of her own children, she began to love all babies. In her view, there is, ultimately, something biological in women's attitude to children.

Yana's motivation to have children had something to do with the idea of *life* as such and with altruism: 'to give them life, as a gift... this life, which is hard enough, but is worthy of seeing.' Yana did not like the idea of continuing the line very much, and therefore she preferred men who had daughters, since their attitude to children is not bound up with the idea of continuing their line, 'they are just such... happy men, fathers of daughters.'

Naturalness was important for her in many respects. Therefore she wanted to have her 'next' child at least partially by a process of natural birth and in the child's father's presence; she preferred the idea of adoption to that of reproductive technologies; and she opposed abortion, and even *contraception* to some extent, although this seemed to be on a theoretical level. Yana's opposition to *abortion* was not only theoretical, however. She got pregnant for the second time when her daughter was just three months old, and she refused to have an abortion in spite of her relatives' insistence that she did so. Yana felt that more than three years' age difference between siblings was bad, since it prevented them from becoming real friends.

Yana's experience at the birth of her two children was rather positive, although it took place at the maternity hospital. The hospital was a good one, the doctor was one of Yana's 'acquaintances' (so that he or she received some informal 'gratitude' from Yana's relatives), and Yana had no complications. For her, giving birth was an experience which gave her maturity and a sense of female self-fulfillment. Yana refused any anesthesia, which she was very proud of. The feeling that this experience was a common one was self-elevating for her: 'after all, all females in the world do it!'

Yana experienced personal 'growth' between the first birth and the second one: during the first she was 'treated as a child' herself, while during the second, she was already helping others and explaining everything to them.

As for mothering, Yana tried to play an intensive mothering role with the first child, to do her best, in spite of almost immediately after the birth falling pregnant with her second child. Her feelings for her first child, a daughter, were rather complicated: Yana had problems in accepting the fact that it was actually a daughter, and she described her

daughter as a very difficult baby who would not sleep, and she could not help but blame her for the fact that she had to give her so much attention at the expense of her son, even when he was still in her womb, since

I always carried her in my arms, for hours, with a stomach which was already very big, so she was practically sitting on her unborn brother's head.

In addition, Yana was an anxious mother, so it was difficult for her to trust her children to anyone else, and therefore she did practically all the child care herself.

Yana thought that society's attitude to childbearing, and to the childbearing women, was not very favourable. No one ever helped her in any special way during either of her pregnancies. However, Yana suggested that this was perhaps due to the fact that neither time was her stomach 'big enough'. On the other hand, she noticed the solidarity between pregnant women who tried to help each other, and even between women who were not currently pregnant but had been in the past. Yana herself did not like pregnant women much before this became her own experience. She did not like the way they look ('they are so... spread, they have such thick faces').

However, the state of pregnancy was, in Yana's view, both 'uncomfortable' and 'pleasant, life-improving' for the woman herself. Yana tried to pay as little attention as possible to the fact that she was pregnant, since she was busy with other things both times. Her career was important for Yana, and she was still very intensely involved with work and study until a month before the first birth.

Yana was not religious but was tolerant towards other people's religious feelings, as long as these were moderate. If not, they were 'repulsive' to her, just because 'too much of anything' was bad. 'On the level of knowledge', however, she enjoyed reading serious religious books. As for politics,

there was a time when politics was important to me, I remember this as some endlessly rosy period.

This was in 1991 when many people went onto the streets of Moscow to protest against the attempted 'coup', the failure of which resulted in the collapse of the Soviet Union. In her teens Yana liked to read heroic literature, and her role models were almost exclusively men, with the exception of the female poets Akhmatova and Tsvetaeva⁶⁷,

⁶⁷ Anna Andreevna Akhmatova (1889-1966) and Marina Ivanovna Tsvetaeva (1892-1941) are still considered now to be the two most prominent Russian women poets of all times, although both of them were active in literary work during the time of so called 'Silver Age' of Russian poetry, which means the epoch of its second blossoming (the first is supposed to be in the epoch of Pushkin, in the beginning of the XIX century). This second flourishing began at the very end of the XIX century and continued during almost all the first half of the XXth

perhaps, because of their 'significance' in Russian cultural life, which placed them closer to men than to other women, in her view. She felt that Tsvetaeva's preference for her son over her daughters was something very close to her own feelings, although on a theoretical level she tried to be critical of this. Akhmatova represented for her an image of female 'maturity', a desire 'to soften, to ease, to balance, rather than to aggravate'.

Kira said that she wanted children very much at 14, 'when female maturity begins'. She always definitely wanted a son, and when she had one she had, and continues to have, very intense proprietary feelings towards him ('I wanted him in order that he would be mine. My son.').

She was upset and did not want to believe it when she was told during the ultrasound test that she was going to have a daughter. She did actually bear a son. This was particularly important for her because she did not plan to have more than one child. Although Kira wanted to have a child at a very young age, when she actually did get pregnant, she was finishing studying to become a documentary film director. It was the 'wrong time', but since she wanted to have a child at some point and was 28 ('to put it off could mean that he would never be born at all'), married, her husband wanted a child, and both of them were involved in the Orthodox religion, she did not have an abortion.

At first, Kira tried hard to combine both child care and work in her profession ('one week after the birth I was back at the Institute'), taking her baby son to her work place with her, where he lay on the table while she worked. She did this not only because it was difficult to find someone who would stay with the child, but also because she did not want to be separated from him even temporarily. Soon Kira had to admit that it was not only a question of doing everything with 'greater speed', but that there was not enough of herself to go round, and that she would have to give herself 'in doses' both to her child and to her work. Eventually, Kira decided in favour of her son. At the time, she was asked to make a film on children homes, and she realized that while she would make this film about 'orphans', her own son would be 'like an orphan'. She did not want this:

whatever your ideas and plans about your own life, your bond with
your child is much more important in comparison to all other things.

Kira could not accept role reversal and tolerate the idea of her husband doing child care while she would shoot films. Men were 'locomotives of life', for Kira, at least, if they were 'normal' men. A man, in her view, was something 'higher, more respected', 'hopes are placed upon him'.

one, although the majority of the poets of the Silver Age had their most 'productive' periods prior to the 1917 revolution. However, it was not the case with Tsvetaeva, who 'has grown into a big poet', according to the words of Akhmatova, only after the revolution.

Accordingly, at the time of the interview she was pushing her husband towards a career which he did not want and was perhaps unable to pursue, but he tried to obey her. According to Kira, both paternal and maternal instincts existed, but the maternal instinct was stronger, since the woman would want a child 'by her stomach and by her whole life.' (*zhivotom* in Russian means both these things - O.I.)

On the other hand, the man's *responsibility* for the family, in Kira's view, must be greater.

Although she loved her son, Kira was bitter about the choice she had to make even at the time of our conversation, after five years had passed. She found some consolation in being her son's 'creative' educator, and saw him as her 'creative work', but Kira was aware that she lost her profession because of him. Kira has put all her hopes in him, as a result; everything that she did not achieve must fall to him, and she could not wait for him to grow up enough to start doing this. She thought it would have been better to have given birth at the age of 14, as she had originally wanted, because the child would be an adult by the time of our conversation, and she would still be young, and they could do much more interesting things together.

However, Kira was strongly discouraged by her mother from giving birth at 14, especially as she would have been a single mother in this case; Kira, on the whole, tended to blame her mother for everything. She did not want a daughter because

the women I knew in my family make me reluctant to have a daughter who would be like them.

Kira's relationship with her father was also not one based on love, but rather on challenge. He used to say to her, in Kira's words, 'first you must become someone, and only then I will speak to you'. Neither of the parents 'particularly welcomed my female essence'; Kira felt she was 'inadequate' in her parents' view because she was not a boy. This is why, she thought, she had such a strong drive for a career and such a strong preference for a son. Kira always wanted to bring up her child in a different way to how things had been done in her own childhood. Her parents were actually divorced, which she feels spoiled her and her brother's childhood.

At the time of the interview, however, Kira thought that precisely this 'female essence' was the most important thing in a woman; accordingly, a woman ought not to try to develop anything else in her personality, she should 'not exhaust her hormonal system by trying to be like a man'. Kira hated the Soviet image of the *superwoman* who was in addition a mother sacrificing her children for the state. In Kira's opinion, women should not carry heavy weights, nor do any physically demanding work, but cherish their beauty and femininity, and they should be highly respected just for that. Women's world was fine

and precious. Kira cited the film 'Piano' 'by a contemporary Australian female film director'⁶⁸ as an example of the artistic expression of such a fine female world. Yet, in reality, she felt that Russian women have little in common with this ideal:

in all of us [women in Russia] there is something from Nastasya Philippovna⁶⁹. And this is no good.

Before she came to these ideas about female essence, a drive towards a career and professional interests always prevailed in Kira. She would even completely forget about her desire to have a child for several years, being busy with 'becoming someone'. She considered self-realization to be a duty, one 'must' realize him or herself 'to the full'. However, her desire for a child always came back to her when she fell in love with a man. Kira always considered all the men in her life from the point of view of what kind of a father they would be to her child, and of 'what kind of a child we could have together'. She thought it was 'natural' for a woman to consider a man from this point of view.

Kira's attitude towards children was positive, she thought they ought to be loved and caressed, she highly evaluated the world of childhood. Children were the 'life's essence' for her, being 'full of joy of life'. However, Kira distinguishes sharply between her 'own' and 'others'' children. All the same, she once felt the desire to adopt a child from a children's home, just because she felt pity for him, but she decided she could not do it at that time, since she could not provide as much attention, care, and well-being as she thought was necessary to two children. Still she thought she might adopt a child when she is closer to her fifty, because

I do not know in what moral state I will be then, maybe charity will be more important for me at that age than it is now,

and because of an unfulfilled desire to have a second child. Kira did not want a second child very intensely at the time when I spoke to her, but could imagine having such a wish in the future. According to Kira, no woman bore two children in the present epoch for economic reasons, even though they usually want two children.

Kira believed that motivations for people to have children lay in the 'powerful laws of nature', of 'life', and she found it exciting to obey them. Children want to come into this

⁶⁸ by Jane Campion, 1993.

⁶⁹ a female protagonist of Fiodor Dostoyevsky (1821-1981)'s novel 'Idiot' (first published in 1868). Nastasya Philippovna was a poor orphan, educated by a rich man to become his lover when she was still very young. But she was not docile, to the contrary, she became opposed to the whole world and full of hate towards humans. She tried to revenge her lover, doing meanwhile as much evil to others as was possible. However, she was kind to some selected persons, usually to those who were absolutely kind themselves, like the protagonist, Prince Myshkin. Her challenging beauty and risky behaviour finally attracted a rich young merchant

world themselves, but society tries to oppress these natural laws. Society's rulers are too old, and this means they are in confrontation with the natural laws, with *life*. This causes them to create unfavourable conditions for young, childbearing people, who are at the same time good potential workers. In such unfavourable conditions, and in a conscious state of mind, and not in the emotional state caused by love, no couple would try for children, in Kira's opinion. Therefore young people with 'potential' who want to have children in 'good' conditions leave Russia for other, better, countries.

Society's attitude towards pregnancy and childbearing was hostile, in Kira's view, although it ought instead to be 'admiring', because it is 'a new life in her'. But women continue to have children because 'life, it keeps going'. They also help each other in pregnancy and in the care of children.

Kira suffered from intense nausea and vomiting during the first four months of pregnancy. Everything that happened after that, including the birth and the first intense period of child care, was much easier. All the same, Kira's experience of the birth of her son was not very pleasant since it was in a 'Soviet' maternity hospital,

where they induce labour in you just in order that you give birth at a time which is appropriate for them.

This was bad for the child's health, she thought. She had previously had many fears concerning possible birth defects of the child, but not of the birth as such. She was ambivalent about natural childbirth, she thought a woman needs a doctor's help or at least that of a midwife (doctor and midwife meant the same thing for Kira, but doctor was preferred for the reason of him or her having 'higher qualifications' - *O.I.*), although it can take place in the woman's own home. She felt the child should be near the mother all the time, and this was so in Kira's case. The birth was almost a religious experience for Kira, and not one of *self*-assertion:

I had the strong feeling that there was some really powerful force, going through me, from the higher World, that I am of no concern here, I am just the conductor.

She actually had the impression that the child came into the world not from her, but from somewhere else, from 'the wardrobe near the bed, maybe'. She liked and respected her baby son from the first moment. It was an

incredible miracle that such a thing comes out of yourself... so important, so virile, and very demanding, immediately after the birth.

to her. He killed Nastasya when he was mad during one of the periods of deep drunkenness which were characteristic for him.

Kira was opposed to the Orthodox church and preferred Protestantism, because Orthodoxy was too strict, it required that a person tolerated without complaints whatever happened to him or her, and Kira was in a rebellious mood then. She thought that religion must adapt to life, and not the other way around.

Lada wanted children 'just because life is like that', it was the same for her as wanting to *live*. She supposed she would have two children, since 'one child is not enough'. However, she married very young, and she did not have her daughter for some time. She felt that 'the [right] hour should come' for that. This hour, or a strong desire, or even 'lust' for a child, as she put it, came two years before the actual birth of the child. Lada did not see any problem in this delay, since 'it does not happen that children appear just immediately after you begin to want them!'

But she claimed she knew she had conceived just at the moment when it happened.

An additional reason for having a child was her belief that she would not be a real woman until she was a mother. It was not that she thought this, but 'felt' it: 'it seemed to me that I was... sort of a man, rather than a woman...'

In addition, she felt that an emotional distance had grown between her and her husband, and she wanted to become close to him again. After visiting a 'natural childbirth' group ('there was nothing artificial in it... it seemed not to be false') even before she was pregnant, she realized that these parents were very close to each other and to their children in comparison to other couples she knew. She felt very lonely, and at the same time believed that she could get more involved with her husband again if they tried to go through this together. In any case, she would have a child as a result, so she would no longer be lonely. The continuation of the line was not so important for her, as she felt that both she and her daughter were 'points of concentration' of some 'vital energy'. Accordingly, the whole process of having a child was due to this vital energy rather than to any individual will.

Lada always admired other people's children, even before her own daughter was born. She felt that there was something extraordinary in taking a tiny baby in one's hands; nevertheless, she had no experience of child care, being the only child of her parents, and therefore felt slightly anxious about the prospect of having responsibility for a child. She thought of herself as 'weak', 'childish', not 'developed' enough personally, and therefore had always put off having a child. For years, it was supposed to happen 'not today, not now!'. Lada also thought that having a child was 'happiness, a present which I did not deserve yet'. In addition, to do 'just what we want' seemed incorrect then, because both Lada and her husband needed to finish their studies first.

A special aspect of Lada's fear of childbirth was due to her 'sad' experience of a miscarriage early in conjugal life. She could not help thinking that this happened because they were somehow guilty, not mature enough (she thought her husband was just a 'boy', not a man yet), and had not worked out their relationship yet. Thus the idea of needing to 'be ready' for a child, and not having one just by accident, had strengthened in Lada's mind. During her next pregnancy, Lada was afraid that she would miscarry again, at the same term as before. She even stopped working for a while. Then she relaxed, however, her fears disappeared, and she returned to work. She became one of those people who believe that there is 'nothing special' in pregnancy, nothing that should require any special treatment or life style. Lada was working until late in pregnancy, and even after she left work, she was busy with repair works in their flat until the day of the birth: 'To go to bed? A healthy person? What a nonsense!' She did not feel the need for admiration on the part of other people, and did not consider 'any' pregnant woman beautiful. She thought the woman ought to take care of herself all the time, to always be energetic, not to become too fat, and so on.

Now, after the birth of the child, everything seemed to be simpler to Lada in the area of having children.

The story of Lada's successful pregnancy and birth, which was 'natural' and took place at home, seems to have served to her as a 'spiritual' self-fulfillment, and promoted bonding with other members of the 'natural childbirth' group rather than with the husband, since he did not visit the group even once, being busy with his work every weekend. The bonding was especially strong with the 'spiritual midwife' who delivered Lada at home. Lada felt real love towards her, trust and jealousy, and she named her daughter after the midwife. Lada seemed to enjoy allowing this woman to take power and control over her and her child's life, and obeying her in everything. This, however, did not only have emotional roots, but was due very much to Lada's belief in the midwife's professional skills. Her husband's participation in the home birth was very active, he cleaned the bathroom, he helped Lada to move around when necessary, and it was he who actually cut the umbilical cord after the birth (at the midwife's insistence, however). Lada was very proud of this fact. He loved their baby daughter very much. Therefore Lada believed in the existence of the paternal instinct, although she thought it was 'very much repressed' in men, while the maternal instinct was 'significantly stronger' in women.

Lada was a passionate follower of the 'natural childbirth' movement. She spoke like a prophet, explaining and proving her position. She tried to be tolerant to other opinions, however, and even said that she considered several variants for her own birth, 'had studied' the conditions of several private birth services at different maternity

hospitals, but was dissatisfied with all of them: there it was impossible to have the child near the mother all the time; it was possible to have the husband present, but he would not have been allowed to actively participate; and no hospital allowed a woman to give birth in an up-right position, since it was 'inconvenient' for the doctors. Lada was warned, however, that she had serious problems with her sight, and was even advised to have a Caesarean. So it was not an easy decision, to have a natural birth. However, the actual experience was so successful, *pleasant*, beautiful, and unusual ('the water buzzed around me') that she was the only one among my interviewees who said that she actually enjoyed the birth and wanted to repeat it:

no, I mean not the birth of another child, but this same birth of Natashka, I want so much to live through it again... it is surprising how many things which happened then are already lost in my memory...

All this, whatever the 'propagandistic', or 'prophetic' part of it, represents a striking contrast to all the other birth stories I have heard (none of the other births took place at home or was absolutely 'natural').

Lada made the choice according to considerations concerning the future emotional and physical health of the child: 'all of a human's life is influenced by how he or she was born', and the emotional links between the mother and child, which should not be disturbed. The child's interests were put first; for a mother, natural childbirth was a huge and important work, although worthy of being proud of. Natural childbirth 'affiliation' also meant not eating 'protein' food ('to protect elasticity of the tissues'), and being 'natural' in many other things.

Lada never had particular fears of the process of giving birth. The only 'frightening stories' which had some influence on her concerned accidents happening to children while they were being born in maternity hospitals. She was not really afraid of any complications to herself. However, she told me several stories of difficult 'natural childbirth' cases she knew of. Lada believed that this had something to do with the inherent 'sins' of the couple, for example, that they did not live particularly well with each other. In some groups, including that to which Lada belonged, 'natural childbirth' was very much associated with religion. The ritual side involved lighting a candle in the room where the birth took place, and the midwife was 'spiritual'. On the other hand, Lada still had reservations concerning religion, and had not been baptized yet. Her position here was similar to her postponing the birth - it might happen, she could imagine one day becoming very religious. Lada felt uneasy about religion because her parents did not pass it on to her, 'it did not come to me even through my grandmothers'.

In literature, Lada was an admirer of Tsvetaeva because of the strength and the courage with which the latter expressed all sides of female personality.

Lada did not have a close relationship with either of her parents; she lived with her grandmother for most of her childhood, and had some tender feeling only towards a grandfather, and only when she was still very young. Her relationship with her mother-in-law was even worse and more complicated than with her mother. However, she became closer to both women after the birth of her daughter, not because they behaved any 'better' since then, but because she began to understand their feelings and motivations.

Lada had a deep, inner desire for a daughter ('all girls, in childhood, want to give birth to girls'), but 'forced' herself to want a son. Yet she thought that the sex of a child depended on 'who is really needed in the family', even if the family members themselves thought otherwise. God knows their own needs better than they do.

She thought that it was important for a woman to maintain her personality and her integrity, be separated from her child, but this did not mean a career at the present moment of Lada's life, rather something more like 'a visit to a hair-dresser'... She did not particularly enjoy her former work (at a research Institute), and consequently could imagine beginning another career in the future, 'doing something more... real'.

Nevertheless, for the present moment, Lada enjoyed staying at home with her child very much, and considered this to be both pleasure and work.

We can see from these interview accounts, and from the opinions the other interviewees express, that the normative family in today's Russia exists within a context of economic and cultural constraints which are associated with economic and normative change. On the one hand, there are rising living standards, enabling more attention to be paid to the quality of the child's and the parents' lives. On the other, the decrease in social welfare means that women have to rely more on themselves or their partners in economic matters, and many have few possibilities to improve their economic situation. The result is that even those people who are relatively well-to-do, married, and want children find themselves subject to a new social norm of having not more than one child. They might accept this norm and restrict themselves to having an only child, although they would like more, as was the case with Kira. Or they might rebel and have a second child, although they will have to overcome opposition from most or all of their relatives and do so very much at their own risk, as was the case with Yana, Nadia, and Uliana. Others, like Lada, postponed the birth even of the first child, even though they were positive about having children, because they felt that parenting was too responsible and important task. The normative pressure to have one child if you already are in a couple situation is also strong. Polina and Vika, who do not want children, feel very much oppressed by this norm.

Women may reach different conclusions from this association of marriage with children: Valeria and Janna, for example, see children as the cost which must be paid for the benefits of getting married, and Veronika felt obliged to have children once she was married.

It is also clear from the above accounts that the desire to have children is sometimes caused or strengthened by the essential view of sex roles which was so widespread in late Soviet society. This view sees men as 'higher' creatures, and associates achievement with them. Therefore some women want to have sons to compensate for their own under-achievement, or they do not even try to achieve anything due to their low self-esteem associated with the essential view of women having less potential for achievement. Alternatively they might have a successful career but give it up for the sake of their child since they see motherhood as so essential for the woman, her pre-destination, much more important than anything else in their lives. This, as we have seen, was Kira's experience. The view that mothering should necessarily be intense seems to be associated both with the view of sex roles promoted by late Soviet family ideology, and with the new rising concern about quality of life.

Religious, or mystical, feelings were also important, especially at the time of giving birth, for this group of women. It is interesting that two of them saw the birth of their children as something not done by them, but through them, as if some 'higher forces' was brought into the world through them. This might be linked to the influence on them of the strong cultural idea of pre-destination, of one's own will not being so important, of the highest moments of life being associated with a unity with some whole which is above the person. Yana felt something like this at the birth of her child, when she felt she was one of 'all the females in the world'.

Women explain the reasons for having children not only in terms of normative pressure, but also in terms of the pleasure they get from children, love of life, and love of natural processes. This can be interpreted as 'another side of the same coin' of the individualism which conditions some people not to want children at all, because having children for pleasure seems to be an individualistic motivation. The pleasure might stem from the creative work of educating the children, of the self-realisation they derive through that creative work, or simply because they love small children.

On the whole, we can see that people use various explanations for their motivations to have children: social (norms), economic (cost and benefit analysis), religious or mystical (higher forces wanting our children to be born), biological (reproductive instinct; this seems to be caused more by views promoted by Soviet ideologists of the family of the late 80-s than directly by those of Western sociobiologists) and individualistic (pleasure). Kira also directly refers to Freud, not in explaining her own behaviour (although for me there is

a huge temptation to apply Freudian concepts to her proprietary view of her child), but in interpreting her husband's attitude to their son.

CHAPTER 3.

Resistance to reproduction: abortion, contraception, sterilization.

In their attitude towards abortion, women of my sample can be divided into two groups: those who see this as an unquestionable '*norm of life*' (though they accept the problems concerning the inherent harm to the woman's health; these problems were always stressed by Soviet propaganda), and those who see it as morally wrong (they often say that abortion is murder). The underlying factor which divides these two groups is education, the level attained. Those in the second group tend to have higher education. The type of education plays a role too: those in the second group tend to have studied the humanities. Acceptance or non-acceptance of abortion by contemporary Russian women of my generation seems, then, to be a *cultural* phenomenon in the broader sense, and not only a religious one, although religion plays an important secondary role, since people with higher education and/or those having a degree in the humanities tend to be more deeply interested in religion. There is also a noticeable '*year of birth*' dimension, since younger women were more exposed to different kinds of anti-abortion propaganda and at a younger age.

However, no one in my sample seemed to adhere to an extreme 'catholic' position, which saw abortion as never justified. Those who came closest to that position (especially the deeply religious Vera and Uliana; or, Polina, when she considered the issue 'emotionally', or Lada, who simply said that 'abortion... it is... a nasty thing', or Kira who considered it being a 'deadly sin' from the Church's point of view) usually accept that it is possible to do in certain cases. These were if the pregnancy was the result of *rape* (Valeria and Yana held this position, although Yana simply hoped that she would not fall victim to rape: 'I will try to protect myself!'); or if there was a high probability that the child would be born disabled (Nadia; Alla; Galia; Kira).

Other interviewees (Janna, Raya, Veronica, Valeria) believe that even in the case of pregnancy which resulted simply from spontaneous, unplanned sex, abortion was justifiable. Many women see poverty and concern with the '*quality*' of the future child's life as sufficient reason (for example, if there are housing problems and/or the mother needs to work while the child is still really small (Raya), or simply if the mother has a low income (Galia, Alla, Yulia). For Kira, for example,

there is such poverty now, everyone is poor, and, of course, many people have [abortions]...).

Kira also thought that many people have abortions because they are uneducated, not 'enlightened', especially in moral matters. Other reasons which justified termination of pregnancy in the opinion of some of my interviewees included having no male support (Nadia; Raya; Alla; Veronica) or not loving the father of the child (Kira), or having another child who is still very small (Nina; Lidia; Raya; Uliana, at least, in the past). Yana does not accept this and had two children very quickly one after the other, as a result. Next reason is the mother not being mature enough to give birth to a child, 'not being ready', the pregnancy not happening at the 'right time' (Alla; Kira; Yulia). Use of abortion as a 'last resort' in the case of contraceptive failure, since there is 'no 100% guarantee', and since many young women simply initially do not know well enough how to use contraception, also was seen as justifiable (by Raya, Alla and Valeria).

Some say that abortion is murder: 'of course this is life of some kind, of course it is finished in the same way' (Raya); 'it is impossible to hide this fact from oneself' (Janna); but 'there can be murders forced upon you by circumstances' (Yulia); or 'I can imagine a situation in which I could commit a real murder, too' (Janna). Valeria uses a 'statistical' approach: 'I kill a life, and how many lives are killed everywhere at every moment?', so this particular one seems not to be especially important.

Some consider that finally it is, precisely, the woman's choice (Alla; Valeria; Vika: 'I choose this, myself! Me, a woman!'), it is her right to control her body, especially if/when she thinks that there are other aspects of her life which must be developed at the moment: education, career (Kira; and Uliana, formerly), or if she simply does not want a child (Vika, Valeria, Janna, Alla, and Polina, when she is 'rational'). There lies a border line between those who see the foetus as a human and those who see it as simply part of the woman's body. In the first category fall Janna, Yulia, and Kira. For the latter the whole issue is very complicated, since she can understand women who have many abortions after they have given birth to only one child just to control their fertility, since 'society is guilty' for not creating good conditions for having children; but women resorting to abortion are also guilty for her. The second category consists of Vika, Veronica, Maya.

However, women who have considered late abortion themselves, or thought about it on a theoretical level, often oppose the *late abortion* as murder and a bigger 'sin', even if they are not so sure about early abortion (Veronica, Raya, Maya, Vera).

Vera and Uliana actually oppose the idea of abortion as a 'woman's choice'. However, they also have some reservations: although Vera thinks that abortion should be forbidden at any term, it is only 'a murder, strictly speaking' after the 9th week, in her view. She also believes that for married women it is a much more serious problem than for single women. She does not 'blame' anyone 'too much', since she actually committed this

'sin 'in intention', when she considered abortion, even though she finally decided against it. For Vera, infertility in many cases is the morally fair result of the 'sin' of numerous abortions.

For most women there is an additional dimension, that of the harm done to the woman's body. Some even see abortion as violation of the woman's body. Yana, for example, claimed to have no religious reasons for opposing abortion, but just 'I cannot imagine someone picking my body and cutting my own child out of me.' Kira tells a story of a woman with such an 'unfairly' robust health that it was still good after 16 abortions. Kira could not help admiring such health even in such a 'sinful' situation. Most of the other respondents simply think that abortion is 'bad for a woman's health' (Yulia; Nina; Vera; Lidia; Janna; Polina; Valeria, who, however, believes that birth is even more harmful; and Raya, though she thinks that only late abortion is particularly harmful), and can result in infertility (Nadia, Nina, Vera).

There is an obvious 'pro-life' aspect in Polina, Vera, Nadia, Yulia, Uliana, and Yana's opposition to abortion. Yana, for example, says that there is something very 'touching, self-approving... and life-approving' in the conception of a child: 'there was nothing and now there is a human'.

Vera decided not to abort her only pregnancy even though she would be a single mother, because she just 'loves life so much' and wanted the child to experience this life as well. Yulia thinks that a woman would not be able to love a child, even if she bore one, if abortion had become a 'bad custom' for her and she had about 10 of them. Something would be 'erased' in her soul forever. Nadia said that she just 'feels very strongly that this is life in me', and that communication with a small child is such a 'life-approving' pleasure, that she could not have had even one abortion after she had had a child, even though she had had two abortions before giving birth. Nina, who likes having children, and had eight of them because they 'came to me, and I felt too much pity for them to throw them away', actually once had an abortion for the most frivolous reason of all the women in the sample: she just had a quarrel with her husband and wanted 'revenge'. Uliana always saw her aborted children in dreams immediately after the event.

Kira thinks that the abortion issue can be resolved by 'enlightenment', by working with pregnant women who intend to do this, and not only 'persuading' them that abortion is bad, but trying to 'open other options' in life for them, so that

even if she now has no help... who knows, life is not so simple, and
maybe some help will be given to her in the future.

Kira would want to participate in such an enlightening work herself.

Women who are not so maternal, or so 'enlightened', have less moral and more rational considerations. For example, Vika did not have an abortion when pregnant with her son, even though she did not want the child herself, because a child was nevertheless planned by her family and 'needed' by this family. She was married then and had already graduated; to have an abortion in such a situation would be 'just stupid'. As a whole, however, Vika's attitude to abortion is positive. For her, there would be no sex if 'every coitus ended in conception', since 'this is too high a cost'. She thinks that only 'male theoreticians and bluestocking old maids' can argue in favour of the prohibition of abortion. Still there are some moral reservations in this area for Vika: 'it is the *deprivation* of something...' [*italics mine*], but not murder, since she does not believe that a foetus is a human until 'the 4th month' of gestation. She herself did not feel that her son had 'any kind of personality' until several months after the birth.

For Lidia abortion was simply not an *available resource*. She also believed that it was not her choice, but her *responsibility*⁷⁰ to have an abortion in her situation nevertheless: 'he [her husband] said - do whatever you want, help yourself by your own means'. This idea of abortion being a responsible act holds for Raya and Nina as well, since these three women feel guilty for intending to abandon their new-born babies, which is generally considered to be less responsible than having an abortion (see the discussion below).

In Lidia's situation her own desires came last. She actually had to choose between being thrown out of her common-law husband's flat together with their small son with nowhere else to go, or aborting her second pregnancy. She could not obtain an abortion, however, since legally she is not a Muscovite, and therefore has no right to free abortion according to contemporary regulations, and no money to pay for a private abortion either. She could not actually believe that abortion, so easily obtainable formerly, and considered an inalienable woman's right by practically everyone, was not accessible to her. But this was the case, and consequently she had to give birth to a daughter whom she subsequently relinquished at the maternity hospital. She was even trying to arrange an abortion late in the pregnancy. Lack of money was the only problem she could see in the issue of late abortion. Moral ideas concerning abortion being a murder simply did not come into Lidia's head in her difficult situation.

⁷⁰ Yana and Nadia experienced pressure to have an abortion from their families and relatives. They were made to feel it was a responsible act aborting a baby who would be born in a situation which the relatives considered inappropriate. This was also the case with Uliana, in a way, although her mother was dead by the time she had her last three abortions. Before her death, however, the mother 'ordered' Uliana to finish her education, whatever it would cost her. With her third daughter, Uliana experienced pressure to abort on the part of her in-laws.

Raya and Valeria both use a 'statistical' approach to abortions in a rather novel manner: they count how many abortions each woman has 'on average' during her life time, including in the sample all women who never had an abortion for whatever reasons, it does not matter was it their own decision or lack of pregnancies in their lives, on the grounds that those having 'fifteen abortions' are not to blame for the fact that they are 'terribly fertile'. As a result Raya and Valeria receive a 'moderate' figure of two to four abortions per woman, which does not seem to be 'too much' from the point of view of the 'seriousness' of this 'sin', if it is considered a 'collective' sin.

In Raya's case, as well as in many other cases of women abandoning their newborn babies, a link from early abortion through late abortion to infanticide becomes obvious, since she considered all these possibilities to deal with an unwanted pregnancy, including the last one, but then was frightened very much by the fact that such an idea had come to her mind, and she finally decided to give birth and to relinquish the baby to the state's guardianship. Raya would actually prefer (and is the only one who actually spoke about this) *sterilization* to both abortion and contraception, and did not try to obtain sterilization earlier only because she had no permanent partner for long periods of time. She wanted to be sterilized after the birth of her second, relinquished, child. Raya opposed the 'natural' 'life-approving' position, according to which children were seen as gifts from the 'upper sphere', their conception being independent from people's own will. Accordingly, Raya saw refusal to have an abortion as the irresponsible position.

Janna 'of course' wanted to abort her first pregnancy, since a child was 'unnecessary' for her. She needed more than the nine months of pregnancy to become 'prepared' for the child's birth.

Galia, who is infertile, thinks that 'abortion is bad', since one child per woman is an absolute necessity, in her view, whatever this woman's life is like. But having too many children while one has no means to support them is *irresponsible* in her view and might be regulated by abortion.

The issue of *responsibility* is important for Alla as well. She had an abortion seven years prior to the interview, and although it quite probably resulted in her present subfertility, she does not regret the fact, since 'only the wanted children should be born' (in this point Maya agrees with Alla). Therefore 'alcoholic' women who bear many 'inadequate children' should better be 'sterilized', in Alla's view. Galia agrees that alcoholic mothers are 'irresponsible'.

Although Vika does not believe that there can be 'forced' abortions (while Yulia has heard about this), Veronica actually had precisely this experience herself, since she is disabled and was compelled to abort her first pregnancy, being told that she could never

have a healthy child, she would die herself, and that it would be better for her to adopt. Then, after the abortion Veronica was told that she never would be allowed to adopt with her heart condition. Her reaction to the deception was so intense that Veronica intentionally 'fell pregnant' again the 'next day'. Doctors, however, did not cease trying to persuade her to abort this pregnancy too, even at a late term, this time unsuccessfully, even though they used other means of deception this time, like trying to persuade Veronica that the child would have a heart disease similar to her own.

Valeria, who is voluntarily childless, considers abortion to be an appropriate means of birth control in her situation (while Vera heavily opposes the use of abortion instead of contraception in the case of voluntary childlessness), she even does not remember precisely how many abortions she has had: 'three... or, maybe, four...'. For Valeria, there is just one choice: between legal and affordable abortion of reasonable quality, and 'back street' abortion in cases where there is no legal option. To her, even suicide seems sometimes to be a better option than giving a birth.

For Polina, who also does not want children, the issue is not that simple, since she is happily married and her husband wants children. In addition, her views are such that she would give birth if she happened to get pregnant, since abortion is unacceptable for her, as well, she thinks, as for the majority of other women.

Polina considers that the fact that abortion is unacceptable for the majority of women is the main reason for single motherhood. Nadia, however, thinks that in this situation a woman's 'inability' to have an abortion results from a strong love for the man fathering the child, which 'biologically' forces her to love the child too.

Maya, who is very reserved about giving birth and can imagine it only in certain conditions, has not 'resolved' the abortion issue for herself yet. However, she thinks that one can control the fertility of one's body simply 'psychosomatically'. Therefore, in her view, she has managed to never fall pregnant herself. Uliana similarly believes that she can address God asking him to allow her not to get pregnant again too soon after the birth of her last child, and that this is going to help.

As for contraception, the opinions of the interviewees on it are more unanimous. Just a few of them reject it theoretically (Uliana, Yana); even they, together with all the other interviewees, do accept the possibility of using it in practice. Veronica finds an additional protective dimension in contraceptive use: 'all these diseases... AIDS and stuff like that'.

However, most interviewees (Uliana, Yana, Lada, Lidia, Janna, Valeria, Polina, Nadia, Kira) do not use any of the 'complicated' but more reliable means, such as the Pill or the IUD, but rely on coitus interruptus, condoms, douche, and the rhythm method. As

Lidia, who uses a douche and the rhythm method put it, 'I just thought that what I was doing was enough'.

Some do not use any contraception at all since they do not have permanent sexual partners (for example, Raya, though she used condoms when she had sex but was not on the pill; she found that the condoms did not work; also Valeria, Vera, Yulia). Among those who use the 'reliable' means (Raya, Alla and Veronica use or have used the pill at some time; Vika and Nina try, or have tried in the past, the IUD) at least one (Nina) experienced contraceptive failure, perhaps because she had the wrong sized device. She was also not very confident in her ability to use contraception properly. Anyway, now, after the birth of Nina's seventh and eighth children, she intends to try the IUD again.

There exists a widespread opinion in Russia that hormonal pills are very harmful due to their side effects, even more harmful than abortion (Kira, Valeria, Nadia). Many think this about the IUD too (Raya, Lidia, and Nadia). Valeria has psychological reasons for rejecting it as well, since she is afraid of having something, apart from a penis, being 'inserted' into her body). Some may really have counter-indications to use either of these two methods (Uliana, and Veronica, although the latter uses the pill anyway; Raya had health problems with the IUD; Nadia might also have counter-indications).

When I asked the interviewees to compare what solution was actually the 'best' to deal with an unwanted pregnancy among contraception, abortion, and abandonment of a child, their answers heavily depended on their overall views of abortion, exposed above. Basically, those who thought of abortion as a murder, especially if they had religious, and/or 'life-loving' reasons to do so (Lada, Kira, Yana, Polina, Vera, Uliana), tended to prefer relinquishment of the babies to abortion (the children could later be taken in by 'kind people', and would grow up in normal conditions; at least, the very possibility of this would not be destroyed with their very lives). However, for the majority of the interviewees (Vika, Yulia, Maya, Nina, Valeria, Janna, Veronica, and Raya and Lidia, who themselves relinquished their children) it was the other way round: they believed that having an abortion was better from the point of view of *responsibility* for this particular child's life, it is better for the child to have no life at all, than to live a poor quality life. Raya also expressed the view that it is physically much easier for a woman to have an abortion, than to carry the pregnancy to term and give birth then. Some of these women stressed that abandonment was better than infanticide (Vika, Raya). Contraception was the best of the three for practically all of the interviewees, although Vera expressed reservations about its overall reliability, believing that success very much depended on the 'professional' skills of a woman, since the only successful user she knew of was the midwife. Valeria, Uliana, and Kira had similar doubts. Uliana and Kira also thought that

contraception is bad for religious reasons. Kira, Uliana, Lada, and Galia agreed that all these means make no sense nevertheless, because

if it is predestined for a child to be born, it will be born, however hard you try to avoid this.

Although the set of opinions the interviewees have in the area of abortion seems to be similar to that of Western women (Murcotte and Feltham, 1996, had the same impression), it is important to stress that when my interviewees express the view that abortion is murder, this is due not only to Western pro-life propaganda (in form, for example, of pictures which appeared everywhere in the Moscow metro one day in the early 1990-s), but also due to the teaching of Orthodox religion, which gained in popularity during the last decade. Orthodox religion is also hostile to contraception, but this seems to have been too strong a requirement for the majority of the interviewees for them to have been influenced by Orthodoxy in this respect.

The view of some women who are less inclined to childbearing, that abortion is a matter of a woman's choice, seems to come more from the fact that abortion was a taken-for-granted practice in the Soviet Union at least since the 1960-s, than from contemporary feminist discourse, which is still unknown to practically all interviewees. Actually, abortion is seen by many of them not as a matter of choice but as a norm of life, as one of woman's social security rights which should not be challenged. This is probably a cultural specific of contemporary Russia. Some women (for example, Lidia, who we will discuss in more detail in the next chapter) really do get into situations which show what happens when access to abortion is made more difficult, especially in the conditions of economic constraints caused by crisis (unemployment, lack of income stability, housing problems, disrupted social self-help networks).

Uliana's case is especially interesting, since it shows the evolution which was occurring in her attitude towards abortion, at the same time that cultural change was also taking place: she went from seeing abortion as an unquestioned norm of life to an almost total denial of the right to abortion and contraception. This change took place as Uliana became deeply involved in Orthodox religion, which intensified an already existing feeling of regret and guilt on account of abortions she had had in the past.

In explaining their preference of some contraceptive means over others, interviewees often use the word "natural", thus providing another example of the spirit of essentialism which was, to some extent, formed in them by the Soviet ideology of the family. However, when speaking about the reasons for abortion, they very often give a social 'marxist' explanation, seeing the main causes as poverty and the bad economic situation in which many people find themselves. One can also see the influence of press

publications on 'cuckoo-mothers' which appeared in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet eras (see Waters, 1992,1). The interviewees expressed hostile, scornful attitudes towards these 'cuckoo mothers', considering the abortion option being 'better' than baby relinquishment.

CHAPTER 4.

Unwanted, but born.

Abandoning one's own child⁷¹ seemed to be the position furthest from 'normality' to practically all the interviewees (Yana, Kira, Lada, Galia, Alla, Veronica, Valeria, Maya, Polina, Nina). Uliana even considered this to be a 'crime'. The relinquishing mothers themselves viewed this behaviour in the same negative light. My interviewees very rarely saw relinquishment in the context of 'objective' constraints such as, first of all, *poverty*. As Kira put it, 'many women leave their children not because they are terribly poor'; or, in Galia's words: 'a child, sorry, does not need a palace. A child needs an ordinary maternal caress.' But Valeria believes that some women really 'cannot afford' to bring their own children up. Vera, Yulia and Polina agree that there might be 'horrible circumstances'; therefore Nadia 'would never blame the [relinquishing mothers]'.

Another 'objective constraint' which was rarely considered to be a sufficient justification for abandonment of a baby, was *lack of male support*. According to Veronica, 'in every relationship everything is clear from the very beginning', so there is never any serious reason to wait, to not arrange an abortion until it is too late. Nadia, Galia, and Yulia agree that it is more appropriate to keep a child as a single mother, than to relinquish him or her for this reason. Yet for Nina, not having the consent of her male partner to take their newborn daughters home from the maternity hospital was precisely the reason for her attempt at relinquishment.

Nevertheless, most often the interviewees explain child abandonment by reference to the *bad education* the relinquishing mothers themselves received as children (Yana; Kira; Veronica; Maya; Yulia; Uliana; Nadia), the *low* level of their *maturity* and consciousness (Vera), infantilism (Yana, Nadia), '*illness*' (Valeria, Vera) of the '*maternal instinct*' in these women (Kira, Lada, Galia, Yulia, Nadia), *fear of attachments* (Kira, Vera, Yulia, Nadia, Nina), *laziness* (Nina; Lada; Galia; Valeria), *irresponsibility* (Kira; Lada; Galia; Alla; Veronica; Valeria; Nina; Maya; Uliana; Vera). Yulia also mentioned the equally important factor of the abandoning fathers' irresponsibility, which, in her view, seems to concern no-one. Other reasons for relinquishment of the babies mentioned by the

⁷¹ In Russia every woman has the right to relinquish parental rights over her new-born child while she is still in the maternity hospital. If she chooses to do so, she signs a special document which is called 'parental refusal'. She will have no more information about this child's future life. Children of such women go into children's homes, where they will live until adulthood, or they may be adopted. The situation in children's homes is bad (see Waters, 1992, 2), but adoption is easier now.

interviewees include *lack of altruism* in these babies' mothers (Valeria, Veronica; Vera; Uliana; Nadia; Yulia; Lada:

they are just consumers, they want society to care for their kids, they do not want to give anything...'),

and *lack of control over their own lives* (Valeria, Maya, Vera). Uliana did think too that these mothers could not control their lives, but in her view it was a good thing, for religious reasons, not to insist on one's own will too much. Therefore relinquishment of a child, for her, was a lesser sin than abortion. Finally, many interviewees considered *lack of love of life*, characteristic for some women, as a possible explanation of this particular form of rejecting motherhood (Galia, Veronica, Maya, Vera, Yulia, Nadia, Uliana).

Some among my interlocutors believed that the relinquishing mothers are going to *regret* this (Lada, Galia, Yulia, Nadia) and feel this 'sin' for the rest of their lives, but it will be too late to change anything in the situation. 'Their children would not forgive them', as Yulia put it.

At the same time, several interviewees felt pity towards the relinquishing mothers, who seemed to be *deprived of love* in their own lives (Yana, Yulia, Nadia). Yana wanted, in the situation of relinquishment, 'to caress both the mother and the child'.

Nevertheless, Yulia thought that no one can call a child 'one's own' unless one had brought this child up oneself. Galia believed that a woman must have a certain degree of *independence* and *personal strength* in order to be able to abandon her own child. Galia expressed gratitude to the birth mother of her adopted daughter, because if she had not relinquished her, this baby girl would not have been available for adoption. Vera, on the contrary, thought that the relinquishing mothers lacked personal strength, but she agreed that they must be 'thanked' for the fact that 'they did not kill the baby' (Uliana would agree with this). It was also good, in Vera's view, that now 'there is somewhere to place the baby'.

Otherwise infanticide would flourish. Uliana, however, did not praise the children's homes for anything. Her hope for the abandoned children was that they might be adopted. Valeria, on the other hand, doubted the advantages of adoption, since a child could get into a bad family which would abuse him or her. Thus Valeria solidified her opinion that abortion is the best solution for unwanted pregnancy.

Many interviewees believed that one of the main reasons for the relinquishment of the babies is the latters' being *born disabled* (Galia, Alla, Uliana, Vera). Yulia actually emphasized that society forced mothers to relinquish their disabled children even when the mothers did not want this. The only woman in the sample who was not a relinquishing

mother but said that she would be able to relinquish her child in some circumstances (Janna) thought that she might do this if her child had some serious birth defect.

Veronica, Polina, Alla and Lada stressed that the phenomenon of babies' abandonment was very far from their own everyday life experiences. As Alla put it, 'it never could and never did happen with any of my friends and acquaintances'. For Vera and Nadia it was, too, though to a lesser extent, a thing about 'others', 'their' lives.

Women who did not abandon their babies, but did not love them, were considered to be no less deviating than those who relinquished (Yana; Lada). Polina said that it was 'indecent' not to love one's own child. These mothers, however, seemed more responsible and less lazy, since they did not abandon their unloved children. But Nadia and Vera thought that such women would do better remaining childless: a person ought to understand which things in life are 'not for her' and consequently never do them.

Now let us consider in more detail two case studies of mothers who actually relinquished their babies to the state's guardianship.

Lidia was born in Moscow, but she lost all her documents in the attempt to sell her flat. She was deceived by criminals, and therefore she has not been able to get documents replaced up till the time of the interview. Consequently, she did not have the usual rights of Muscovites, including the right to free medical care and, hence, free abortion. Lidia also could not use the option of 'temporary refusal'⁷² of her parental rights, since she had no Moscow residence registration.

Lidia's family situation was no less complicated. 'My marital status is very difficult...', as she put it. She had a common-law husband and a son by him. They lived together in his room in a communal flat, but unofficially, since she had no documents. Nor can she marry him, not only due to the lack of documents, but also because he was still officially married to his first wife, who also had a son by him. A few days before the interview, Lidia had a daughter. Since both she and her partner were currently unemployed and lived at his parents' expense, this was a situation of extreme dependence, which was unfamiliar to Lidia: she had worked all her life and was used to independence, because her

⁷² Temporary refusals: temporary refusal is an option allowing a mother to leave a child in the children home for a limited time, and then take it home, when her situation changes. There are two possibilities: to do it for a year, and to do it for three years. This involves and requires permanent and regular contact of a mother with a child, she can and should visit him or her at the children home ideally every day. However, this option, in distinction from a full refusal, is open only to women who have a residence registration at the place where the birth happens (in the present case, in Moscow). If they do have the registration in some other place, they theoretically can take a child with them and leave it then at the children home in their own city under the same conditions. However, this is too complicated practically and psychologically, consequently in reality the temporary refusals are open only to women with Moscow residence registration.

own parents never helped her in anything since she finished secondary school. Lidia was always working even while living with this man, as a street flower-seller, even when she was pregnant the first time, and again just four months after the first birth ('we had... financial problems then... so I had to [go to work].').

Meanwhile her common-law husband was baby-sitting and working just occasionally at one-day jobs which his father found for him from time to time. Recently Lidia also became unemployed. This made the situation very complicated, because her partner's parents did not accept her, considering their son's first wife's family his 'real family'. Lidia's partner is used to being completely dependent on his parents. Consequently, when she fell pregnant for the second time, his only reaction was:

The most important thing is that my parents do not learn about it; if they do, you will be thrown out onto in the street together with your son.

He told Lidia to do whatever she wanted and resolve the problem by her own means. She tried unsuccessfully to obtain a free abortion; tried unsuccessfully to borrow money from acquaintances to pay for a private abortion

(I do not have friends, only acquaintances; and usually there are no friends in situations when you need money anyway).

She thought about 'everything', in her own words, including the possibility of late abortion, but nothing was available to her either due to her lack of documents, or to her lack of money. As a result, she was practically 'compelled' to give birth and then to relinquish the baby at the maternity hospital ('and this was already much more complicated' than abortion, psychologically), although she tried to persuade her partner to let her bring the baby home. However, Lidia did not insist on this. They both would rather have chosen temporary refusal, since they hoped to improve their situation in the near future by studying for better trades and obtaining more stable jobs (though Lidia said that for some short time period she would accept any job). However, temporary refusal was not an option for them, as I already said, because Lidia had no documents, and a child can be registered only under the mother's name, not the father's. Accordingly, their first child was still not registered. Lidia did not want to think about her daughter's adoption, she would have preferred to find some way to keep her. Nevertheless, finally she had to be humble and accept the fact that she would have to part with her daughter forever.

Lidia actually found herself in a situation of choosing between her two children. She said that she had to relinquish her second child in order to protect the first one, to ensure that he would not be 'thrown out onto the street together with me', and to preserve the possibility 'of setting him on his own feet' in a 'decent' way. Lidia thought it was

irresponsible and 'not proper' to have several children when one was poor. It was better to concentrate one's efforts on only one child.

Lidia's second pregnancy was kept secret from practically everyone. On the other hand, often in the situations of relinquishment there is at least one person who knows everything. In this case it was, naturally, Lidia's partner, although, as is, again, usual with such 'confidantes', he was not of much practical help in solving this question. The final decision is the woman's, whether she wants it to be or not.

Lidia had found that her husband's personality was 'very domestic', and she thought that this was good, since he at least did not spend time drinking in the company of friends. He also did some housekeeping, but preferred baby-sitting to housekeeping. Lidia never expected him to be a provider for the family; as she put it, 'I never thought that even if I lived with a man, I would live at his expense.' At the time, however, their relationship was 'strained' because of money problems, dependence on his parents, and the fact that his parents were trying to persuade him that Lidia was no good for him. Lidia and her husband never had a close emotional relationship, they were not accustomed to sharing their moods and emotions with each other. Lidia believed that her second pregnancy happened precisely because they 'did not have sex regularly, not... constantly', since they both worked, had a little child to take care of, and were tired.

Lidia always 'planned' to have children, but a 'normal' job was more important for her. In Lidia's view, a couple, even when it is formed and stable, ought to live a bit 'for themselves' first, and to have children

only later, if you are absolutely sure that you want them... It is not a cat nor a dog, but a child that you will have.

She decided to start a family only when she met this present partner, she considered that he could become a good father, and that 'a family will be normal with him'.

Lidia slightly preferred sons to daughters, but 'a child is a child, since it is given to you', so, a daughter was acceptable for her, too. For Lidia, 'a child is given by *life*' [italics mine], she had her son not because she wanted to be like everyone else, but because he was 'a new human who... perhaps... will bring something good into this life.'

A child is actually the meaning of one's life, we 'live for' having children. A child is the 'future', one's 'successor'; s/he can also help the parents in their old age, but Lidia stressed that she did not want to 'burden' her son too much. However, if he did not respect his parents at all, it would mean that the parents themselves were 'worthy of nothing', were not 'decent people', did not have any 'will'. Therefore Lidia thought that education should be relatively strict, in order to 'accustom' the child to some norms.

Lidia's relationship with her own mother was very bad: 'Honestly, I hate her'. Lidia and her brother were brought up by their grand-parents, while their parents freely enjoyed their lives, until her mother decided to divorce her father. Lidia took the father's side. This strained her relationship with her mother, and the father died soon after. The mother 'lives for herself' since her two children have grown up, and, Lidia asserted, the mother never helped her either by giving her money or advice.

Lidia's attitude to pregnancy was very stoical, she thought it was better 'not to take too much care of oneself' during this period, since if you do hard physical work hard during pregnancy, 'you give birth more easily'.

This is what she did, both times. However, she had problems with veins on her leg, as all street-sellers do, especially if, as is presently the custom, they work until the last day of the pregnancy, since their work involves standing on their feet for long hours. The last pregnancy was bad at the very end, 'because I could not bend to clean the flat properly'.

Lidia did not think much about this second child during pregnancy, and no bonding developed, since she felt 'desperate', she

had a suspicion that this would not end at all well... I felt like someone says - there has been enough good for you, now it is time for you to experience some bad...

Lidia's attitude towards relinquishment as such was different from that of other women in this sample at the time of the interview. She said that she

never blamed people who do so...Because one can always get into such a situation as well. But I could never imagine that I would really get into such a situation.

Lidia was aware that others might consider her and other abandoning mothers to be 'idiots or fools'. In her view, these people did not understand anything, since

it can just seem so, that it is simple, that the mother just left her child, and that was that. But, I am sorry, how can they know what happens in her soul...

Lidia tried to console herself with the idea that her daughter could have a better fate in her future life:

you never know what will happen to people... And this girl who has been born to me, who knows, she might have nothing now, but in the future maybe she will gain a lot...

Lidia was religious, but not very; she simply was going along with the rituals: 'I believe. Well, a bit. I visit a church, I light the candles...' Anna Karenina⁷³ was 'of course' her preferred literary female image because

This human was unlucky in her life. Very much so, I would say. She wanted some stability, a determined situation, but she did not get it.

As for the politics, Lidia thought that the present regime was more corrupt in comparison to the previous one: 'now, you cannot do anything without bribery'.

Raya, another relinquishing mother, was unmarried and not cohabiting at the time of the interview. She had another child from her 'first' marriage, a 13 year old daughter, whom Raya loved very much ('we are very close to each other, but neither of us has anyone else in the world'). Raya always wanted to have one child, and preferred daughters to sons: 'I thought, one daughter - it is enough, it is normal'. She 'expected' a daughter this second time too. Raya said that her child comes before men in her life, that she would have this first child even as a single mother, if she did not happen to be married:

I just would wait longer in this case, for example, it would not have happen at 22, as it did, but, perhaps, at 25.

She also believed that some men 'want children even more than their wives do', because the actual child care would be a female-only business; a man could receive all the pleasure from a child without being 'overworked' because of it.

People have children, in Raya's view, because of 'instinct', this desire coming to them 'normally' when they marry; however, Raya did admit that not everyone felt this instinctive desire even after they marry. All the same, at some moment in people's lives ('when you are 30...40 years old') most of them do feel 'emptiness' if they have no children.

Conception of the first child was not that easy in Raya's case: it happened only two years after she and her husband had begun to try for a child. They were upset and even visited a doctor. Then everything happened by itself, without any medical intervention. After the birth of her daughter, Raya used contraception (the pill), but had two abortions

⁷³ A female protagonist of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy's (1828-1910) novel with the same title (first published 1873-1877). It was a married woman from 'high society' who opted for living openly and honestly with her lover, which was very unusual then. She had a son by her husband and then a daughter by the lover. After the second birth she 'advised' by the doctor 'what to do in order to have no more children.' Her passion to the lover was too strong, and her isolation from society, as a punishment for the not normative behaviour, too complete. As a result she fell into a kind of deep depression, suffering from jealousy which had very few foundations for it, and committed a suicide, which 'revenged' her lover very efficiently: he became unable to even think about new relationship with a woman. And more so, because his daughter by Anna was taken from him by her husband - the law was such that all offspring of a married woman, whatever happened in reality, was legally her husband's.

anyway. The first was very soon after the birth of her daughter, and the second came from some 'unplanned sex' after she divorced her husband due to his drinking habit. It happened when she had no regular partner and so did not use contraception.

She had lived with the father of her second child, the one she was relinquishing, for two years prior to the pregnancy. He was married, but almost separated from his wife. Raya's relationship with this man was very calm, there were 'no money arguments', since they were not 'set into the marital routine yet', and it was satisfying for them both. It was not a passion, just a desire for some 'stable relationship' in her life, since Raya was already 35 years old. She claimed that pregnancy came unintentionally, that they used contraception but it just failed at some point. However, in another part of the interview she said that

yes, maybe I did this in order to keep the man... Maybe I had such a thought in my mind - that if I bore a child, he would not go.

As is very usual, he went even faster because of the pregnancy, though initially he said he was very glad about the prospect of new fatherhood and they had agreed to have a child together, though not to marry

(now, maybe, 90% of people live in common-law relationships... registration is not important).

He said that he would 'support' both Raya and her child, and that Raya had nothing to be afraid of in any case, since her economic situation was relatively stable: 'You have a flat, so what would you have to be afraid of?'

Raya really did have her own self-contained flat, which made her relatively better-off than the majority of the relinquishing mothers whom I know, especially taking into consideration the fact that she was not a native Muscovite. Raya obtained her official residence registration through her work long ago.

She not only had a flat, but had a job as well, as a cashier in the Saving Bank of the Russian Federation. The job was not well paid, but was very stable. However, Raya left this job recently, to hide the fact of the pregnancy from her work colleagues, after this man deserted her in the 4th month of pregnancy without any good explanation. He only promised to help with money and contacts if she decided to have a late abortion⁷⁴. She was afraid of doing so 'because it is harmful for the woman's health'.

⁷⁴ Late (after 3 months of gestation) abortion is legitimate in Russia only in some very exceptional cases, associated with poor health of a mother. It can be obtained 'for social reasons' too, but it is very difficult to prove that you have the good reasons. In practice, however, it can be obtained in much wider number of situations illegally (but still in the hospital setting) for money. In this case, there is a private agreement between a doctor who must be contacted through people to whom he trusts and whom he knows very well, and the

As for the child, Raya felt so insulted by his father, that she decided: 'If he does not want [a child], why should I [want him]'.

During her pregnancy, Raya worked as a street saleswoman in a market, and there as well no one knew about her pregnancy, because 'we all wear loose overalls and coats there, it is cold'. Only one female friend knew the story. This friend took care of Raya's daughter (who was also not aware of her mother's pregnancy) while she was at the maternity hospital. Raya worked until the last day of pregnancy, and for this reason had severe varicose veins. She gave birth prematurely to a son, at the 33rd week of gestation. Raya was very angry and depressed during the last half of the pregnancy, and even the idea of infanticide came to her mind. Raya's friend persuaded her to give birth instead, and then to leave the baby at the maternity hospital. So she did:

I decided to carry the child to the term which was predestined for me. But it was born prematurely anyway.

For Raya, as well as for Lidia, the experience of her two births was strikingly different due to her different 'moods' about having a child. The first time she felt excitement, even when she was in pain; and the second time she was in depression, but did not pity herself when she went through this pain, perhaps because the pain served as a partial 'expiation' of 'guilt'. The different attitudes of the hospital staff, who show their disgust of the relinquishing mothers, also played a role. The birth of Raya's second child was 'easy' and 'fast', perhaps, because it was premature, and because she was in physically good form because of working until the last day of pregnancy. However, before giving birth she was afraid she would die in child-birth and that her daughter 'would be left alone' in this event.

Raya opposed the idea of the father being present at the birth, she thought it is 'better when he does not see'. It is a female only matter, a woman is not beautiful at this time, and her not so beautiful moments should be hidden from her man, in order that his love for her remains intact.

Raya, as well as Lidia, did not want to see the child she was relinquishing, to take him in her arms, or to breast feed him: 'if you take him in your arms, you will never be able to give him up'.

patient. A doctor would be afraid to agree to do this to 'just a person from the street' whom he does not know and who was not introduced to him or to her through friends. Similar unofficial 'regulations' exist in all other areas of medicine in Russia, including this of birth assistance and conception assistance. In many occasions, this applies to the private clinics as well, which means that there you have to pay twice: first time, officially, and second time, unofficially. Many people prefer to do that in hopes to obtain the treatment of 'even better quality'.

Raya asserted that she always liked small children, beginning from their age of 6 months, 'when they become clean, white, nice', and already sleep reasonably well.

Raya had a good but not very close relationship to both her parents, workers from Ryazan, who were pensioners by the time of the interview. They helped her with money previously, but currently she has to rely on herself only. She was closer to her mother, could speak to her about 'everything' as a child. Raya claimed that at present she had the same kind of good, close relationship with her daughter. However, she did not tell her mother about this pregnancy, since the latter would advise her to

keep the baby, but how could I - I have to stay at home with the child for at least a year, out of work, and who will feed us?

Raya declared that her reason for abandonment of the second child was 'purely economic'. She could, perhaps, survive on her own with two children, but it would lead to economic destitution. However, in another part of the interview Raya talked of her anger towards the child's father, and admitted that she had considered infanticide at some point.

Raya liked reading books about 'rustic life', and her favorite novel was 'Dauria' by Sedykh⁷⁵. This is a tragic love story (and also the story of people's participation in the Civil War in Siberia):

he was from a rich family, and *she* was from a poor one, they were not allowed to marry, and she died at the end of the book.

Raya was 'not absolutely indifferent' to religion, but just went into churches for mainly tourist reasons when she and her daughter traveled together. She neither 'rejected' God's existence, nor 'really' believed in him. Concerning politics, she just followed 'the news... It is always interesting who is nominated for what position', but she did not like any one among contemporary politicians.

We have seen in the case of Lidia that children are not necessarily relinquished only because they are really not wanted; it can happen because the mother's situation is 'objectively' extremely unfavourable. On the other hand, a child which was not personally wanted by the mother might nevertheless be kept by her, if the general circumstances of her life favour such a solution. For example, Vika claimed that she gave birth to her son because her relatives thought that this was just the natural thing for her to do, and because all of them wanted this child. It was to be above all a 'gift' to her husband: 'I thought it was... kind of my moral obligation to do this for him, since I could.' In Vika's opinion, children are also necessary 'for society'. Nevertheless, Vika worried very little about 'what is going to happen in 8000 years after our lives', therefore she had no concern with the

⁷⁵ Sedykh Konstantin Fedorovich (1908-1979), a Soviet writer. The novel 'Dauria' was first published in 1942-1948.

continuation of her line ('the child is a person, different from me, absolutely'), and, seemingly, with society's future as well. She had never in her life felt her own desire for a child, never in her life. It was, in fact, a 'puzzle' for her, why people want children. All 'rational' considerations (the possibility of career promotion, of free sexual relationships with men, simply of having free time, freedom 'of movement' as a whole; being beautiful, having 'good skin', have to be sacrificed) are actually in favour of childlessness for a woman, since by having children 'she loses much more than she gains'.

The woman also becomes more dependent on a man in this case, she is 'chained' to him. Furthermore, Vika believed that 'you transfer part of your brain to [the child], this necessarily happens, this is normal...'

The 'puzzle' can, probably, be resolved by taking into consideration the 'reproductive instinct' which is placed in everyone 'by nature' and lies very deeply somewhere in our selves. Vika thought that it existed in her too, somewhere on an unconscious level, and was much stronger than herself. She could explain the fact that she gave birth to a child 'by this only', since Vika was never aware of wanting this on the conscious level. 'It is a program within us, like there is a program inside a robot'. Vika believed that the sexual instinct, especially in men, was inherently associated with this reproductive instinct, albeit in a rather sophisticated way:

He might not have sex without a condom, even once in his life, he might always use contraception, but he would never have sex with a woman at all if the possibility of conceiving a child in this way did not exist.

This, then, is a 'clever' 'program' in men as well. For Vika herself, however, sex would be unpleasant if constant childbearing were the cost.

Vika was married and had already graduated from college by the time she got pregnant 'by accident'. She was planning to get pregnant in due course, though not without reservations, and was using contraception when conception happened. Actually, her pregnancy 'was always meant to happen later, and again later, simply, not now!'. Vika was 23 years old at the time. She admitted that she could perhaps begin to feel more desire for a child later, since she could see among her acquaintances many women who became 'paranoiac' in their desire to have children when they were 33-34 years old. All this happens, in her view, because contemporary life is too contradictory in this respect: we become biologically mature so early...And we become socially adapted so late... [and] this gap becomes bigger and bigger [with every generation]!

While formerly it was enough for female social adaptation to be a 'wife', now 'we want everything'. As a result, many women are infertile by the time they are finally 'ready' to motherhood. For Vika,
the head and the womb are absolutely incompatible [...] they push us in different directions!

Vika did not actually need children, but marriage was important to her. She felt that her husband 'needed' a child, so it was the 'minimum I had to do for him', an 'unavoidable evil'. In Vika's view, 'an adult is more important than a child', her husband was still more important to her than her son, and she was very grateful to her husband that in one psychologically critical moment he chose her, too. It happened when Vika became scared that she would die in childbirth, when she was in the eighth month of pregnancy, and the husband said that if there really was a problem, if there had to be a choice, he would tell the doctors to save her, not the child.

For normative reasons, Vika planned to have two children, but, as soon as she realized 'how horrible a thing this is', she decided not to have more than one. Pregnancy was frightening enough in itself:

this human comes closer and closer to life, my stomach grows for some unclear reasons...
all this was so... unfortunate.

It was 'unfair' that something was growing in and *from* her against her will.
Why me? A developed personality, with brain, maybe needed by... I am not sure about society, but definitely needed by my husband... should be put at risk for the sake of some hypothetical child?

Pregnancy is an inherently handicapping state, in Vika's view: 'the pregnant women, they are even forbidden to drive' [this is Vika's opinion and not reality], and, of course, they are ugly: 'your stomach protrudes...'.
Vika did not 'feel' her child's personality throughout the entire pregnancy and even after the birth, until he smiled at her for the first time:

then I realized that this is a human, that he will grow up, that everything will be better in the future.

Before that 'I did not know that he was a human'.

As for society's attitude to pregnancy, Vika thought that it was indifferent at that time: 'everyone tried not to look at you, I felt a sense of shame', but by the time of the interview it has improved, 'everyone is interested, after all, it is exciting... it is a new human...'

Perhaps in reality this reflected changes in her own attitudes to pregnancy with passing time.

The actual birth for Vika was simply a 'horror story' for all possible reasons. First, she really had a very difficult and exhausting birth due to pelvic problems. Second, it took place in a 'Soviet style' maternity hospital without any 'private' agreement with a doctor. This usually results in a painful experience, in loneliness and humiliation, unless you are very lucky. Third, she was 'not mature enough' then, emotionally dependent on her husband, and used to always being with him, he was usually nearby with his skillful help in case of any difficulty which she was not able to immediately resolve herself. And he was not allowed in the maternity hospital, of course. Vika's experience felt like being in 'prison' and being 'tortured'. She was deprived of all her personal belongings, including her jewelry and pants. Of course she was shaved, and there was the obligatory douche, which was cold, and the heating was insufficient. Vika felt extremely weak and vulnerable in the beginning, and the idea that she had to do some 'work' made her even more upset (and the birth of a child was precisely 'work' for Vika,

my unpleasant but unavoidable working duty, which no one else could do instead of me... like cleaning a toilet).

Everyone was indifferent to Vika while she was in labour. When she was already absolutely exhausted, they induced her, but this did not work, 'since the body already had no resources' to respond to it. Finally, when the birth happened, she felt no pain 'there', but only in her legs and hands which were extremely tired from long hours of strain. She said that she felt 'terrible jealousy' towards those women for whom giving birth was a 'pleasant sensual experience', as some claim it was.

Vika felt a bonding for the child, but most of all in the form of anxiety

that something would go wrong [...] it is always so with me, I always expect something bad to happen.

The best time periods during the first year of her child's life were when she was 'on leave' from him due to her mother's help, and in these periods she would 'absolutely forget about his existence'.

Motherhood was a traumatic experience for Vika. She needed lots of time in order to 'gradually' accustom herself to the fact that her son 'really' and irreversibly 'exists'.

The older he was, the easier all this became for her, even though he grew up into a boy who was difficult to control, to the extent that gradually his grand-mothers, who had always helped Vika a lot, admitted that they could not deal with him. Yet, at the time of the interview, when he was 10 years old, 'even the difficulties are interesting!', in Vika's view.

This change in attitude is perhaps due to a general lack of interest and perhaps even some disgust on Vika's part towards 'little babies' throughout her life. It is disgusting for

her, too, to observe other women having what she described as an 'orgasm' when they look at 'any kind of a baby, even a dirty one, an ugly one'.

She strongly preferred developed, adult people (and even animals!) to those who are new-born.

A mother 'damages a child' if she 'dissolves herself' into him, in Vika's opinion. A child values his mother on the basis of other people's attitudes towards her, and therefore it is important to be 'someone': a professional, a beautiful woman, a wage-earner. Otherwise you will gradually lose all respect on the part of your own child.

Anna Karenina was her (as well as Lidia's) preferred literary image, because 'she was a honest woman. She dared to go to her lover, and she had *no more children*.' Vika thought that in Tolstoy's times children, or 'biology', as she put it [and Anna's love for Vronsky was not biology then? - O.I.], were the only predestination for a woman, and that Tolstoy portrayed Anna as a 'deviation' from the norm, and 'killed' her for that. 'Yes, I am sure. He killed her! A murderer.'

Religion should serve a moral function, in Vika's view, not in the form of 'prohibitions', but in the form of 'propaganda ... of... a healthy style of life!'. Since it is impossible to compel people to behave morally, morality should rather be made attractive to them. Vika's own morality represented

a healthy anarchism: do not do evil to other people if you want them to not do it to you. Do not limit other people's freedom, if possible.

The same was applied to politics, but there Vika felt more need for 'prohibitions', since she would not enjoy to be burgled, for example.

Janna similarly had her son without a strong wish for a child. She gave birth in order to 'win' a man who wanted a child, but did not want to marry her. As a result, several years which followed were spent by her in different inventive attempts to 'win' this man again and again. This was, perhaps, pleasant for Janna in itself, since she admitted enjoying situations

when I plan something, but everything happens in a different way... I enjoy both components of this process - planning and unexpectedness.

Finally, the present situation was established, in which the child lives with his father. This does not accord to the Russian norms at all. In the event of divorce it is assumed that the children (especially if there is only one child in the family) will stay with the mother. Yet, Janna lived separately, alone:

It is sometimes said that one can fall in love with one's own child... But this did not happen to me... So, it is better to be honest in this, at least.

Since she disliked child care, she believed that the others must do so as well, and, consequently, she thought that her husband would soon 'understand' the difficulties and would need Janna again, as a helper.

Their romance actually began at a time when Janna felt the desire to commit suicide, since everything in her life was too 'boring' and 'predictable'. He persuaded her not to do so, and since that moment became the center of her life. They were each other's first sexual partners, because he had previously felt homosexual inclinations, which he later developed and realized, and she was busy trying to enter University, which she subsequently did, and graduated in due course. She also had mostly female acquaintances and work colleagues, working as a librarian. After she fell pregnant, they finally married, but after the birth of the child most of the actual child care became Janna's duty, because they did not reside together. Her husband was practically free from childcare, although it was he who had wanted the child. He was also free from wage-earning to a large extent, having insufficient salary and not trying to earn more.

In spite of this, after a while it was he, and not she, who became dissatisfied with conjugal life, seemingly due to his homosexual orientation. He felt that Janna was not good enough for him, her body 'did not attract him', because she was 'too fat'. This led to a deterioration in her self-esteem, which was already low. As a result, when they separated for the first time on his initiative, she felt traumatized, and finally found the way out of her depression by having sex with other men. In addition, she decided to do this for money. After all, she thought that the providing function in their family must be hers, since she was interested in a career, and her husband was not.

Charging for sex gave her a means to improve her weak self-confidence: 'men were not only willing to have sex with me, but were prepared to pay for it'. She needed money as well, since no one could survive on a librarian's salary at that time. This all took place in 'dialogue' with her husband, with her showing him, first, that the others valued what he did not, her body, and, second, that he was a bad provider. At the time of the interview, Janna was even giving him money 'for child maintenance', and he had to accept it, although he was aware of the source.

They had another period of living together after the first separation, which ended in divorce when he learnt about her second 'job'. In the course of this job, Janna once met another man, who was very 'good' sexually. She had sex with him for free, and he wanted a relationship with her. Yet, Janna decided that her 'love' for her husband even 'with very mediocre sex' was more valuable for her than this 'very good sex without love'. She earned not too much by prostitution, since she was 'not expensive'.

Janna's parents had a similar pattern of life in the economic sense: her mother was the provider and a kind of family tyrant, and her father was weak. Janna and her father were friends when she was a child, he actually did the child care and spent most of his time with her, but later she began to 'despise' him for his 'lack of masculinity'. Speaking about her father, Janna said that

we all are like that... if a person really dislikes his situation, he does something about it, and if this does not happen, then the situation must be at least tolerable for him, if not inherently satisfying.

She asserted that her husband was absolutely different from her father, but it was obvious that at least several important patterns were the same.

For Janna, some 'meaningful profession' was always more important than children, although she 'planned' to have them, but after she finished her studies, at the age of about 30 years. She would not feel 'too upset' if it had not happened at all. She could only imagine having a 'negative' main reason for having children: as a desire 'not to repeat one's own parents' mistakes in one's upbringing'.

She places much emphasis on genes: she liked ethnography, and wanted to undertake a 'fantastic' project to collect the photographs of all people, however many they are, who would have their 'ethnic roots' in one and the same area, so as to be able to follow their genetic similarities and differences. But her interest in genes did not play a role in having children: '[my son] is a separate personality... this is not *me*.'

She preferred adults to children, in the same way that Vika did, although maybe in her case it was not because of dislike or disgust for children, but rather because children were so much smaller and less worthy, since they were less skillful. Nevertheless, 'although I have few maternal feelings... I still have some', as Janna put it. She did not expect too much help in old age from her son; however, Janna hoped he would not allow her to 'die of hunger', it would be 'natural' if he would support her then at least to that extent.

She felt very early in her pregnancy that the child was 'separate' from her. However, when they had a kind of accident, and her stomach was squeezed by the closing doors of a bus, she 'instinctively' felt the need to protect the child, but then she also felt that everything was all right with him, while her husband experienced 'almost a heart attack' then, since he 'could not feel' the child himself.

Janna felt the need to 'wear a wedding ring during pregnancy' to show to everyone that 'I am not without an owner'.

Pregnancy was a state in which there was 'nothing special', and even a handicapping state, in a way: 'they always have such strange ideas, the pregnant women...'

Janna had the feeling that she was caring for her child during the birth:

I am even proud of this, [my main concern was] that I am strong and adult and feel such a pain - so what a huge pain he, a tiny baby, must feel at the same time!

Janna hated the female world of other women in her ward telling her their birth stories, repeated 'five, ten times', while she wanted to 'forget all this as soon as possible', and appreciated having a male doctor who stitched her after the birth for the fact that he was discussing her profession with her meanwhile.

As for mothering, the first year of the child's life was very hard for Janna, she said she would be able to experience again all the rest of motherhood, but not this. Therefore it was 'too high a cost' for her, to bear a child simply in order to resolve other problems in life. First of all it was difficult due to sleeping problems: Janna even referred to the Chekhov short novel '*I want to sleep*'⁷⁶ while speaking about this. However, Janna felt that it was ultimately 'my child, my responsibility'. This feeling, and not the lack of help available (in fact, help was available), motivated her to somehow try to do everything for the child herself.

As it is obvious from the above, Janna's views on sex roles were very relaxed and liberal. She thought that there were 'no strict borders' between the two genders, and should not be. She easily, and even with interest, accepted her husband's homosexuality, and was never sexually jealous of him. She even tried lesbian sex herself, but did not enjoy it; she was not disgusted, just 'indifferent', 'I simply understood that I prefer the male body much more'. She thought that women often were 'less interested in global things' in comparison to men, but that this was due to social reasons, to the conditions of women's upbringing. She always had female friends and acquaintances who were 'intellectual ladies', so she knew that such type of women existed. She agreed to do, and did, 'some housekeeping' without any 'internal strain'. But Janna felt that, according to her husband's views, she was not 'domestic enough', so his attitude to sex roles was more traditional.

As for relinquishment of a child, Janna was the only one among the interviewees who did not relinquish their children, who admitted that she could do this, though only in the form of 'temporary refusal', if her circumstances were particularly unfavourable.

Janna and her husband had 'Orthodox friends'. Nevertheless, they never were 'fundamentalist' in religion, just 'interested'. Janna's own attitude to religion was 'rational' and 'intellectual' rather than 'emotional'. She thought that she lived through the 'sinful period' of her life at the time of the interview, thus, perhaps, only 'collecting' sins

⁷⁶ It is about a baby-sitter, who was about 10 year old herself. She had no possibility to sleep at night at all, and was not allowed to sleep by her employers during the day either. She finally

to have something to 'repent' later. Janna was interested in politics in the form of international relations in her childhood, but at the time her view was that politics was 'just one of the professions'; politicians must be busy with it, while she and all other people should rather 'keep to their own business' and not try to be the 'judges' of politicians. Her only firm political idea was that 'the state should not prevent me from doing my work, either'.

As for literature, she preferred images of prostitutes, especially those supporting men they loved with their income. One of these was Sonechka Marmeladova from 'Crime and Punishment' by Dostoyevsky⁷⁷, but she was 'too infantile' for Janna. Another was the female protagonist of the novel 'Shadow'. Janna was unable to remember who was the author. The female protagonist of this novel supported her man by the money received from other men. She committed suicide at the end. This story was set during the Civil War, a time of relative deprivation. This time seems to many people in Russia to be similar to the contemporary epoch. Janna liked poetry by Tsvetaeva because the latter was 'such a rare personality', not too much restricted by sex roles. Janna also liked Lisa Minelli in 'Cabaret'⁷⁸. Perhaps, there again, she found some similarity to her own situation - loving a homosexual man and living at other men's expense. The last film mentioned by Janna was 'Prorva'⁷⁹, where the female protagonist tried to save her beloved man from Stalinist prison by having sex with an influential officer. At the end she somehow lost her eye. It seems that the authors of such plots always want to punish the protagonists somehow; but Janna did not enjoy the fact of punishment, rather, she liked the exposition of this type of female behaviour. Janna did not want and did not expect any punishment for herself.

In conclusion, we can see that the interviewees' explanations of the relinquishment of babies and of a lack of maternal feelings tend to be essentialist, biological, and psychological. When the interviewees speak about a 'norm' here, they imply that both these types of mothers are not psychologically normal (and also perhaps not biologically normal, in the sense of not having the appropriate 'instincts'). They refer sometimes to these women having had a 'bad childhood', in the sense of either (or both) childhood

suffocated the baby with a pillow with the only thought in her mind that from that moment she could sleep at last (by Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904), first published in 1888).

⁷⁷ first published in 1866; in the novel, Sonechka Marmerladova was just 14 years old, and depicted as rather kind, but passive victim of the circumstances. She accepted the role of the protagonist's woman, but the active part was played by him. He wanted to humiliate himself by attaching himself to the prostitute, but, on the other hand, Sonya was young enough not to seem personally guilty in her way of life. This 'innocent victim' actually did not support him by her income, but was freed from this life by Raskolnikov - just in order to follow him in Siberia, where he would become the convict.

⁷⁸ a film by Bob Foss, 1972.

⁷⁹ *The Breach*, by Ivan Dykhovichny, 1992.

socialisation and childhood experience; in other words, they are offering both social and Freudian explanations.

The overall negative and scornful attitudes the interviewees express towards so-called 'cuckoo-mothers' could, as already mentioned, have their roots in the press attitudes expressed in many publications on this topic in the late 1980-s (see Waters, 1992,1). However, some interviewees take a moral and/or Christian point of view when they call for pity towards such mothers and ask people 'not to blame them'. The same could also be said of the explanation of relinquishment in terms of 'lack of altruism' on the part of the mother. In some cases consumerism is also offered as an explanation of such behaviour, in the sense that these women do not want to 'give anything' and want the state to care for their children; so too is individualism, it might be argued, in the sense of having, or lacking, the necessary 'abilities' to make the decision to relinquish a child.

Most interviewees oppose the social explanation of relinquishment. All the same, it would seem to me impossible for readers of the interview accounts of relinquishing mothers not to be aware of the influence which social and economic constraints have on a woman's decision to relinquish her child: for example, poverty, unemployment, poor housing, and hostile and indifferent attitudes on the part of partners, relatives and institutions (such as the medical establishment). It is probable that the cultural context of individualism simply helps them to make the decision: it is easier for them to say 'I cannot accept this responsibility' when everyone around them tells them that whatever they do, they do at their own risk. One might imagine that in the Soviet era it would have been more difficult for a woman to dare relinquish her child, when all types of behaviour were considered, above all, from the point of view of society's needs and a person's duty to society. However, social reasons played their role then, too (see the article by Svetlana Sanova in 'Rossianka', ed. by Mamonova, 1980).

CHAPTER 5.

Adoption: solution to infertility, or salvation for children?

Several important issues come up when the interviewees speak about adoption. First, there is the question to be individually decided: whether to have children who are *similar* to their parents, or to have those of 'high *quality*'. One's own genes can be considered 'poor' (Yana; Veronica, Uliana; Lidia and Vera, the latter two speaking about other people), and therefore the adoption of a healthier child preferable to having one's own. For some interviewees (Kira; Raya; Alla) the similarity, the feeling of '*one's own*' child is essential. In Valeria's view, this feeling is not caused by genes, but by bodily closeness during pregnancy, birth, and breast-feeding; but the child should 'look like us [the parents]', too. Maya, similarly, thought that genes were not 'too important', but a child made any sense for her personally only if he or she was born and not adopted. In addition, she thought that mothering by a non-biological mother would 'necessarily be worse' in comparison to mothering by the birth mother. Yulia, Vika, Veronica, and Nadia thought that you can call a child 'your own' only when you brought him or her up yourself. Genes are not important for the 'line continuation'. An adopted child could continue yourself or your line no worse if you have 'invested a lot' in him or her and have transmitted your 'family's values' into him or her. For Alla, the issue was absolutely different:

I want [my children] to be similar to me and, well... to the father I chose for them, even in all the bad traits of character.

Others (Yana, Vika, Veronica, Lidia) were mostly concerned with the '*quality*' of the child and not with whether he or she had their genes or not. For Janna and Vera, when they spoke about adoption, the child's '*quality*' was not important, but nor were similarity and genes. Alla believed that an adopted child's quality could be normal, but it would not help since it would not be possible to obtain *similarity* through adoption.

Then, there was the *charity* issue. Some interviewees (Yana, Kira, Raya, Veronica, Vika, Uliana) spoke about adoption from the charitable position. As Vera put it, 'There are many kids in the orphanages. There are many kids who wait for mothers.'

In this case, the alternative options of social policy for abandoned children were often compared to adoption. Yana thought that so many people wanted and did adopt, that virtually all abandoned children would finally get into new families. The relative '*worth*' of people who '*can do this*', i.e. adopt and care for adopted children properly, and of those who cannot, was sometimes examined in this respect (for example, by Raya, Janna, Vera). Valeria and Veronica thought that one would 'naturally' love one's natural child more than

one would love the adopted child. Uliana held the opposite view. According to her, due to your kindness and your sense of responsibility, you would love the adopted one more. Yulia thought that a mother would never love a child born to her with the help of some 'artificial' means, she would love a 'natural' adopted child much stronger. Vika confessed that adoption was impossible for her personally: 'I cannot put a plate of food near every cat. There are too many of them.' Kira thought that those who could adopt were 'heroes' (Vera would agree that they were morally 'higher'); while those using technologies to overcome their infertility were 'individualists' (according to Vera, they had the right, given to them by God, to be such individualists, 'and Catholics should not object this').

Alla did not believe that adoption ever worked, whatever the personal abilities of the adopters, since it was always obvious, in her view, that the adopted children were 'aliens' in the adoptive families. Maya, Vera, Uliana and Kira agreed that conditions in children's homes were poor, and that children there were deprived emotionally. Once Kira and Uliana even wanted to adopt children from orphanages just because they felt pity for them. But these two women did not adopt, considering their economic conditions (Kira) or their energy (Uliana) insufficient. The solution of the problem of abandoned children, in Kira's view, could be in the organization of children's homes of a 'family' type (which means a kind of fostering - *O.I.*), and in the 'enlightenment' of contemporary Russian society. In her view, the higher the level of people's morality, or of their 'consciousness', the more often abandoned children would be adopted. Maya, Vera and Uliana would agree that adoption could be the best solution. For Kira, adoption was precisely *a charity act*:

here, you are already doing nothing for yourself; you do it only to prevent him from growing up on the streets.

Valeria did not believe in the possibility of a good resolution of the problem of abandoned children. In her view, they either stayed in the orphanages with all the suffering implied in this, or were adopted, for mercenary reasons, into 'bad' families which would abuse them. On the other hand, Yulia believed that even 'ordinary Soviet' children's homes could be good, 'everything depends on the personality' of the director. In her view, some women, who were the directors of the children homes, were really maternal and loved by their pupils as their real mothers; while the adopters who did this just for money were 'no good' for children. Money were considered by the interviewees to be an immoral thing here on either side: for Nadia, private adoption was a debased thing precisely because children in this case were 'sold for money.'

The third group of issues which came up when the interviewees spoke of adoption was the association between *adoption*, *infertility* and *bodily problems* in a larger sense. First, my interlocutors examined whether there can be any reason for fertile people to

adopt other people's children. Lidia thought that prospective parents' ill health could be a reason. Yet, Veronica was refused adoption precisely because of her ill health. For Janna, child care during the first year of a child's life seemed unbearable, and therefore she thought of the possibility of adopting a 'one year old' child if she underwent a second marriage where the husband wanted children. Valeria wanted to escape the suffering which pregnancy, birth and breastfeeding brought, in her view, to a woman, and therefore she felt prepared to adopt, but preferably a relative's child, because genes were important to her. Vika and Uliana stressed charitable reasons as motivations for fertile people to adopt. Second, my interviewees were concerned with the question whether adoption constituted a resolution of infertility (Yana, Vika, Lidia, Vera) or not (Raya; Alla; Kira, although the latter believed that it could serve as a very good therapeutic self-deception in this case). Vera and Kira thought that simply working with children or having a meaningful career instead could help. Kira believed that it was better to use any means to avoid the worst: depression caused by infertility. However, infertile Alla disagreed that work with children could be of any help. The third issue was whether adoption was a better option than reproductive technologies due to the more '*natural*' character of the former. Yana, Vera and Yulia thought that 'unnatural' reproductive technologies should better be avoided, and a child 'naturally' born by another woman should be preferred. But Yana and Yulia have also said that their position might change if they found themselves having serious problems in the area of reproductive health. For Veronica, giving birth, whatever preceded this, seemed more natural, than adoption. Raya believed that 'all possibilities [of treatment or technologies] must be tried', since neither adoption nor childless life were acceptable. A childless life was preferable to adoption for Raya, but for Nadia adoption was better than childlessness. Yulia, Uliana and Vera agreed that 'while there is still hope', it is better to try to give birth to your own biological child.

Kira thought that there was no difference between technologies and adoption as the means of infertility resolution. Vera, Yulia and Uliana suggested the additional 'alternatives' of helping infertile women, namely 'praying to God to give you a child' (Vera and Uliana), 'cleaning your body by natural means' (Yulia), and 'relaxation, not being in control, allowing things to happen' (Vera).

Adoption was one of the symbolic acts which could help such relaxation to take place, 'nervous tension' being one of the main reasons for infertility, according to Vera. Consequently, she told me, several women whom she personally knew had got pregnant after they had adopted.

Being single could constitute another reason for adopting, rather than biologically giving birth to a child. However, usually single women were prohibited adoption. But Vera

was aware of two cases of her acquaintances who managed to adopt despite this prohibition.

The next theme concerned *class* values and views on adoption. It seems that in Russia now adoption is mostly restricted to working class families, since others hold the view that the children who are available for adoption, usually have 'poor genes' (Kira, Vika, Veronica, Valeria, Yulia). As Vera put it: 'it is always risky to adopt'. Uliana thought it was possible, though very difficult, to 're-build' a child with such 'poor genes'. To compensate for all his or her problems, and taking into consideration the limitations of your own psychological resources, it is better in this case to ease the situation and to adopt an infant. With an older child 're-building' might not work.

Finally, Raya, Janna, Uliana and Vera considered adoption to be a matter of 'personal choice', where many different circumstances must be taken into consideration. According to them, this was not an automatic response to infertility, and might not be connected to infertility at all (Uliana). These interviewees had no objections to adoption in cases where the choice was 'responsible', so that the individual's energy and economic possibilities were examined by her in advance. Lidia, the relinquishing mother, would agree with this:

if she [the adoptive mother] thinks that she can give her [Lidia's daughter] more than I can give her, for example.

As yet, adoption in Russia is not very widespread and/or not visible since it is usually *kept secret* to some extent. Secrecy in adoption cases does not do any good, according to Yulia, who believed that it would be revealed at some point nevertheless, bringing harm to the adopted person and the adoptive parents, and Alla, who summarized the adoption story of her close friends in the following way:

now all of us play our roles - they know that we know, and we pretend not to know anything.

For the reasons of secrecy and scarcity of people of this kind, it was difficult to find an adoptive mother to serve as the case study for this research. I finally found an infertile one, so her story will serve as one of the case studies in the next chapter too.

Galia always wanted to have children ('not less than three' of them), she played only in the 'mothers-and-daughters' game, when she was a child, and always very much liked little children. She did not even question whether to have children or not. Yet, in spite of the fact that she now has an adopted daughter, she said several times during the interview: 'I have no children', since she felt this was the case biologically. This meant that her infertility, though resolved by adoption, and very successfully, in Galia's view, remained only partially resolved:

It never occurred to me that I would never have children... Simply, fate decided it so... it is an evil joke...

Galia was one of 5 siblings herself. She appreciated the fact of having brothers and sisters. They were ultimately 'the closest' people to her, 'they have the same blood as you, they can always help in a difficult situation.' Accordingly, a genetic link to her own children was not unimportant to her, and Galia tried for many years to become a biological mother (see next chapter). Finally she had an operation, after which only two options remained open to her: IVF and adoption. The third option, remaining childless, was absolutely inappropriate in this case, since Galia's desire to have a child had become 'mad' by that time:

after the operation, I thought that I would become totally mentally ill. ...I dreamed at night about children, and I had dreams that I was delivering a baby.

In this dream she felt all the pains of labour, and when she told other women who had given birth about this dream they confirmed that what she had experienced in her dream was very similar to the actual birth of a child. Thus, Galia actually had an experience of childbirth which seems to have been necessary for her: 'I lived through this. All in the dream'. She was both frightened and maybe relieved by this experience, and decided that if she continued to undergo medical intervention, she might become absolutely mad. Galia simply 'needed a child', and not the continuing trouble of trying for it. She felt, personally, that she had no more time to wait.

Galia was in favour of the father being present during childbirth, since the birth experience was so important for herself. In Galia's view, if people have 'gone through' the pain of childbirth, they would love their child more as a result. The widespread Soviet custom, according to which the husband sat at home drinking with his friends 'for the birth of the child', while his wife was in birth, was disgusting in Galia's opinion.

After having experienced these dreams of giving birth, Galia discussed this with her husband, and they made the decision to adopt. She visited some IVF clinics before that, but was put off by their commercial spirit, their 'indifferent attitude to women', and the need to take 'lots of medicine' again: Galia thought that after her previous treatment, when she was taking pills of various kinds 'in handfuls', her body would reject any additional drugs. The couple had some money at the time, so they could pay for one IVF attempt, but decided that it would be better to 'spend this money on a child that is already here'.

Galia decided that since she was already 'not too young' and 'unhealthy', she might waste what remained of her health continuing the attempts to conceive a biological child of her own. After all that, she herself and the resulting child, if there was one, would be

absolutely ill. However, in Galia's view adoption was only for 'extreme cases, like mine', a woman must not resort to it simply because she feared giving birth, for example:

all woman's life is pain, and pain is what a woman must always be prepared to endure.

A childless life, on the other hand, was unacceptable for the couple:

To live for ourselves?... We were, simply, fed up with living for ourselves. It is boring, above all, it is boring.

Both did not have the 'energy to enjoy ourselves anymore'.

They felt 'unwell', they saw only children everywhere, and, in an attempt to escape the pain associated with this, they did not go out anymore. The additional normative reasons played some role too, since Galia thought that 'real' marriage presupposed having children.

The actual process of adoption was easy in Galia's case. Of course, Galia and her husband had to prepare many documents. Their housing, marital situation, and income were examined. Finally, they were accepted as adopters and waited for just one year before being offered a child. It was enough to have two rooms in a communal flat to be considered. Galia once met a crying couple who were rejected as adopters because they had just one room. This illustrates how vulnerable to discrimination people are if they cannot bear children for themselves naturally and easily, while

if she could bear a child for herself in this small room, she would be able to bring it up there anyway, no one could forbid her.

However, Galia was aware that some people could have 'mercenary goals' in adoption, such as wanting to get a bigger flat due to the fact of having children, and some would 'abuse the children afterwards'.

Galia and her husband had some preferences in respect of the child's appearance (they wanted her to look similar to them) and health:

I did not require an absolutely healthy child, there are no absolutely healthy children, in my view, but, you know, in our conditions, when doctors have such attitudes to people, it just would not be feasible to adopt a really sick baby.

They wanted a three-month old, since by that time the state of health of the baby would already be clear. Galia also strongly preferred to have a daughter, since 'girls are closer to mothers, in any case'. All these requirements complicated the issue, but were possible to meet in the conditions of contemporary Russia.

At the actual moment of adoption, however, Galia realized, that she would not be able to reject a child offered to her, whatever kind of a child it was, because 'this would

mean for her to be rejected for the second time in her life', it would be like 'choosing goods at the market place'.

Nevertheless, from the very first moment when Galia saw her daughter, she felt an enormous love for her, the feeling 'that this is *my* child', who had 'finally been found':

they began to move her legs, her hands, to show that everything worked well enough, but I did not look. After I'd seen her once, it was already not important for me, what kind of a child it was.

In any case, in Galia's view,

With time passing, the adopted children become similar to their adoptive parents.

Galia did not try too hard to keep the adoption secret:

Those who know [about it], they know, and those who don't know, they don't know.

This position was due to the impossibility of really hiding things, and was not caused by Galia's indifference to the prospect of revelation of the secret to her daughter - Galia would not want this to happen, but: 'It depends on people's conscience, whether they will tell her or not'. For the time being, Galia intended to hide everything from her daughter: 'I will tell her, but much later, when she will be able to understand at least something.'

Galia was afraid of her daughter's future reaction at her disciplining the girl now, because she thought that when the girl found out about the adoption, she might think that her 'natural' mother would have been more 'liberal' with her and allowed her more things. For this reason, Galia often tried to be less strict with her adopted child than she would be with a natural daughter: 'I always think about this'. The child brought meaning to Galia's life in many senses. First, now everything she and her husband did, had a goal:

Everything we will be able to save during our lives, all this will be hers [...] I now simply know the meaning of my life: that I have to do something for someone.

When they brought the baby home, Galia experienced all the 'normal' maternal anxieties, like 'what if she will just stop breathing', but the baby was calm, and nothing bad happened. Galia's daughter initially did have some urine infection, and pneumonia, but they treated this; there was some developmental retardation, but by the time I saw them, the girl (then two years and three months old) seemed, if anything, over-developed for her age. She was also very mature emotionally: she tended to console and calm her mother down when something bad happened, and only admitted that she was afraid herself when

the episode had passed. Galia was spending all of her time with the child, and, though she was very tired, was glad that she did this.

Since the adoption experience has been very satisfying for the couple, Galia said that she would never try reproductive technologies in the future, but might consider 'adopting one more child'.

Galia had a good relationship with her husband, and the relationship between him and their daughter was very satisfying for both of them as well. Still, sometimes he was drinking, and quarreled with Galia. Since the time of adoption, this was eased by the presence of the daughter, who tended to stop their quarrels simply by being there, to 'bring peace in the family'.

Galia's attitude to men as a whole was rather skeptical, however. She said that, yes, they wanted children and loved them, but the main part of the work associated with children fell to the woman, while child-loving men are likely to 'have three 'wives', and children by each.' Men, Galia believed, were drastically different from women, 'it is impossible to understand them, sometimes.'

Galia was not 'seriously occupied by religion', but she tried to read religious books 'from time to time', and intended to get herself and her daughter baptized sometime in the future. She tried to resist the efforts of people from various 'sects' to recruit her, considering herself to be easy to deceive in this area because 'I do not know enough about religion'. Galia wanted to decide this question herself.

As for literature and films, she was impressed very much by the film of Soviet film director Sergei Kolosov, '*Remember your name*' (*Pomni imia tvoyo*) (1974). It was a story of a mother who lost her son during the Second World War. He grew up in another family in a different country. She was not able to *find* him until he was already a young adult. But she *did* finally find him. Galia did finally *find* her child, too.

In summary, the interviewees used a mixture of explanations concerning adoption, just as they did in relation to other choices concerning motherhood. Essentialist explanations make an appearance in the form of references to 'nature', either in the sense of the child having the same genes as his or her parent making this child their 'natural' offspring, or of adoption being more 'natural' than reproductive technologies (and therefore an adopted child being more 'natural' than the 'technological' one). Some of the women also take a position of moral and Christian charity when they evaluate the welfare of the children being adopted, and when they take a negative view of commercial mediation in adoption. Some interviewees express concern about the 'quality' of children, whether they are the mother's birth children or were adopted, wondering if their genes are 'poor'. Such a position can be partly attributed to the consumerist approach which is so influential now. It

might also be associated with a rather derogatory representation of abandoning mothers and their children in the press in the late 1980-s (see Waters 1992, 1). Adoptive parents are also viewed from an individualist position, as people having considerable personal 'strength' to be able to do such a thing.

The view was also expressed that mothering by the biological mother would be inevitably better than mothering carried out by anyone else, which might have its roots in the Soviet 'Rousseauian' essentialist concept. This view is associated with a lack of belief in adoption as the resolution of infertility. Social motherhood, according to many interviewees, cannot substitute for 'real', biological mothering. However, this view was not held by all of the interviewees, some of whom do believe that the social aspect of motherhood is more important than the biological.

CHAPTER 6.

Shall I stay childless: infertility and disability.

Infertility and disability are united in one subchapter because both are conditions which make biological motherhood problematic. When the interviewees spoke on these issues, the following came across: first, the *moral* problems - whether or not one had a *right* to bear a child, being disabled or infertile (Janna, Valeria, Vera thought it was irresponsible; Polina, Yulia, and Vera again, expressed high respect towards the disabled mothers who 'dare' and 'manage' this), from the *religious*' and/or *eugenicist* points of view. It would be better if 'ill people' would not reproduce themselves, according to Lidia, Janna, and Valeria, who said:

Why do all these people never think that maybe they should not?

No, it is always necessary to them.

However, the majority of the interviewees (with the exception of Yulia), even those for whom religion was a serious issue, assumed that there should be no contradiction between 'the laws of God' and personal desire to have a child (Uliana, Kira, Maya, Vika, Lada). As Kira has put it,

The Orthodox church considers that life should adapt to the church... maybe I am wrong, but it seems to me that in some respects the church and all these codexes of laws... they must somehow take life into consideration, too.'

Maya, Uliana, Vika, and Lada thought that everything that happens (birth of a child or, vice versa, absence of a wanted birth) with or without the use of the technologies was in accordance with God's will. As Vika put it,

if God does not want to give her a child, he will not give it to her, whatever she does - no ventilation of tubes would help, nor would knotting anything inside... but, if he actually gave her a child, after all that, then, it means, the person earned her right for a child, going through this painful treatment [...] if God does not want to give you something, he will not... He would not give me a third leg, even if I wanted this very much! And if the Pope of Rome had an appendectomy... Why did he not decide to die from appendicitis?! God, after all, gave it to him! If one rejects infertility treatment, one should be consistent and reject all kinds of treatment!'

Similarly, Valeria was sure that '*Nature*' ruled all actions of 'ill or infertile' people, allotting them a 'bigger portion' of reproductive instinct in order to ensure that even those people, who would otherwise remain childless, would reproduce themselves, in spite of all the difficulties.

If the interviewee asserted that it was possible to try for a child in the case of biological constraints, usually an *individualistic* position was assumed by her (for example, by Janna, Maya, Polina). Yulia held this view concerning the issue of disabled mothers. Kira stressed that: 'if a human wants this very much, then he or she needs it very much.' As Vera put it, 'it is impossible to forbid the desire'. Yana, speaking about herself personally, said that:

all this [her overall opposition to reproductive technologies] is a fairy tale, at the end of the day, I do not know what would happen if I had some real problems... I would probably use some treatment. I cannot say.

Second, there was the issue of *feasibility* - whether it would be possible to bear and bring up a child in a situation of biological constraints, and whether it would be worth the cost. Lidia thought it was not feasible for disabled women, so they should not be mothers. Vera thought it was possible only if you felt that you had enough energy to control the situation. Polina, if she wanted a child, would try for one until she were successful. Nina would agree that children are necessary. Lidia thought that there are many cases in which 'nothing helps', so it is better to not even try. Valeria asserted that it would be better to 'accept' childlessness, to 'sit and relax', if it was already clear that 'nature' was not giving you children 'easily'. Yulia and Maya believed that a person has the right to risk giving birth even in a situation of high probability of having an 'ill' child, but only on the condition of 'accepting responsibility for the consequences' of her behaviour, so not relinquishing a child if it had a birth defect.

Third, the question of '*naturalness*' seemed very important in this area. Many women (Yana, Maya, Kira, Yulia) considered any traditional or technological medical intervention *unnatural*. Valeria even asserted that

for a woman who has no periods, it is absolutely unnatural to have periods induced in her by the hormonal pill. Better to have no periods at all. Less trouble.

The issue of infertility treatment necessarily involved the *reproductive technologies*, up to the point of genetic engineering. Yana and Yulia opposed the technologies. Valeria said that they ensure a situation which is genetically harmful for the whole of humankind - a situation, in which

practically every unwell person who cannot do this easily and simply can have treatment and have children nevertheless.

Kira thought that

it is dangerous [...] in this way, it is possible to bear many children, and then to send them to work in factories, into arduous uranium mines... all of them can remain without names... here it is possible to apply everything written by Orwell'.

Lada, Vika, Raya and Nadia welcomed new reproductive options. As Maya put it, there is no contradiction between nature and the technologies: a person should use the technologies available to her, precisely in order to live in harmony with nature.

Several women subdivided the issue and appreciated some variants of new technological development while severely opposing others. For example, Kira particularly welcomed surrogate motherhood, even imagining herself as a possible surrogate mother: in her view, this allowed a woman 'at least to carry a child for a while' inside her body, in a situation, where for economic reasons she forbade an additional child to herself. Issues of *kinship* came across here too. The surrogate was the 'real mother' for Vika, whether the former was the genetic mother too, or she was not. In spite of Vika's view that pregnancy and childbirth were 'work', this was not similar to all the other kinds of work in a sense that contractual relationships were not applicable here, for her. Valeria considered surrogacy being 'too expensive' for herself to resort to. Having a genetically unrelated child would be 'of no need', while having an ova extracted from Valeria's body would mean 'intervention' which she would prefer to avoid.

Several women suggested other, 'natural' (Maya, Yulia), or 'psychological' (Lada, Maya, Vera), or religious (Vera, Uliana) means to overcome reproductive health problems. In Vera's and Uliana's opinion, the technologies should not be rejected completely, but just thought 'alternative' means of trying for a child (though not the 'sorcerers' medicine, as Vera named it) must prevail.

Fourth, there was the problem of the woman's *personal accommodation* to the situation (for Lidia, Vera, Nadia). Raya stressed how difficult it could be to accept one's involuntary childlessness. Yulia and especially Polina know how painful, humiliating, but personally necessary could be a struggle with the medical establishment for your health, and how much the result depended on your psychological strength and ability to insist on your will. Valeria considered women who try too hard to overcome their infertility to be mentally 'ill', 'masochists', this striving being just one of the symptoms of that 'illness'. Kira spoke of the necessity of male support for a woman going through infertility

treatment. She also thought it was essential for a woman to be able to finally *accept* her childlessness without personal degradation, 'if nothing can be done', by 'switching' her interests into other areas of her life (career, meaningful socializing, having God-children, etc.) and using them as 'life anchors'. Vera would agree with this. According to Nadia, only adoption can help in such a situation. Vera, however, stressed that infertile women were sometimes striving towards having children only due to normative reasons and not because of their personal desire. Therefore the means of personal accommodation within the situation of involuntary childlessness must be chosen individually.

Fifth, the possible *causes* of infertility were discussed. Very often there was some stigmatizing aspect in considering the causes. Many people assumed that infertility was the 'punishment for sins', the result of '*deviant*' sexual behaviour: *beginning* sexual life too *early*, *prostitution* (Lidia), *abortion* of the *first* pregnancy (Kira). In Lada's opinion, reproductive health problems could, for example, result from having a bad relationship with one's husband. Valeria and Nina simply and openly considered infertile people, on an equal basis with disabled people, as 'inadequate' and 'handicapped'. Vera, however, warned infertile women precisely against feeling themselves 'inadequate'. Yulia emphasized that most often reasons for someone's infertility lay in the area of 'nervous stresses and ecological problems', which are not of a person's own fault.

Infertility and reproductive health problems in a broader sense seem to be extremely widespread. Almost all interviewees either had (Yana, Lada, Raya, Maya, Yulia, Nina, Uliana) or suspected (Polina) such problems in themselves, and/or knew one or several infertile people among their friends, relatives, and acquaintances (Kira, Uliana, Raya, Valeria, Vika, Vera).

Now two women will tell the stories of their actual infertility and their struggle with the medical establishment in an attempt to overcome it.

Galia decided to have treatment after she did not manage to have a child after one year of marriage to her husband. The next seven years of her life were spent in this treatment. The only result was that 'I completely lost my health'.

It seems that she had a pelvic inflammatory disease and perhaps some hormonal problems too. Galia was treated by antibiotics, which caused a drug-related shock in her body, but did not treat the disease. On the contrary, the inflammation was aggravated, and at one point Galia was on the edge of death. A surgical operation saved her life, but both her fallopian tubes were removed. In addition, she could not have any medicine even after the operation, due to her previous history of treatment, which 'exhausted my body's potential for taking drugs'.

All this time Galia was attached to her factory clinic, which she always thought was good enough. Galia was under the supervision of a female gynecologist, who assured her that 'tomorrow' she would get pregnant, and continued to say this even when her final aggravated inflammation began. Galia used to believe this doctor and trust her, and thought that there was no reason to 'jump' from one doctor to another. They were all the same, in her view:

I thought we had a good clinic, and she was a good doctor... She loved to smile very much.

However, Galia had to go through all the necessary tests in private clinics, and then she was bringing the test results to her own doctor for 'analysis', so that this doctor only had to make her unfortunate decisions.

After the operation, and before she made the decision to adopt, Galia tried several IVF clinics which she had been advised to visit, since it was still physically possible for her to try IVF. Again, the necessity of personal connection to a doctor played an unfavourable role: 'I had not a bad doctor there', but this doctor decided that Galia needed to take the hormonal pill. She was scared to do this after her previous history with drugs: 'not every woman, after all that happened to me, can take hormones'. The doctor's answer was: 'If you need this - you will do what I say'. At this point Galia left the clinic [the one in which I actually had a successful IVF treatment several years later - O.I.]. In the second clinic, she was frightened by the prospect of giving blood samples every day during the IVF attempt, because:

in former times they took so many blood samples and other specimens from me... that my organism cannot endure this any more.

Galia thought that 'they would listen to me first...', that one of their duties was precisely 'to help people morally'; but they wanted to listen to her only after the investigations were made. She disliked them having 'such an attitude towards a woman.' Her personal relationship to the doctor played some role there as well:

I had a good doctor there, but he left this job. And to begin all this again with someone else, anew... It was already too difficult.

Some of the reservations, for Galia, were physical and related to age:

one needs to still have some health for a child, to bring him up [...] we must think of IVF as intervention into the body, and no one knows, what kind of a child will result from all this [...] if I would be 20 years old, I might try this - some very young women come there, too.

There were also psychological and economic considerations. In Galia's view it was 'unfair' that the doctors do not return at least part of the money, if the IVF attempt was unsuccessful. Moreover, in Russian conditions, the stated official price does not mean too much, since patients are expected to pay some additional money to the doctor 'unofficially', otherwise they are not very much welcomed by medical professionals (see the footnote about this in the chapter on abortion). In Galia's view, these doctors were too 'greedy' and immoral, making 'such a huge amount of money - from what? From our female suffering.'

Galia and her husband had some money then, but, due to the high inflation rate at the time, all the money they had was finally sufficient to have just one IVF attempt, whether it was successful or not. As a result of all the above considerations, they decided rather to adopt.

Although Galia thought that people should not have their own biological children if they were too 'ill' and there was a risk that the condition could be passed on to a child, and that to bear a child in such a situation would be irresponsible, she added that: 'if a woman feels that she will be able to bring a child up', then her own illness was not of extreme importance. In addition, people who were healthy today, could become absolutely ill tomorrow, so

at the present time, no one can be sure, it happens that now a person is totally healthy and was never ill, but then suddenly she or he dies... Therefore it is hard to decide this question immediately, because we never can guarantee our own lives.

Alla's story was different in many respects. She was never married. Her infertility was a very recent discovery, as well as her desire for a child. On the other hand, her desire was even stronger than Galia's. In addition, she seemed to be a very strong-willed and rational personality. Alla's familiarity with the Russian medical establishment came from inside (her mother was a doctor); this, her better education, middle-class origin, status as a native Muscovite, and absence of money problems ('there is money for me, my family's money'), were all significant advantages in her struggle with the medical establishment.

Alla drastically differed from Galia in her attitude towards adoption. She felt this was a solution which was being imposed on infertile people; a solution which never worked. Alla's problems could never be resolved by adoption (see previous chapter). Yet a childless life recently became unbearable to her, too. Alla even wanted to commit suicide, but realized it would be an 'unfair' thing to do to her mother, 'who would not even know the reason for it.'

Alla always wanted to have children, in order to 'copy my parents in everything', since her parents family was 'very good', in her view. Alla had good relationships with both her father and her mother, though had some reservations in both cases. They were not the absolute role models for her anymore, because her mother was 'not a fighter', and Alla realized quite clearly that she then needed to be a fighter:

Am I a fighter?... maybe I will not have any huge victory... and of course I will cry when I encounter difficulties... but the tears will dry, for me the most important thing is to know what I should do tomorrow.

Alla's attitude to her father was that of love mixed with humour and some condescension. He seemed to her to be slightly childish. Thus, Alla's relationship with her parents was close, she was sure that they would help her to bring a child up as a single mother, but at the same time there was a necessary degree of separateness, which allowed her to make the important decisions of her life independently.

Alla wanted to become the single mother of a child by her long-term married lover (see more on this in the chapter 8), and she even persuaded him to go through IVF with her. However, she needed several years to obtain his agreement, and was prepared to pay for IVF herself.

Alla was similar to Galia in having a very strong desire for a child, and in her attitude towards her work, too (Galia enjoyed her work at the factory and her friendship with her women-colleagues, and this friendship was still very strong at the time of the interview, when she stayed at home with her child; but she enjoyed being with a child no less than she enjoyed her job). Alla was a foreign language school-teacher for many years. Nevertheless, at the time of our conversation she felt that this career was not her first choice, although she enjoyed it to some extent, some of her pupils becoming her friends. Still, all the possibilities for self-realization in this direction were exhausted, in her view. The pupils were always 'other people's children', and Alla felt that it was 'much better' to have her 'own children'. In addition, Alla thought that she was domestic enough, since 'I like housekeeping very much, cooking, sewing, and so on'.

There was some similarity in both women's childhood socialization: Galia used 'to play 'mothers-daughters' game', and Alla played with dolls almost until adulthood. Alla believed in the maternal instinct. According to her, 'all of us have this'. However, in some people the instinct 'perished' due to the 'bad' upbringing they received in their own childhood.

Desire for a child intensified when Alla was 30 years old. She 'stopped using contraception', and began to worry when pregnancy did not happen after six months of

unprotected sex. She made the necessary investigations very quickly, and was shocked when they revealed that her fallopian tubes were blocked due to an infection: 'I never knew that all this [various bacteria and viruses] lived in me...'. .

It was a real psychological crisis, since Alla could not accept the fact that she would have no children. She did not want to live, and became interested in religion. Alla then was regularly visiting both a Synagogue and a Catholic Church. Orthodoxy seemed to her to be 'too much forced on everyone', and therefore she could not accept it. Alla has also visited a Mosque once, and planned to go to a Protestant Church, too. She did not feel that she irreversibly belonged to any of the religions.

Alla aborted a pregnancy from the same man seven years prior to our conversation. She still did not regret this, since she was not ready for motherhood then. 'Only wanted' children, in her view, must be born, and they should be born when one becomes 'mature enough', having 'something to pass on to them' in the intellectual sense, and in the sense of life experience. When people who are not mature enough bear children, they just 'give them to their own parents to bring up', and this is not right.

However, Alla believed that a mother should 'necessarily do something else, too, not to dissolve herself in her child completely.'

At the time when we spoke to each other, Alla accepted all the necessary pain and discomfort associated with pregnancy and childbirth. However, formerly she was very much afraid of any kind of pain. Overcoming this fear meant 'maturity', in her view. In addition, Alla believed that 'all women are constructed in such a way so that they can endure the birth', and that birth was a valuable experience, which it would be a pity to 'miss out on'. Therefore, if Alla does get pregnant she does not want a Caesarean, and would prefer an almost 'natural' childbirth with minimum intervention, although in a hospital setting in order to diminish the risk.

Alla's attitude to children, as a whole, was very selective. She liked some of them, and was indifferent to others. Alla always strongly preferred to have a son, because she would be more concerned for a daughter's future: 'women's life is more complicated, after all... women are more... bound.'

However, at the time she was ready to accept anything that happens, provided that this would be 'her' child or children: 'a boy, a girl, two boys, two girls, three of them, or four...' The only unacceptable thing was childlessness.

Age was important for Alla: 'I grudge losing years'.

She realized that she could have even more problems with health in the future. In addition, 'in our family everyone had children earlier in life'.

She also took into consideration that her own, and especially her lover's hard-won decisiveness to have a child could weaken soon: 'it is better to do it now, while all of us are ready.' Therefore

I cannot just wait, just hope for something, I need to do something which will provide *a radical solution to the problem* [italics mine - O.I.].

There were no moral difficulties, for Alla, in accepting the necessity of medical and technological intervention. To achieve the desired goal, a child, 'all means are good'.

However, the need to use donor sperm or ova would complicate everything, since genetic links to her children were very important for Alla. The father-to-be was irreplaceable, too.

Alla was well-prepared to deal with the medical establishment: she did not fully believe anyone. She was difficult to influence. Consequently, Alla took the advice of several doctors, compared them, and made informed decisions herself. She did the same with advice from 'lay' people [including myself -O.I.]. Alla searched for information anywhere she could find it, but it was useless to try to persuade her of some specific direction. All this was, of course, difficult for her, she needed to be completely mobilized ('I now have only one goal - this one'), her will, her intellectual abilities were constantly strained, but this was her strategy, which she hoped would lead to success in the struggle with the medical establishment. On the other hand, Alla was prepared for unavoidable humiliation, which seems to be another necessary element for success in this area. If you want the result, you have to accept that all other components are less important. The 'best' doctors are not necessarily the nicest ones. Nor is humiliation by the medical establishment a feature peculiar to Russia only: Alla had a not very pleasant experience with a female German doctor she tried to consult. This woman discouraged her at every point. She did not want to make the investigations, interpreted the results of the investigations as 'simply, you will never have children', and kept repeating: 'if you want to keep your man by means of a child, you will not succeed'.

Nevertheless, Alla did persuade this doctor to do 'what I wanted her to do': Alla's final decision, after careful and independent investigation of all the aspects of both forms of treatment, was for laparoscopy, advised to her by this doctor, and not for IVF, advised by me. After this laparoscopy, Alla did get pregnant and recently gave birth to a son (all this happened already after the interview).

Alla and her family were interested in politics very much, they tended to 'keep themselves informed' about the events. Their position was extremely liberal. Yet the present pitiful state of Russian economics seemed to them to be 'an abyss', a situation

which should better end as soon as possible so that people can finally 'live normal lives' and have real incomes. All literary heroines were 'alien' to Alla, she did not identify with them while reading novels. Alla had no Russian literary role models:

I never liked the Turgenev's⁸⁰ girls, because of their infantile characters, Anna Karenina⁸¹... she is not a fighter, I do not like such people...

The only role model for her was, to some extent, Scarlet O'Hara⁸², because of the sentence at the end of the book: 'I will think about this tomorrow', since psychologically 'It helps so much...' However, Alla did 'understand very well that this is, surely, a mass culture reading'.

Veronica was a disabled mother. She had an inborn heart condition which made it necessary to constantly receive treatment and it could, as doctors said, cause her death at any moment. However, she had managed to live all these years because of a 'strong nervous system', which gave her protection from sudden unfortunate life events which could negatively influence her heart. This nervous system was a 'glass object' to her parents when she was a child. They tried to make her childhood as calm as possible, as a doctor had advised. As a result, Veronica's life philosophy became as follows:

if it was good today, then this means that everything is normal. And,
tomorrow - we will see about tomorrow, according to the situation.

Why worry, when the event has not happened yet?

Nevertheless, Veronica 'always knew' that she would have no children, since it was 'forbidden' to give birth with her heart condition. It was not too difficult for her to agree to this: Veronica did not like little babies 'too much', she was, in fact, rather indifferent to them. Consequently, she 'did not plan' to marry either, since she did not see 'too much sense' in a childless marriage:

⁸⁰ Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev (1818-1883), Russian writer. Female protagonists of his novels are usually considered to be 'genuine', self-sacrificing, natural, essential. They also usually are personally stronger than their men, at least more decisive (Heldt 1987). Whatever decision they make, they are consistent in it. On the other hand, all of them are young girls who have no experience, and girls from nobility, a declining class, so that they had received the 'artificial' education. Therefore they are often perceived as people who are very naive and far from reality, though having their special charm, which is due to this mixture of naturalness and decline.

⁸¹ see the footnote to Chapter 4 of the Part II.

⁸² The novel (first published in 1936) by the American woman writer Margaret Mitchell (1900-1949) was popular among Russian women (those who had access to Western literature) of younger generations. The female protagonist seemed attractive because of her independence and individualism, and her ability to resist troubles and insist on her will. The book also revealed contradictions between the male world of war and the female world of children and

when you look at childless couples, you see that there is no harmony: either the wife wants children very much, or the husband always looks at the other people's children without indifference.

As for the other aspects of marriage, Veronica thought they could easily be met in common-law relationships:

why complicate things, then, why marry? People can easily live together without registration, while they want to be together.

In Veronica's view, people in general want to have children

in order to pass their experience on to them; there are several periods in a human's life - first, he or she gathers the experiences, then, s/he feels the desire to pass them on to someone else.

This was applied to both men and women; however, women also wanted children in order to have someone 'to care' for. This was specific for the 'maternal instinct'. In addition, Veronica believed that people need children to become 'normal', so that mature, kind, calm, and developed in a harmonious way. They became 'humans of full value', able to see 'into the depths', only from the time of their children's birth. A human is 'born anew' at this point, for Veronica. The issue of the continuation of the line did not seem important to her at the time of the interview, and nor did it earlier, at the time of the birth of her daughter.

Despite her life plans, Veronica met a man who, she realized, 'I could bind my life with'. According to her views on what a 'real marriage' was, Veronica then 'had no other choice but to begin to resolve this problem', i.e. to have a child. Her husband did not push her towards this, he was rather afraid to risk her health. Consequently, initially they used contraception, but it failed: 'conception itself was very easy', as Veronica said. Only after that, when she was already pregnant, Veronica began to 'seriously think' about motherhood. This is consistent with her view that abortion is the same thing as 'removing a tumour if it begins to grow on your leg'.

She decided that they needed a child, and she would give birth. Doctors (who usually tried to

get rid of such women with problems, by any means... if you try to obtain some information from them, for example, on what is the percentage of success stories, they never know)

told her that it was absolutely impossible, that she would die herself and would produce a sick child, that she 'must' have an abortion, and that after that she would easily

work. However, the protagonist wanted to unite these male and female worlds in her own life. She was not successful in that.

adopt. As soon as Veronica had the suggested abortion, things were clarified by the doctors. They told her that with her heart condition, no one 'would allow' her to adopt. This left her feeling 'deceived, I felt I had been got into a trap'. Veronica hated getting into traps, as a whole: 'I am used to making decisions myself, at least in matters which concern me.'

All this only intensified her determination to have a child. Veronica got pregnant again, as soon as it became possible, and again very easily. But she did not tell anyone, including her husband, about this new pregnancy, until it was too late for a legitimate early abortion, i.e. until the term of three months of gestation. Yet, 'with my heart condition, abortion is allowed at any term', so the doctors continuously pushed her towards it throughout all the pregnancy, again, using deception, promising her an operation on her heart, which had not been available earlier, as soon as she had an abortion. All their efforts did not lead to success, however.

Veronica felt good during the pregnancy, there was no worsening in her condition, and she gave birth at full term at a special maternity hospital for women with heart defects. She was lucky to have a good doctor there, and did not have any problems. Labour was induced in her case, at her own insistence, since she wanted to give birth during her own doctor's shift. Other women at the hospital were not that lucky: they were left to give birth with whatever medical team was 'on duty' at the time of their labour, which was not necessarily the best one. When the hospital temporarily closed for its 'cleaning', which is a routine procedure in all Russian maternity hospitals, aimed at the elimination of 'intra-hospital' infections, these women with heart defects were put together in the same wards as pregnant women from another maternity hospital who had various infectious diseases which could worsen the condition of these disabled women if they caught these diseases.

Veronica gave birth vaginally, since both she and her doctor thought it was better for someone in her condition. A caesarean section was not 'natural', since the female body made some hormonal preparations for the birth, and all these hormones would be 'in vain' if a Caesarean was performed. That would negatively influence the heart. Veronica was against having the husband present during the birth, since he 'should not see' a woman in her 'not beautiful moments.' A 'father's love' for a child would not depend on his presence at the birth. As for home birth, Veronica thought that it was 'people's right' if they felt 'confident enough' to manage everything at home.

Veronica did not give any 'presents' to her doctor, although she and her husband intended to do so. The doctor did not accept the offered 'gift', which was a rare case in the Russian (Soviet) medical practice.

The overall conclusion which Veronica has drawn for herself from her personal experience of dealing with the medical establishment was that

in this life, a human must rely only upon herself or himself. No one will help you in really important matters. Well, they may help you a bit. But even if they wanted to, they cannot help you seriously [...] only in something, but a human is, yes, alone and lonely in this life. He must resolve all his problems himself.

She wanted to have a boy, initially, she did not know why, maybe because she was internally strong and respected strength. But Veronica finally realized that 'in my situation, I needed only a girl', because boys should be born in families where fathers would participate in domestic life more than Veronica's husband did, where the fathers were 'handy, strong, could do everything themselves', while 'our father does not even know how to hammer a nail in', so he would not be able to serve as a good role model for a son. A girl, on the other hand, can be taught all necessary 'female housekeeping skills' by Veronica, who considered herself being a very good housekeeper.

Veronica also worked in a clerical job in the Presidium of Russian Academy of Sciences, and was highly valued there. In her view, in both men and women's lives both family and career should exist, in order for humans to feel 'protected'. Those who have just one of these things are 'deprived of something'. Veronica was opposed to the very idea of choice in this area: 'It is always better to have the two things, than just one.'

This was what she wanted in this life for her daughter, too. There should not be any gender inequality in distribution of life pursuits. Housekeeping duties and child care should be divided 'fifty-fifty' (the amount of work, but some concrete tasks still were more 'male' or more 'female') between man and woman, and the same should be applied to work outside the home. However, in Veronica's own life, it was not like that, and she reproached her husband for not sufficiently sharing housekeeping with her.

At the time of the interview, Veronica loved her daughter very much. Mothering was her 'hobby' then. A hobby, in her opinion, was something in which a human 'invests his or her soul'.

It was not that happy in the beginning: child care was then just 'hard work'. This is understandable, if we remember that Veronica never liked little babies much. Still, she did not complain, and did everything that was necessary herself. After all, even if her decision to have a child was rational rather than emotional, it was not imposed on her, it was her own choice. Nevertheless, the older her daughter grew, the more Veronica perceived her motherhood simply as 'happiness'.

She felt pity and empathy for infertile people: 'I hope they will achieve pregnancy through their difficult way to it.' She also hoped they would give birth to healthy and strong children, since all the existing treatment options could influence the future child's health in a negative way, in her view. Veronica also believed that the majority of the cases of infertility were caused by abortion of the first pregnancy.

Veronica was not religious, maybe because she had, as she herself admitted, 'too rational a head', and also due to her 'totally atheistic upbringing'. She was indifferent to all religious 'rites', and to the 'idea of God'. However, Veronica believed in some psychic 'energy'. 'Creativeness', 'genius', and even 'hobbies' were for her the different embodiments of this energy. Veronica sometimes felt this 'energy' in herself being 'so strong', that it seemed impossible to her that this could 'perish without result... go into emptiness'.

Sometimes I think so intensively... about something... or about someone... that it is difficult to believe that this does not *mean* anything.

In the political area, Veronica held moral views:

I would want more reason there, more rationality... I want us to come faster to a normal life. At least, to a rational life, and not one of the «after us, the deluge» kind. I agree that the people at the top should have some privileges... well, let them become richer... But... this should not become their main task.

Veronica named no female

(probably, it is easier to describe a man, than to create such a good and many-sided female image...)

and no Russian model literary images ('the English character is closer to mine').

She liked Sommes from '*The Forsythe Saga*' by Galsworthy for

both his restraint and the depth of his feelings. And... his desire to establish rational order in the world.⁸³

⁸³ John Galsworthy (1867-1933). His large novel *The Forsythe Saga* (first published in 1906-1921) was translated into Russian and widely read in the Soviet 'intelligentsia' circles. Sommes, one of the most 'restrained' personages there, could seem attractive to those people who value self-control; but I remember him precisely in the moments where he was losing self-control. In these moments, for example when his wife Irene left him, or when his daughter was born, the intensity of his feelings was somewhat wild and even slightly frightening, in my view. The 'proprietary' side of his feelings was striking for me on both occasions. It seems that this feeling of property on the 'live things' was important for him to such an extent that it became his weakness, since no one can really own another person in this world. Both times he was doomed to loss.

As we have seen, a woman's desire for parenthood when she is infertile or disabled is considered by the interviewees from individualist, Christian and rationalist positions. The individualist position considers whether a person has an automatic right to have a child, and the individual abilities to achieve this goal. The Christian position looks at the interaction or contradiction between the 'law of God' and individual will. The rationalist position is concerned with cost-benefit analysis, and the issue of feasibility. Essentialist views concerning 'nature' are also often applied. Some of the interviewees blamed infertile people for their own situation, explaining it by reference to prostitution, early sexual life, or having the first pregnancy aborted, and made derogatory comments about disabled people who want to 'burden' the state with their 'inadequate' offspring; this might be a reflection of the attitudes expressed in articles in the press in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods (see the discussion on this in **section 11** of Chapter 1 of Part I; see also Waters, 1992, 1). The attitudes which infertile and disabled would-be-parents encounter from the medical establishment are generally hostile or indifferent, and these attitudes probably stem from the same understanding of such people being 'inadequate'. However, they might also convey a consumerist message: if one has to pay \$2000 per IVF attempt, while the monthly official salary for most people in Moscow is less than \$100 (see www.mosstat.ru), it means that a child is sometimes considered almost as a very expensive consumer good.

CHAPTER 7.

The voluntarily childless and the 'not sure yet': who are they?

Many interviewees (Yana, Lada, Galia, Alla, Nadia, Nina) '*did not believe*' that there really were women who did not want to have children. They thought that these women either were '*not ready*' yet (Lada; Raya and Uliana believed that many people postponed giving birth for economic reasons and for reasons of family instability), and that they would want children later in their lives, or that these women were *infertile and tried to hide* this fact by pretending to be voluntarily childless (Galia).

If the interviewees believed in voluntarily childlessness, it seemed to them to be a *deviation* from the norm (Yana, Kira, Alla, Nina), a consequence of *low 'maternal instinct'* (Kira, Vika, Raya, Alla), of lack of '*love of life*' (Nadia). Other reasons offered included *individualism*, or *selfishness* (Vika, Lidia, Raya, Vera, Nadia, Nina), desire for an *easy life* (Nina, Lidia, Raya, Vera), *immaturity* (Yana; Lada; Raya; Nina). Veronica emphasized that people, in her view, could actually become mature only through having children. Vera agreed that to her personally maturity came precisely through the experience of motherhood.

My interlocutors also mentioned *asexuality* (Yana) and *bad childhood experience*, or '*incorrect*' *upbringing*, of a woman herself (Kira, Alla, Yana) in this respect. For this last reason, the voluntarily childless '*deserved pity*', in Yana's opinion. However, many interviewees admitted that this was actually a matter of *personal choice*, whether to have children or not (Kira, Vika, Lidia, Janna, Raya, Alla, Veronica, Vera). For them, this choice was quite legitimate, in comparison to the abandonment of babies. Some, however, expressed concern that it must not be realized through numerous abortions (Yana, Kira, Vera). On the positive side of such a choice the interviewees saw *better career options* (Yana, Kira, Vika, Lidia, Janna). On the other hand, several women (Veronica, Yulia) opposed the very idea of choice between children and a career. According to them, this made a person psychologically weaker, depriving her from the important '*reserves of energy*', made her less '*harmonious*'. As Yulia put it,

it is desirable to develop in all possible directions... when one develops in only one direction, one becomes totally excluded from reality ... if, for example, at some time you find out that you do not have any more energy to continue what you are doing, then you will be left just without anything, your life will be totally finished...

Kira thought that even the successful career women were going to regret such a choice in their older age. If it was, in addition, achieved at the cost of numerous abortions, they were going to 'feel their sin' with renewed intensity near the ends of their lives.

Other positive features of choosing childlessness included supposedly *strong will* (Vika, Vera), *high level of self-consciousness* (Vika, Vera, Alla, Veronica), and *honesty* (as Vika put it:

This is honest, at least!. And I did a dishonest deed [she gave birth to an unwanted child]. I say and think one thing, and what I really do is an absolutely different thing!)

of a woman who 'dared' to acknowledge lack of the desire to have children in her, the fact that *children were not important to her* (Vika, Janna, Veronica, Vera, Nadia), and that she was *self-sufficient* (Vika, Nina, Lidia, Nadia, Vera). As Kira has put it: 'perhaps, for some women it is better to be alone, on their own'.

All this implied the ability to *act against norms* (according to Vika and Vera). Vera, Alla, and Nadia believed that such women also were *responsible enough to not bring the unwanted children into the world*. Several interviewees (Vera, Nadia) thought that some *life styles were incompatible* with having children, for example that of *homosexuals* (Kira). According to Yulia, many lesbian women themselves held this view. Yet, ultimately childlessness was considered *immoral* (Raya, Veronica, Nadia, Nina) and *unnatural* (Lada, Yana, Kira, Yulia, Nina). It was believed to be a question of human *responsibility to bring new people into the world* and thus to *continue our species* (Lidia, Raya, Galia, Veronica). As Yulia put it, 'every man must... give sperm, and every woman must bear children.'

Veronica raised the issue of *childless marriage*. In her view, when one partner did not want children, but another wanted them very much, it was the *duty* of the first to provide the second with the offspring. Vera, however, knew of several voluntarily childless couples who were happily living together for many years.

Galia argued with the position, according to which people could decide not to have children for economic reasons. In her view, 'one child per family' was possible in any conditions. '*Overpopulation*' was 'just a nonsense', in Kira's view.

For deeply religious Uliana this issue looked very different: on the one hand, one had a legitimate right to stay childless. However, it did not presuppose acting according to one's own will, but rather a 'divine inspiration' for childlessness which should be 'felt' in this case. On the other hand, this implied some kind of monastic life, since both abortion and contraception were 'sins', in Uliana's opinion.

Now let us listen to women who were sure that they did not want children as well as to other women who were indifferent to the matter. For Maya, children were simply a secondary side of life. She was similar to Janna in feeling that 'If there are children in my life, then, good, if not, it will be sad, but not a tragedy'. The only difference was that Janna had a son, while Maya was still childless, though she thought that she might have a child in the future:

if there is some age limit for a woman to do that, it is not now, later,
I think, at thirty five or forty years. I still have some time left to have
a child.

There are other things in life, which are 'more important', from her point of view. For the majority of people, Maya believed, children meant 'some 'scenario' put into us during our personal development, it is not our own desire', which means that children are being born with the unconscious intention, independent from one's own will, to repeat all the 'bad sides' of the upbringing and personalities of their own parents. Thus a 'vicious cycle' of 'bad infinity' takes place, in which everything is always the same, and nothing new ever appears. The only way of escape from this circle, in which it was far too easy to lock oneself, is 'personal development' in the spiritual sense, which would make one different from the 'scenario' which was, consciously or not, placed in one by one's parents. In the process of development, you find your 'real personality', freeing it from all the 'wrappings' of socialization. This development is very difficult to achieve, but it is something worthy in itself. You could be sure that you 'fulfilled your task in life' and perhaps you even achieve 'immortality' through it, whether or not you have children. Children have nothing in common with this 'real' immortality; however, they can provide parents with 'poor' and 'wrong' immortality through what we described above as 'vicious cycle' of repeating always the same things in 'bad infinity'.

All this is associated with Maya's religious views. She does not specifically prefer any church, but 'takes' what seems to be 'appropriate' and 'right' to her 'from everywhere'. Maya believes in 'absolute' and 'higher principles', but rejects all 'rites', which are, in her view, 'too formal, to the extent of losing any real content'.

According to the position expressed above, it would be better to postpone having children until 'development' is achieved. Otherwise it would be far too easy to 'slide' into this same 'vicious circle' of repeating the 'scenario' of your own and your ancestors' socialization. Once development was achieved, one could choose to have children, but only if several important additional conditions were met: there must be a male partner who is 'developed' to no lesser extent than you; there must be mutual love between you; and

there must be a shared desire to have a child. Economic conditions must be conducive enough as well.

Some people might choose to have children as part of their chosen life-style, as 'natural childbirth' adherents do. Maya admires these people: 'in my life it [the birth of a child] could only be done like this [naturally]', Maya was very 'ecologically minded' as a whole, she readily accepted the notion of 'population control', on an equal basis with various alternative 'natural' life style positions. She always liked animals very much and even wanted to become a biologist as a child. As for people, Maya liked 'those people who fit into the eco-system.'

For Maya, having children when the above conditions were not met, was worthy of blame. She thought that all other reasons for motherhood, besides a mutual heterosexual love and a shared desire coming from it, were egoistic. For example, Maya knew women of her acquaintance who had children in order to 'keep their men', or for health reasons, when they were told by doctors that it was better for them to give birth earlier in life, since their reproductive systems were not working well.

Maya did not believe in the existence of a strong desire for children as such, nor in the 'maternal instinct'. It was, in her view, rather 'an automatic drive developed somewhere at the social level'. She never felt a desire for children herself. As a child, Maya thought about having children of her own, but only when her mother was doing something 'wrong' in her view. Then, Maya thought: 'I will do everything differently with my daughter when I have one'.

As an adolescent, Maya fell in love with a boy of her own age, they planned to marry and to have two children as soon as they completed secondary school. However, both sets of parents were frightened of this prospect and initiated a real 'anti-family' propaganda campaign, trying to persuade 'the children' that they must 'get a profession' first. The couple separated soon because their 'love was gone', but from those times Maya retained the view that family life is far from attractive, and consequently it is not her 'first' choice:

children are such a huge responsibility, first of all, and I did not want responsibility [...] my mother was afraid that I would not study, I would not work, I would just bear children and do nothing [...] cleaning, washing, bearing children... in real life all these three usually come together!

Maya had a complicated relationship with her mother, based on a power struggle. Her mother was single, and Maya was her only daughter, yet: 'she never was an authority figure for me!' Since early adolescence, Maya searched for a male authority figure, and

blamed her mother for depriving her of a father. For herself, the option of single motherhood was 'closed', 'I will never do it like this'. Maya has not met her father since she was an infant, and therefore she felt insulted by him, too:

He can divorce his wife, I understand that, but he has no right to divorce his children!

Maya did not like the way pregnant women look, especially women of the 'underclass', 'begging in the street, drunk, ragged, with huge stomachs.' Her perception was different if the pregnant women were adherents of natural childbirth. Then she was 'delighted! Ideally, pregnancy is happiness.'

Ability to control one's life was a very important part of the personality, for Maya, while these 'underclass' women, in her view, 'simply cannot control their fertility'.

Maya's attitude to children was very selective as well. It depended on whose children they were, and on their age: 'beginning from four to five years, they are interesting for me'; while 'with babies of the breast-feeding age, it is unclear what to do with them.' Maya thought all this would change if she were to have her own child, but, as yet:

I do not have any disgust towards young children, but I do not have any special tenderness either.

Maya, as well as Veronica, believed that men want to 'develop' their children's minds, to 'pass their knowledge on to them', while women want to 'care' for children. Maya believed in the essentialness of maternal care for a child during the first three years of a child's life. In her view, a mother was 'necessary and irreplaceable' for a child during this period, since there still existed a 'biological link' between them. However, a mother should not be busy only with the child, she must be able 'to find time' to do something else - 'to read some books, to visit friends.'

However reserved her own position concerning childbearing was, Maya thought that those women who did not want children at all were 'anomalous': 'Those whom I met in my life were, you know, clinical cases' (Maya was a clinical psychologist). Desire to have no children was associated in these women with overall deficiencies in communicating with people, with a lack of desire to care for anyone, and with a preference for 'artificial' works of art over everything that was 'alive and natural.'

When I suggested the possibility of choice between career and children, Maya felt 'disgust' towards such a possibility for the same reasons that Yulia and Veronica had: I do not like it when someone wants to reduce herself to just one side of her life, in this case, a career.

On the other hand, the reduction of oneself to motherhood evoked no less antipathy in Maya.

The literary images she named were of 'all-round developed personalities' (an ideal which was propagandized by communist ideology in the area of personality's development), or of women who were on their way to becoming such. Children might equally be present or absent in their lives. The first of them was a girl full of 'creativity and cheerfulness', from some 'Soviet' science fiction novel (Maya did not remember the title nor the author). This personage was a good professional, very sporty, and spoke many languages. Another woman Maya named was Olga Iliinskaya from '*Oblomov*' by Goncharov⁸⁴. In Maya's view, this was a woman en route to development, guided by a 'male teacher' (a very important symbolic figure for Maya in her struggle against her mother's husbandless authority) who was her German husband. But only temporarily was she guided: by the end of the novel the female protagonist had 'exhausted' all her teacher's 'potential', and she was ready to go further than him along the path of development, already unguided.

Maya perceived politicians as 'officials at the service of the state', and thought they must be 'better in their profession', than they actually were. This view of politics prompted Maya to 'consult those who know more about this' before she voted. Her sympathies were broadly democratic and anti-Communist (and anti-Zhirinovsky). Maya did not like women in politics, as well as 'career-women' as a whole, since she believed it was incompatible with being a woman, especially in Russia, 'for the Russian mentality, you can be either a woman, or a politician'.

Valeria was one of those who were absolutely sure that they did not want any children of their own. In Valeria's case, this was most of all due to the fear of giving birth, which was particularly strong in her, according to her own words. Yet, many women have this fear, but give birth any way. It seemed that Valeria's position was reinforced by failure to find the prospect of having children attractive.

⁸⁴ Goncharov, Ivan Alexandrovich (1812-1891), Russian writer. In his novel *Oblomov* (1859) he depicted the degradation of a noble Russian man, who was full of intellectual potential, due to a lack of activity in himself and due to lack of rewards for activity in Russian social life, which did not value this. The female protagonist, Olga, was his fiancée, but, quite logically, he could not marry her (though not because of physical impotence: he even had a son by the end of the book from an 'uneducated' common-law wife). Olga was rather demanding in the intellectual sense, and, after several attempts to wake him up, she yielded to the unavoidable and married his German friend, Stoltz, who was very practical and active and intellectual, as all Germans are, in comparison to Russians, in the author's opinion. Olga and Stoltz had children together, and developed an agricultural household economy, and read philosophical books. It is traditionally thought that she still regretted her unsuccessful love for Oblomov. Maya interpreted the story in a slightly different way.

Valeria believed in the 'reproductive instinct', she thought that it was 'normally developed' in her, and therefore it could not win over her disgust towards all 'unnatural' interventions into the body performed by the medical establishment. Women in whom the 'instinct' overcame the fear had the former in an 'overdeveloped' state, in Valeria's view. Most women were 'normal' and, in her opinion, had children just 'by accident', not 'intentionally'.

Valeria did not have any disgust towards babies and children and asserted that she would readily take care of a child if only she could avoid giving birth to him or her and going through the necessary pain, discomfort, and risk to her life. Valeria believed that all the bodily transformations associated with pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding (the stomach loses elasticity [...] the genitals are being mutilated, you are never going to be sexually active any more [...] the breasts become long and empty bags)

were spoiling female physical beauty, which Valeria tried to preserve, or, at least, 'not to ruin intentionally, as women do when they give birth'.

Neither the prospect of 'natural childbirth' (without a doctor's help? If it were only possible to do it like this, I would definitely never give birth!),

nor Caesarean ('and what if I died under the anesthesia?') helped Valeria to overcome her fear. In addition, woman's psychology after the birth was changing too much, she becomes interested only in the child ('this is unnatural'), and gives up other opportunities (concerning sex and work). Valeria did not like her present life-style much and believed that a child would not drastically push it in a more negative direction. She was very much for the 'here and now', she did not believe in any form of immortality, including that connected with having one's biological children ('why should they continue me? I am already all here. A child would not be me').

About all religious forms of 'life after death', Valeria said: 'After my death I will not exist, the same for every one else.' Religion could serve 'this world's' life goals for Valeria, on the other hand: in order to legitimately marry her present husband, Valeria 'converted' to Islam. They were about to separate at the time of the interview, and her grand-mother tried to 'propagandize' Orthodoxy to Valeria. She listened, but did not feel any inducements to enter the Church.

Although she felt no disgust towards children, she had no strong desire to have them either. Valeria said that although she could justify her childlessness by her present unstable marital situation, if she wanted children, she easily could have them in this marriage, as other women would do if they were her. The real reason was that she 'does not want them too much'. Still Valeria believed that she might have children one day, 'I

still have some years left before I reach forty', if her husband wanted them very much and pushed her towards childbirth ('financial incentives' would not work, only 'direct compulsion'). However, Valeria's present husband was not 'bothered' about children.

In a way, Valeria was used to marital instability, she found an easy task to break up with a man, or to survive when he rejected her, and to find a new one: 'there is always another hundred of them around'. She realized that it would not be possible to do this so easily with a child, who would be 'always here'. One cannot 'divorce' a child, and such 'over-binding' represented something rather negative in Valeria's view.

Valeria believed that she will be able to manage on her own in her old age ('I will have better health than others have due to having no children'), and even if not, it was 'immoral', in her view, to burden other people's young lives by 'forcing yourself upon them for care.' Many old people were 'abandoned by their children anyway', and, on the other hand, 'some neighbour's children can bring me a glass of water, if necessary.' However, Valeria asserted that she was going to care for her own parents when they are old. It seemed that everything that was going to happen 'after 50, when my beauty will be gone' seemed not important to Valeria at her contemporary age and almost equaled death.

Valeria was shocked by the death of their family dog several years ago:
they are like people. You have them, you bring them up, you live with them, and then they die. Better to avoid this, and to have no pets at all.

Her relationship to her parents never was too important in her life, there was neither blame nor too much love in what she said:

my mother was always working, she had no time to deal with me, I was with my grandmother most of the time, and then in the kindergarten. But this was the reality of our Soviet life, she had to work.

The same applied to her father, for whom, as usual, she felt slightly more distance, but he was not blamed either.

However, there was one thing which Valeria never accepted in her parents: their poverty, their constantly overworked state, and their 'overall pitiful life style'. Valeria appreciated very much that she herself lived differently, had more money and more leisure. Having leisure time was even more important for her than having money, because 'in Soviet times everyone was obliged to work, it was so bad, now it is better, freer...'

Valeria perceived her contemporary situation as moderate upward social mobility (she was doing some inter-country trade with her Pakistani husband). On the other hand, she would not appreciate more significant mobility, a real 'career', since this would involve 'myself in too much strain'. As a whole, she was happy with the situation as it was.

Like Maya, Valeria believed in essential motherhood: a mother must deal with her child herself and live with him or her, not give him or her to her parents or to her husband to bring up: 'she is a mother! How can she?' The usual conclusion drawn from any suggestions I made that to be such an over-responsible mother could be difficult in many life situations, was: 'then, do not bear a child at all.'

Valeria admitted that mothering would mean some additional working 'strain' for her, but she was not afraid of this and thought that she could manage it.

Valeria was happy to use abortion as birth control. She tried some other means, but only condoms 'did not disturb' her. The pill has side effects which spoil one's beauty, and the IUD had to be 'inserted into the body, and you know my attitude towards all bodily interventions'. Abortion was 'unpleasant and unhealthy', but much easier and less frightening (and 'less bodily harmful'), in comparison with carrying a pregnancy to term and giving birth.

Valeria did not read too much, but she liked films. When I asked her to name her preferred female images, she finally chose the female protagonist from '*Cabaret*', performed by Lisa Minelli, as Janna did (see the footnote to the Chapter 4 of the Part II), and one of the characters from the film '*Moscow does not believe in tears*'⁸⁵, performed by Irina Mouravieva. In this last film, three variants of female life were suggested: first, remaining at your own social level, having a family and working very hard (this character was played by Raisa Riazanova). This was rejected by Valeria for the same reasons which caused her to reject her parents' life style. The second option (the heroine played by Irina Mouravieva) consisted of moving towards a more leisured life style, actively enjoying one's youth, and not caring too much about the future. The third one (the protagonist, performed by Vera Alentova) presupposed significant career and social mobility at the cost of constant and intense 'work and strain'. Valeria chose the second path. Maybe, the protagonist of *Cabaret* also seemed to Valeria to be enjoying a funny and leisured life. All such protagonists usually had their bad moments in films, but Valeria had her bad moments too, and accepted them as a necessary feature of a chosen lifestyle. She also remembered an old Soviet film '*My Love*'⁸⁶, for the reason that the plot there contained the

⁸⁵ by Vladimir Menshov, 1979.

⁸⁶ by the film director Vladimir Korsh-Sablin (1900-1974). The film '*My Love*' was made in 1940. The plot moves around the supposed illegitimacy of the protagonist's child, while in reality it is her one-year-old adopted son, who's birth mother, the protagonist's sister, died during childbirth. Some of her friends begin to despise the heroine for being an 'immoral woman', but the 'good' ones among them support her whatever happens. Finally, of course, the latter ones are proven to be right. However, the message concerning illegitimacy is thus ambiguous, since the spectator is still left uncertain about what should be the 'right' moral position if it really had been her natural child, conceived not within marriage.

situation which she would prefer for herself - adoption of a relative's child: the female protagonist of the film adopted her sister's son.

Valeria's political views were that everything should be free, and calm, and people should not bother others by trying to teach them how to live.

Therefore, now it is much better than it was in Soviet times. Everyone who is not a complete idiot understands this. And even for the idiots it is better now, simply, they do not realize this.

Like Maya, Valeria agreed with the 'population control' position.

Polina felt 'no desire to have children', like Valeria. She tried to force herself to want them, however, because society's 'norms', and everyone around her, 'pressed her.' Her position was less favourable for childlessness than Valeria's, and was similar to that of Vika in the sense that Polina was happily married, had a very close relationship with her parents, and her parents and her husband all wanted her to have children. She had a childless aunt, on the other hand; Polina admitted that she always preferred older childless women to mothers, since the former were 'persons': 'they look different, speak differently, everything about them is different'. All this was applicable to this aunt of Polina. She was 'splendid', in her niece's view. However, lately she has become a 'witch', in Polina's words, 'a lonely woman who hates the whole world'.

In Polina's view, when a woman becomes a mother, everything changes in her. Basically, she loses her personality, the child will always 'come first' for her, she will 'admire his excrement, eat the food which he refused', and be happy with all this. She will never look at the 'flowers and the sky' anymore. The beauty of the world disappears for a mother. These psychological changes seemed to Polina to be more frightening than the physical changes which happen in a woman during pregnancy, childbirth and breast feeding, although these were scary too:

I cannot understand, how women think about pregnancy in a state of calm, it is a horrible state, when someone unknown begins to live in your body, you become two persons in one, it is a mad state!

Her fear of giving birth was significantly lower, she did not speak to me about it at all. Perhaps, this fear was not very strong, since Polina had the experience of overcoming a serious skin disease and this made her used to tolerating physical pain and suffering - if it was necessary for the chosen goal, however.

Polina did not believe in the 'maternal instinct', nor in the existence of a female desire to have children. In her view, women tended to bear children

for egoistic reasons, to keep a man, or to sublimate their desire for a man into a child, to escape loneliness, to achieve their own unattained goals in this life.

Polina strongly disapproved of all 'selfish' reasons for having children, like the following one:

in my view, it is deeply immoral when you bear a child in order to have someone who will help you in old age.

She asserted, like Valeria, that she herself would help her parents when they are old and disabled. She also believed that what people used to name the 'maternal instinct' was in reality the desire 'to love'. It is possible to love a man, or a kitten, or even nature. And it is possible to love a child. So a woman could feel the desire to bear a child 'as a future object of her love' when this need to love someone or something was still unfulfilled by other possibilities which life had offered her. For example, Polina thought that her mother could not love her father, and therefore decided to have a child.

Polina disapproved of abortion for 'life-loving', rather than for religious reasons, and thought she would give birth if she fell pregnant. For this reason many women had children, in her view: they fell pregnant unintentionally and then could not abort: 'I never realized how huge a problem this is, abortion, for the majority of women.'

Men, however, wanted and needed children much more than women, in Polina's view, since they 'do not know how to be friends', how to be close with other men, and could achieve this closeness only with their sons. If a man had a daughter, it would be for him 'like a second love'. This could make mothers and daughters jealous of each other. Women could be better and closer friends to each other, in comparison to friendships between men. Polina herself had two very close long-term female friends, and several others whom she met recently. This facility for friendship was an additional reason for women to be less interested than men in having children.

Probably, Polina's fear of mothering had something to do with her relationship with her own mother, which she admitted to be 'too intense.' Polina's mother was a full-time mother of her only daughter for the first nine years of Polina's life. This was unusual for Soviet women of her generation. Polina remembered this time as very nice, actually, but on the other hand she felt that because of this her mother 'did not realize herself neither as a person, nor as a woman', by the first of which she meant in terms of a career, and by the second, in terms of sexuality. Polina felt a 'tremendous guilt' for this lack of personal development in her mother. On the other hand, all this presented to Polina a role model of 'all-absorbing' intense mothering, which she was not ready to copy herself, since both sexuality and to a lesser extent career (which was just beginning at the time of the

interview, though Polina intended to become professionally involved in a career in the area of social psychology) were very important aspects of life, in her opinion.

Polina's relationship with her father was much more complicated, she actually hated him in childhood and wanted him to disappear from their (her and her mother's) lives; her mother did not like him either. However, later Polina found a common language with her father, since both of them valued sex very much, while Polina's mother thought that her daughter was a 'whore' because she enjoyed having sex (even though she engaged only in sex within marriage). Polina's mother at the time of the interview seemed to her daughter to be 'passive', while the father seemed 'oppressive', inclined to psychologically manipulate people.

Such an intense relationship with the mother in her childhood, perhaps, made Polina very much oriented towards one-to-one interactions. It was difficult for her to admit a third person into the dyad, and the child would be precisely such a third person in her relationship with her husband. Therefore, as Polina said,

I feel jealousy in advance: I am jealous both of the child who will steal my husband's love from me, and, strangely, of my husband, who will steal this future child's love from me.

Polina believed that if she bore a child, she would actually love it 'too much'. All this did not make things any easier.

In addition, Polina felt disgust towards children: 'a child, sniffing, never happy, capricious...' However, when one of her friends, who did not like her own son, cared for him badly, so that he was always dirty, Polina did not approve of his mother: 'It is even indecent, to behave like that.'

As for her own husband and his desire to have children, Polina said: 'We agreed that I will be his child', and that 'the adult is always more important than a child, is he not? I prefer him to having a child from him.'

Polina was similar to Valeria in that she was very much concerned about her age and body (in fact, even more so than Valeria): 'it was difficult for me to persuade myself that it was worth living after I turned twenty.' Polina cared for her appearance in the sense of 'content' (treating the skin illness) rather than 'form' (using make-up), like Valeria did. Another interesting parallel in the narratives presented by Polina and Valeria was the story of a pet which died:

a little kitten lived with me. It was just for a month, and the kitten was very young... I was crazy friends with him. I was just in love with him. I fed him, he slept with me, we spoke to each other... so it was in a way like having a child... And then he died, suddenly, in the bathroom. It was so horrible.

It was a 'boy-kitten', and when Polina sometimes imagined her 'virtual' child, she always had in mind 'a boy, similar to my husband.'

Polina's attitude to religion was, however, different from Valeria's: Polina was interested, and therefore religious norms insisting on a direct link between sexuality and childbearing disturbed her, although not enough to overcome her decision not to have children, even having sex being less important for her than escaping pregnancy:

once there was a period in my life with my husband when I was afraid of pregnancy very much... I even began to avoid sex then, and left him unsatisfied...

Polina did not believe that death will mean the absolute end of her personality; indeed, she told me: 'I will not die'. *Therefore* children were of no need to her as a *continuation*. Actually, the idea of immortality frightened Polina more than the idea of death. Polina thought of herself as of a 'selfish person', and this used to worry her very much and prompted her to try and 'become better'. By the time of the interview, however, 'I learned to perceive my own and others' bad traits more easily'.

Among literary images, Polina liked Margarita from '*Master and Margarita*' by Bulgakov⁸⁷ - a sexual, attractive, mysterious, active childless woman, both powerful and helpless. Perhaps all the attractive traits of this female image seemed to Polina to be essentially associated with the childlessness of Margarita, although at least in one place in the novel there is a hint that it was actually *involuntary* childlessness⁸⁸). However, it is known that the author, Mikhail Bulgakov, was childless voluntarily in all three of his marriages⁸⁹.

To summarise, cultural change in relation to motherhood over the last decade is probably most noticeable in relation to the acceptability of voluntary childlessness. While our sample is admittedly small, there are indications that the issue has divided this generation into two groups. On the one hand, some women in the sample do not even believe that there are women who do not want to have children. This view reminds us the essentialist representations of the later years of the Soviet epoch, when motherhood was

⁸⁷ Mikhail Afanasievich Bulgakov (1891-1940), a Russian and Soviet writer. His most famous novel *Master and Margarita* was first published (in Soviet Union) only in 1966-67. Presently it is included in the school program on literature, but it was not included before 1985. The novel contains an intense satire on Soviet society in the 1930s, a love story of the oppressed intellectual Master and his married (to a Soviet official) lover Margarita, burlesque fantastic elements, and an apocryphic interpretation of the story of Christ.

⁸⁸ Bulgakov, Mikhail, 1986, p. 253 'I will tell you one tale... There was one woman in the world. And she had no children, and she had no happiness, as a whole, too. So, she first cried for very long time, and then she became malicious', Margarita tells her story to a little child, who was left alone in his room by his parents at night, and whom she caresses and calms in the middle of her witchcraft, intended to ruin her enemies' flats.

⁸⁹ see Parshin, 1991.

said to be 'natural', 'normal', and the most important part of every woman's life. On the other hand, other interviewees look at the issue from an individualist point of view, and accept that some people might decide to have no children, and see this as their right and even an indication that they are '*responsible*' enough '*not to bring unwanted children into the world*'. This is not seen by them as a deviation from the norm. As they understand it, there are social reasons (if one wants a career, for example) why it might be rational and justifiable not to have a child.

On the whole, the issue of *responsibility*, or *duty*, seems to be very important for the interviewees when they speak about voluntary childlessness. Some see giving birth to children as one's essential duty to humankind, society, and one's partner. In this understanding of motherhood as duty, it could be argued that the late Soviet Rousseauian discourse has the most prominent influence. However, the economic crisis has resulted in increased understanding of childlessness in economic terms. Some people believe that what appears to be voluntary childlessness might actually be the result of postponing giving birth for economic reasons until it is too late.

Freudian discourse also has a part to play. Polina enjoys explaining herself in Freudian terms, citing her relationship with her parents and her attitude towards sexual pleasure and towards bodily matters as causes for her views on childbearing. She used to have regular consultations with a psychoanalyst. However, she is also influenced by Christianity, which makes the situation more difficult to her. She has found a compromise by using 'natural' contraception but deciding against having an abortion if pregnancy does occur.

CHAPTER 8.

Independent motherhood.

The title of this chapter means motherhood which is valued in itself, without being dependent on the man's role in it, either psychologically and/or in daily life matters. Various situations can be united under this term: single never married mothers; divorced, separated, and widowed mothers, who also are single in fact, because they do not live with men since some moment in their lives; and lesbian mothers. There are women in my sample whose experiences accord with each of these states, except for widowhood (which is also the least interesting in itself, since it is practically independent of a personal *decision*; however, Nina was a widow, but she was already living with another man at the time of the interview). Yana was in the process of divorcing her husband with the intention of living separately with her two children, relying on herself, in the absence of a stable new relationship. Vera was a single never-married mother, president of the single mothers' association, which had 50 members. However, in her case single motherhood was not a conscious choice, but rather a 'post-hoc acceptance' of the situation. Alla was single and intended to become a single mother. In her case it was very clear that this was precisely her choice. Finally, Yulia was a lesbian mother. She gave birth to her son as a teenager, within a heterosexual marriage, but this marriage ended very quickly. In practice, her 'beloved woman', as Yulia named her, shared child care with Yulia, rather than Yulia's husband.

The majority of the interviewees had tolerant attitudes towards single motherhood (Kira, Lada, Vika, Lidia, Raya, Galia, Veronica, Valeria, Nadia). It was not surprising, taking into account how widespread it was in Russia for several successive generations of women. Kira, for example, thought that the mother's relatives would accept and love her child, whatever the life situation in which he or she was born. Raya expressed the widely held opinion concerning single motherhood in the following way: 'it is better to be a single mother than to have no children at all.' In her view, 'having a child is more important than having a man.'

Nadia and Galia agreed with this. Only Nina, who came from a remote village, that is from a different social background, seriously thought that single motherhood was a 'shame'.

However, despite this high degree of tolerance, single motherhood seemed to be only the 'second' life choice for the majority of women. Kira, Lada, Janna, Raya, Galia, Veronica and Nadia believed that one would resort to it only *after* trying to find a man with whom it would be possible to share responsibility for childbearing, whether the marriage be registered or not. Nina and Raya assumed that the registration was unnecessary. Uliana

stressed that unregistered cohabitation was even profitable, since it allowed one to receive both the single mother's benefit and support from a man. Veronica thought that our society was still 'not civilized enough', and therefore it was preferable to register a marriage. Janna agreed with that at the personal level. However, Lidia expressed a view that in some cases single motherhood could be the first choice of a woman, since some men would not add any good to the situation.

Another widely held idea concerning single motherhood was that many women were doing this just by *mistake* (Kira, Vika, Polina, Nadia). These interviewees were, in addition, ready to understand and justify such a mistake, and sympathized with this category of single mothers. On the other hand, Maya thought that this could never be a naive mistake, but rather there were malicious egoistic calculations, when woman used pregnancy to keep a man but failed. Polina agreed that in some cases it could happen in that way.

Nevertheless, most often my interviewees have seen only one serious problem associated with single motherhood: that of *practical feasibility*, of this being difficult for the woman herself to endure (Kira, Lada, Vika, Raya, Galia, Veronica, Valeria, Maya, Polina, Nadia, Uliana). As Vika summarized it,

it is physically harder [than motherhood within marriage], there is no one to feel pity for her [a single mother], and she wants someone to pity her, and usually there are money problems, as well...

In Galia's view, not only money and energy, but also personal psychological resources were important in this situation. For example, a woman must be 'resolute' enough. Raya and Galia felt, in addition, that it could be possible to 'normally' survive as a single mother only with one child. On the other hand, 'every woman' could do that with one child, and therefore, in their opinion, every woman should become a single mother, if she had no possibility to have a child within marriage. Nina, a mother of eight, however, assumed that every woman could and should be prepared to manage with any number of children on her own without male support. In her native village it was the fate of many mothers during lengthy periods of their lives, for the reasons of early widowhood or desertion by their husbands. Uliana believed that God sent voluntary 'helpers' to single mothers, so that the latter could manage their difficult task better. For Nadia, a mother of four, the main reason for pitying single mothers was that 'they cannot spend as much time with their children as they would want to'.

Only a few (Kira, Lada, Maya, Nina) mentioned that, in addition, there was an important moral problem, because *a child needed a father*. Yet, for only a tiny minority of women in my sample (Maya, Nina) this served as a reason to *oppose* single motherhood as

such. However, for this reason several women (Kira, Lada, Veronica, Polina) expressed reservations concerning the '*conscious*' single motherhood of older women, since the more conscious their decision was, the more responsibility fell on them for its consequences. According to these interviewees, the main area of bad consequences concerned various deficiencies in the child's upbringing which 'fatherlessness' could lead to. As Kira put it, 'A child needs people of different sexes around'. If there was no father in the situation, a child might begin to search for substitutes in the form of older male lovers, as Maya, a single mother's daughter, did herself as a teenager. Single mothers tended to bring up 'weak sons', who then formed 'bad husbands', according to Kira, Lada, and Veronica, because these men were used to the idea that women could and must do everything themselves, as their mothers, 'Soviet style superwomen', did. Maya thought that single mothers of this type tended to be overpowerful with their children and worthy of blame for this reason, but they were also worthy of pity for being themselves deprived of a very important part of life. Uliana was quite happy with the image of superwoman and therefore liked single mothers who dared and managed to conform to such an image. In Veronica's view, single mothers' children of both sexes had a stereotype 'that it is better to be alone', and therefore they could find it difficult to form stable relationships in their adult lives. Valeria would explain all these problems in children's development by too close relationships which single mothers tended to form with their offspring. In Valeria's view, children often became substitute men for these women. She thought, however, that in many cases single mothers actually married later in their lives, so it was quite probable that 'there will eventually be some kind of father in the situation'.

On the other hand, Lidia, Vika, Janna, Raya, Veronica, Valeria, and Nadia (though some of them with the reservations exposed above) were in favour precisely of conscious and responsible single motherhood, where all resources of a woman were first considered by her. For Vika, in addition, conscious motherhood was preferred 'even if the choice was made by a sixteen year old girl'.

Kira was in favour of early teenage motherhood, be it single or not, or '*conscious*' or not, for the reason that it was biologically more '*natural*'. In her view, in very young women who had just started their periods there was an 'impulsive' desire to become mothers. A child could serve as the means for a mother's 'maturation', rather than being born when she was already mature. Finally, according to Kira's position, motherhood at a young age had an additional advantage in that a woman would have grown up children while she was still young herself.

Other interviewees (Raya, Vika, Valeria) did not approve of young '*unconscious*' single motherhood precisely because the woman concerned would not intentionally choose

such a difficult destiny for herself, and/or because a child would grow up in poor conditions. In Vika's view, motherhood on the part of a young 'childish' woman, who was still herself in a need of being parented, was like 'dividing a small piece of bread between two people, when you are intensely hungry yourself.' As she added, 'It is possible, but very difficult.'

Another situation, which 'relieved' women from at least part of the responsibility for their single motherhood, was that of *divorce* (according to Kira, Lada, Lidia, Veronica, Valeria, Maya, Nina), especially if it took the form of desertion by the husband. But divorce on a woman own initiative was justifiable, too. Several interviewees agreed that it was better for a child not to have 'both genders as role models than to see a distorted relationship', as Kira has put it. Janna, however, was non-traditional in a sense that she became a 'Sunday mum' after the divorce, while her husband became a 'single dad'. She enjoyed paying the child's upkeep to her husband and meeting her son on Sundays only and believed that her relationship with her child became better due to this arrangement. On the other hand, Valeria passionately opposed the very possibility of single father families, because men, in her view, were 'even biologically unfit for bringing children up'.

According to Valeria, single fathers must try hard to find women for themselves or another kind of female helper, in order that their children do not grow up with 'distorted' personalities. In her view, the situation of single fatherhood was more dangerous in this respect than the situation of single motherhood, and even than the situation of children who were growing up in the families formed by homosexuals.

As a whole, the views which my interviewees held in the area of homosexuality, and consequently their ideas concerning *lesbian motherhood*, were less liberal in comparison to what they thought about single parenthood. Kira advised some segregation of homosexuals in society and taking their children away from them at birth in order that the children would not later develop into 'deviating personalities'. On the other end of the scale, Janna perceived homosexuals on an equal basis with other people. Polina was close to Janna, she just disapproved of homosexuals being sometimes 'aggressive' and trying to force others into relationships with them. Somewhere in the middle was Valeria who sympathized with homosexuals since they were a deprived minority in Russian society, and considered their families to be better places for children to grow up than the families of single parents, on condition that there still was some 'sex roles' division between homosexual partners, so that they still represented 'both genders' role models' for the younger generation:

one of them would be of a manly type, so he or she will be the father figure, while the other one would be womanly, so he or she will be the mother figure [for the child].

Maya, however, did not believe in the possibility of a woman to substituting for a man in anything, and vice versa. For her, 'sex roles' were 'naturally defined'.

The views held by some of my interviewees in the area of homosexuality could seem very hostile, but one should take into consideration the fact that there was even less acceptance of homosexuality at the end of the Soviet epoch, which was still quite recent.

Now let us consider the actual cases of women who find themselves in the various positions which I have united under the common term of 'independent motherhood'.

Yana was divorcing her husband at the time of the interview, taking their two children with her: 'I said to him: «The children are mine», and he began to cry.' She was doing this because she fell in love with another man. She initially assumed they would marry. Yet, later she found out that he was opposed to marriage as such, and wanted to make sure of his feelings first, in any case. Yana decided nevertheless to go ahead with her divorce, but began to consider other options of how to survive with her children than that of being supported by her new lover. When I asked Yana to talk about her attitude towards single mothers, she said that she was currently herself 'broadly' in this situation:

I am not a single mother yet, but I... have asked for a divorce, at least, and my prospect is to stay alone with the children. Or, to become a free woman with children.

However, Yana was in favour of the presence of the biological father in the situation of single motherhood in some limited way: 'It is good, when a father exists, at least.'

Her own case at the time was complicated by the fact that she still lived in the same flat as her children's father; economic and moral reasons prevented her from finally separating:

I do not hate him, but... the logic of the events requires divorce, while the logic of the children's situation requires a father.

The children 'have not noticed anything yet' and 'try to unite all of us into a family in their imagination.'

What happens to the children after divorce was a big problem for Yana. She wanted to keep her own children 'unconditionally', but she understood men's problems in this event, especially if the child herself or himself wanted to live with the father. She felt some pity towards such fathers. On the other hand, men, in her view, might have less rights because 'they did not overwork themselves [with child care]'.

For Yana, the idea suggested by her new lover, 'that we live as a threesome', seemed the best solution for their situation, 'I even know some families like that, who live as a threesome, all in the same flat', but Yana's husband did not agree to it.

Yana wanted to have another child from her new man, on the one hand, and on the other, spoke about the possible immanent end of their relationship.

In any case, Yana wanted more children, but when she thought about it, she considered the probable number of children in accordance with how many children she could manage to bring up alone, as a single mother.

The situation of lone motherhood involved 'too many people' in this case: three protagonists, plus two children, and the four parents of Yana and her husband. Yana's father seemed to her to be the most important 'not to hurt'. This was an additional reason for her to believe that it would be easier if she really was 'just about to marry' for the second time. However, as her new relationship became 'weaker' recently, and Yana realized that this lack of stability

is not just a preliminary stage, it can continue like that for years...

the second marriage possibility does not work...

This was very 'depressing' for Yana to realize.

Yana's attitude to homosexuals and consequently to the families created by them was tolerant:

such things do not bother me at all. Whether someone is gay, or not,
is not important for me.

Alla was on her way towards 'conscious' single motherhood. For her, as well as for many others, it was the '*second best choice*':

because I am not married, I gave myself a time limit - until the age
of thirty - and decided that then, if I had not married, I would have a
child on my own.'

She did really act according to these plans, in spite of the fact that things were found to be very complicated in her case, since she needed infertility treatment.

Alla acted consciously, she did not deceive herself concerning the possibility of marriage. She also was honest: she persuaded her long-term married lover to have a child with her, 'out of wedlock' (although she needed several years and 'making scandals' often, in order to succeed), and did not simply 'steal his sperm'. At the end of the day she had no other choice, taking her infertility into consideration. But she began the 'campaign' before this infertility was discovered. As she put it,

Only young girls, they think that they are going to keep their boys by pregnancy; I do not need this anyway, [my man] is already all mine,

Her relationship with her lover was long-term and satisfying for both, 'tested in times of troubles, during some relatives' illnesses'. Alla believed that neither of them was going to betray the other under any circumstances. On the other hand, his divorce and their marriage were impossible for reasons which Alla did not want to explain. Still, she assumed that their future child would grow up in a situation of co-parenting, that the child's 'father would often visit us.' Even if he does not, the presence of male figures (this was important, in Alla's view) would be ensured by Alla's father and brother. She was sure both of them would actively participate in her child's upbringing; while in many 'complete' families, as Alla observed working in a school, the father, though married to the mother, did not participate in family life at all.

Alla did not feel that what she was intended to do was not normative, since in 'practically every class in the school' where she worked several children were from fatherless families.

To have a child out of marriage, but from a man she loved, was strongly preferable for Alla, for genetic and emotional reasons, and the prospect of having a child from a man she does not love, a child who would 'irritate' her by having the genetic features she disliked, frightened Alla: 'Why have all this in *your own child?*' [*italics mine*]. Therefore Alla rejected all offers of marriage she received

(as far as I can see, according to all my friends' experiences, marriage is rarely worth doing),

although she did wait until the age of thirty in the hope that a more marriageable 'real love' would 'enter into her life'. She even had an abortion from her present lover seven years ago, since she still had hopes to marry, and because, actually, 'to be a single mother, this never was prestigious'.

Alla's parents' reaction to her single motherhood at her present age would still be negative, she believed, but she has become 'stronger herself', confident that what she was doing was right. In addition, her parents wanted grand-children very much, so it seemed possible that in the depth of their souls it would be unimportant for them whether these grand-children were legitimate or not. However, there was an element of struggle for her own maturity in Alla's relationship with her mother: the first reaction of the latter to Alla's decision was: 'And you could decide such a question without me?' However offended her mother could feel due to that, Alla believed that it was her, Alla's, right to do with her own

life whatever she wanted. Such power problems in the relationship with her mother only strengthened Alla's confidence at the end of the day.

Vera was a single mother in the 'pure' sense of the word. She also was the president of a single mothers' association. She was always successful in the professional sense, and had a good relationship with her parents at least in the past, when she was herself a child, but Vera 'always knew' that she 'would never marry'. The reason was that Vera was 'a white crow, or a black sheep, as the Spaniards say' (Vera had a diploma in Spanish studies). To put it simply, Vera always felt her 'difference' from others. She thought that men felt this difference too, and therefore did not like her.

She was happy to be an odd person, however, since this allowed her to do 'whatever I wanted, beginning from the school years.' Her studies, her hobbies, her friendships, all this satisfied her completely until the age of 24 years. Then suddenly a crisis began:

I felt that I was not interested in my life any more, this life which I led in those years. All possibilities were exhausted.

She did not feel happy about the things which made other people happy; she was always bored. Then her romance began. Vera thought herself that it was a

story which was doomed to failure from the start, we were too different, he was... not of my size, in the human sense!,

but it seemed to be something new in her life, and a temporary way out of the situation. This also was the first love story in Vera's life. Before that she said she had only had one 'sad' sexual experience, which may have been rape, since she said that 'it could have cost me my life.' On the other hand, Vera's love story was happening without a conscious aspiration towards single motherhood. Though Vera fell pregnant very soon after their sexual life began, she started to hope for marriage, perhaps, precisely because of the pregnancy. Her lover was constantly promising marriage, but Vera could not believe him. She was right in her lack of trust: not only did the marriage not happen, but he has never helped Vera since the birth of their daughter with anything: 'he is just greedy'. Eventually, Vera 'lost all trace of him', and often had a strange feeling that he never existed in her life:

sometimes I forget, I ask myself - where did this child come from?

You are supposed to be with a man to have a child?

Of course, like a normal Soviet woman, she considered an abortion. She became a Christian and acquired an anti-abortion position much later. Vera did not tell to anyone at home about her pregnancy until very late, so she actually made the decision on her own, in

a state of 'terrible loneliness' and 'horror'. Vera decided to give birth for 'life-loving' reasons:

I love life so much, myself, and I thought that a child ought to experience it too, to play in these crazy spring puddles...

After the decision was made, everything suddenly became 'easier'. All the difficult things which she still had to go through - telling others, the birth, child care, earning money for child support - started to look like just 'logistics' of the issue. Vera thought about all this in a 'working' mood and only from the point of view of 'how to do it better, how to organize things better.' She had a one-room flat which was rented out, so she told the lodgers to leave it and organized repairs to the flat while she was already heavily pregnant. She told her mother and grand-mother. Vera loved both of them, and her crisis in those times was very much due to the constant quarrels between these two women, who were so dear to her. First they cried, and then they gradually accepted the situation. Vera's father had particular difficulties in accepting her single motherhood, since he was used to her being a 'very successful child, perfect at studying, and triumphant at the beginning of a career.'

However, the situation could not be reversed. The possibility of a child being given out for adoption was never considered in 'good families' in Russia. After all, single motherhood was socially tolerated to a sufficient extent.

Vera did not feel a strong 'desire for a child'. However, she said that in her case having a child was a 'resolution of the life crisis'. Vera admitted that she 'became calmer' after her daughter's birth, more 'mature' and 'wise'. She simply acquired 'meaning' for her life through childbirth, 'a new meaning, an absolutely different one.'

Vera did not believe in the 'reproductive instinct'. In her view, it was 'extinguished' in us due to the influence of 'civilization'. As she put it, 'I never felt it in myself.'

Pregnancy was easy. At one point in the eighth month Vera fell down a pit, but nothing bad happened. The birth was easy as well, the only 'funny' thing which Vera remembered about it was that when she asked for more anesthesia, the nurse began to prepare a syringe and by accident pierced an electric lamp, so that while Vera was giving birth she was covered in splinters. But this only led to shared 'laughter', and she and the nurse parted as 'best friends'.

Life after the birth was difficult, though Vera's mother helped her a lot, but in such a 'hysterical' way that Vera preferred to do everything herself. Vera thought, on the whole, that women like her own mother should have no children, since they are too emotionally unstable and egoistic, 'not ready to refuse themselves many things for their children's

sake', and, consequently, they are not well prepared to the role of upbringer. In Vera's view,

Motherhood is not a necessary life program for a woman. There are other ways for self-realization.

By saying so, Vera did not mean that 'some women are worse than others'. She simply was in favour of choice between motherhood and 'other things in life'. In her view, 'only those who need them should bear children', which meant those who liked children, enjoyed spending time with them, and perhaps simply even preferred 'childhood as a stage of life', as Vera herself did.

Vera liked children, although perhaps not the youngest ones. She said that she began to enjoy her daughter from the time when she 'ceased to be a capricious insect and became a little human.' However, children themselves always liked Vera even more than she liked them:

Flocks of these little ones always followed me. It was enough for me to caress a child once, and he was mine.

Before her own daughter's birth, Vera baby-sat for her older sister's daughter, and to such an extent that the latter called her 'mummy'. Therefore, when I asked Vera whether she had some idea of leaving something of herself behind in the world by having a child, she said:

You leave something of yourself behind not only through your own genetic children. For example, I have nieces. All the same, life is fragile, and children now are often born weak, so no one can be sure that his or her child will survive longer than oneself. And also, I do not need to have something of myself behind in this world, since I believe in God and in life after death.

Vera was a Protestant Christian, baptized in Latvia. As a child, she was averted from the Orthodox church because of the 'hostility' and 'oppressive behaviour' of the believers in one church which Vera and her parents visited. Everyone inside the church began to swear at them for not being dressed in a proper way. This 'frightened' young Vera deeply. She could never forget this impression. In addition, the role of the priest in the Orthodox and Catholic faiths seemed to Vera to be 'the role of God himself'. This was 'not right', in her view. There should be no mediator between God and an ordinary human. A priest should be 'just a teacher'.

Vera's involvement with Protestantism was linked with her love for a 'much older married man', whom she met in the Protestant community in Latvia. As Vera put it, 'I do

not want any other man'. There were not many other admirers. However, one friend of hers, who was 'even more weird than I am', wanted to marry Vera.

Vera did not choose marriage, but another way of 'compensating' for 'the deprivations' of single motherhood: she founded an association of single mothers. All the members (there were always fifty of them, the number was never changing, though the actual people, represented by these numbers, could be different in different periods of time) must be lone mothers. As soon as they married, they must go, whatever their own preferences. However, as soon as they divorced or separated again, they could return to the association. As a real expert on the subject, since she busied herself with helping all the types of single mothers who form her association, Vera believed that the 'least problematic' among them were those who gave birth to their children when they were themselves young, because a young woman

has enough flexibility to change her job, or enough energy to have some additional job, or at least she is cheerful enough not to become too sad if she is unable to do neither of these things.

Simply, younger women still had 'a store of life energy', which is necessary for a single mother, who must be a superwoman, a carer and a provider in one. Vera thought that she herself belonged to this category when she gave birth to her daughter.

The opposite kind of single mothers, 'those who had their children after forty, being absolutely alone in this world', was the 'hardest to deal with'. Usually these were women who used to be carers for their old ill relatives before becoming mothers. They tended to give birth to their children 'after all their relatives die, due to loneliness'. Later these women were unable to control their children and too weak to combine work with motherhood. Both themselves and the children were often ill.

The most 'decent' group, in Vera's view, were mothers who had their children at the age of about thirty 'in a battle to keep a man', which they had 'lost'. They were 'proud enough' not to admit this fact, and 'carried their cross' in an upright way, without complaints.

Vera believed that there were several 'traps' far too easy for a single mother to fall into. First, her child might feel that he or she was 'the center of the world' for his or her mother. This could spoil the child. Another trap was to spoil the child's life by the mother's own 'unsatisfied complexes and ambitions', for example, grieving an uncompleted course of study, or a marriage which did not happen. Such complexes often make a single mother too 'aggressive' and too 'demanding', attempting to force her child to follow the path she wanted for herself and to achieve there more success than she did.

Vera did not see any special Christian elevation in the position of single mother, though she constantly stressed how difficult their lives were, and how often they lacked any possibility of a better future. All this was, for Vera, simply, 'one of the variants of human life.' Everyone had his or her own fate. That was all. Motherhood was 'just a part of life', in addition, the importance of motherhood was different in every woman's life. And this was 'normal'.

Many single mothers, because of the current situation of poverty and social insecurity, were forced to work as cleaners or in other areas of unskilled manual labour, despite having a good education. Vera thought that she was 'lucky', since although she worked overtime to meet her family's economic needs, this work consisted of translations and Spanish language private lessons, 'which I do here, in the comfort of my own kitchen.'

She practically never was out of work, doing written translations until almost the moment of birth, and then resuming her work from home when her daughter was just two months old. Her mother stayed with Vera's daughter whenever necessary, but Vera never asked her parents for money. In the economic sense, she tried hard to always be self-sufficient, considering this to be her duty, which followed from her decision to have a child on her own. Taking responsibility for the consequences of her own decisions was very important for her self-respect.

The fate of single fathers differed from that of single mothers. Vera told the story of one organization of men of that kind. After they had produced some publicity, they all ended up in new marriages, since huge numbers of women wanted to marry this kind of 'good and domestic' men. Vera and the co-members of her association had plenty of marriage proposals after the publicity as well. However, all of these proposals came from men who were criminals in prison. This frightened Vera, and she completely ceased to be a public figure as a result.

Vera did not believe that 'a child needs a father.' In her view,

a child does not need any kind of father, not any! A child needs what a man can give. If he provides protection, or - simply - money, if he provides ...confidence; or joy, if he plays with the child, [or] he gives the child a reason to be proud of him or herself, to be proud of something. Or just if the child loves him. And, if this person is boring, or he is an alcoholic, or he is ... just the «trousers» at home... a supplier of dirty socks, and an eater of steaks... Then - there is no need of such a father.

As for the male role model, children could see other men around, so that

they know [that there are men in the world], they learn this very fast
when the time comes for it,

and, Vera preferred to believe, would not feel 'deprived' of anything.

Among female literary characters, Vera named Jane Eyre⁹⁰, since there was no comparable female character in Russian classics, mostly written by male authors. Jane Eyre was, in Vera's view: 'a little, ugly, and poor woman, but full of life and claiming her share of life's happiness.' All this accorded with Vera's main motto: 'one must choose life everywhere, and everything that is done for the sake of life, is good.'

In politics Vera was in favor of Chernomyrdin, considering him being 'wise' in 'yielding to the enemies when it was necessary to save human lives'. According to Vera, he manifested this quality while resolving the problem of the hostages taken by the terrorists at the city Budennovsk during the Chechen war. As a whole, for some 'mysterious' reasons, Russia's top politicians were always 'too corrupt', Vera believed:

Russia is one of such places... where politics do not really work.

And therefore I have a pessimistic attitude towards politics, in fact, I
try to not have any attitude at all.

I had difficulties in finding a *lesbian mother* of the age group which interested me. Yulia, a lesbian mother whom I finally spoke to, confirmed my impression that she represented an exceptional case. She said that many lesbians whom she personally knew refused to have children either because they thought it was inappropriate for a child to grow up in a lesbian family, or because they 'do not want to have anything in common with men', and they saw having children as doing so. Artificial self-insemination was not widespread in Russia yet.

Yulia herself had a child like many Russian lesbians of previous generations did: as a teenager (she was 19 at the time) in a heterosexual marriage. However, Yulia was aware of her 'true' sexuality by that time, since she has been in a relationship with a woman she loved since the age of 15 years. Yulia thought of herself as a lesbian because she did not 'have sex with men too often', but she was actually able to have sex with men, while many other lesbians absolutely did not want it. So Yulia's pregnancy was actually accidental.

While already pregnant, Yulia began to consider the options. First, she thought it an advantage that 'the actual father' of the child had 'good genes', since he was from Siberia, and 'they all are very healthy there.'

However, genes were not of ultimate importance for Yulia (see chapter on adoption), especially since we cannot know for sure who has 'poor' genes and who has

⁹⁰ A protagonist of the novel with the same title (first published in 1847) by Charlotte Bronte (1816-1855), a famous British author.

'good' ones, all what we can see from the prospective parents' appearance are just their own personal features which could be different in their genetic offspring:

we all know of cases when parents who are people of genius themselves give birth to an idiot, or to a child with Down syndrome.

We cannot see the 'hidden' genes of these parents, so anyone can have a 'hidden' potential for producing a genetic illness in the child. The father of her child agreed to marry Yulia. This was important to her too, because she believed that 'in the birth document, everything that should be written there, must be there', so that the place for the father's name should not be 'left blank'. In addition, 'all of us, we worked then, so we could afford a child.'

'All of us' meant Yulia herself, her mother, with whom she still lived up to the time of the interview, and who helped her a lot with child care, the father of the child, and the woman Yulia loved. These people formed her immediate family, in Yulia's view, so she took all of them into consideration when deciding what to do about the pregnancy. Yulia actually spoke to all of them about it. In addition, she realized already then that she herself wanted a child. She did not think about this in her childhood because she did not have 'enough time' (Yulia was studying in a secondary sports school, doing swimming at a serious level), but she wanted her mother to give her a little brother or a sister. At the time of her pregnancy, Yulia felt herself to be 'already able to give him [the future child] something' in the sense of upbringing. Therefore she did not listen to the friends who advised her to have an abortion for various reasons. She wanted to give the child life.

From 'the third month of pregnancy' Yulia 'knew' that she was going to have a son. That was what she would prefer, because 'sons are customarily considered to be the continuers of the line'.

Yulia's own father was delighted by the fact that he had a grand-son with his own family name, to such an extent that he began to visit his daughter very often. Yulia finally agreed to his visits, although she felt offended with her father for the fact that he was not with her 'in the difficult moments' of her own childhood. However, Yulia's mother was always with her, they were the good friends, and the mother even 'unconditionally' accepted Yulia's lesbianism.

The latter believed in the 'natural' reasons for having children, in the 'reproductive instinct'. In her view, 'children come into your life by themselves', it is a 'given'. In addition, having children was the 'easiest way' to leave something behind you on the Earth. People 'must' have children in order to be 'natural beings'.

According to Yulia, some heterosexual women felt the desire for a child in a form of need to 'receive something huge from this man' who they loved, they were going to

keep this something, a child, for a long time afterwards, and the child also was 'a very good thing.' More mature people, 'women about thirty and men about forty', could feel a desire for a child for more 'egoistic' reasons, in Yulia's view. For them, a child could mean a new investment in life while their own life is 'already fading'. This feeling and the crisis they experience about their fading lives was unavoidable, in Yulia's view, but it was possible to ease its psychological consequences, if a person was prepared for the crisis in advance. However, in order not to spoil a child's life by 'over-protection', it was better to have him or her while a parent was young.

Yulia knew people who did not want children very much. For them reproduction was 'punishment', they were giving birth only 'at their relatives' insistence', or waited until some special 'economic conditions' were met. As a whole, for Yulia, both too much desire for a child and lack of desire were not 'natural'. The moderate position which accepted having children as an unquestioned 'part of life which just naturally happens' seemed the best to Yulia.

The maternal and the paternal instincts were different things, in her view, although being not strictly connected to biological sex but rather to the gender of a person. In Yulia's view, there were no strict sex roles. The paternal instinct resulted in a desire to mentally educate a child when he is already slightly 'grown up', while for the mother

the best time is when a child does not walk yet, when he is still
being breast-fed.

During pregnancy, Yulia did not wear the wedding ring, which gave some people the wrong impression that she was going to become a single mother. Once a school teacher even asked her to 'speak about the experience of single motherhood' to her pupils:

It was actually the only occasion when someone paid any attention
to my pregnancy, and this only happened in such a special form,

laughed Yulia. She felt 'proud' to carry a child, but believed that pregnancy did not require any special attitude from the part of other members of society. Pregnant women were just 'normal' people, the same as everyone else.

The pregnancy was easy in Yulia's case and brought 'happiness' to her, and the birth constituted 'happiness' too. She preferred everything happening in a 'natural' way at birth, and therefore she was against a Caesarean. However, Yulia felt that she did not have enough 'training and confidence to have a natural home birth' in the 'pure' sense. As a whole, as Yulia said, 'my attitude to that [home birth] is rather cautious'.

In addition, her son was born 'slightly premature' and needed special hospital care. Yulia managed to attract necessary attention to herself from the part of the hospital's personnel, and persuaded them to 'explain' to her everything that was happening with her

during the birth. In Yulia's view, 'information on what is happening at every moment', and advice concerning 'what should be done' were the most important things for a woman giving birth. Yulia was not 'afraid to breast-feed' and stopped this only for the 'medical reasons', when the doctors advised her to.

The child really proved to be the 'life anchor' for Yulia to an unexpected extent. She felt enormous responsibility for him after he was born, and thought it was actually good for her, since she stopped 'hanging around', experimenting with drugs and so on. She realized that the child needed her unconditionally, and therefore her life had an immediate meaning and she did not need to search for the meaning elsewhere. Communication with the child 'meant a lot' for Yulia 'in itself'.

It did not mean that Yulia lost all interest in other sides of life. On the contrary, she intensified her involvement in various jobs, since she believed that 'a human must be developed in all possible directions', and also because she had to provide for a child, because her marriage broke down very soon. On the whole, Yulia believed that it was bad when a human becomes 'locked in one and the same job for all his life', there should always be a significant degree of flexibility in everything. She herself promoted such flexibility in her own life by having a child.

Her divorce was highly predictable and not traumatic for Yulia, especially since the main purpose of the marriage for her, 'being a lesbian', that of having a child, was already fulfilled. Yulia felt enough energy and even a desire to manage on her own, however helped a lot by her mother and her female partner, who actively participated in the child care, especially during the first year of the child's life. Later in her life, Yulia went through several separations and reunions with her female partner, and she had other lovers of both sexes, and even was in a new marriage with a man, after the time when I conducted the interview. Her son, however, knew and loved Yulia's female partner practically as his second mother, and missed her when she was away for lengthy periods of time.

Yulia could imagine having a second child, it was 'not a problem' for her, since 'the optimum number is two children'.

She believed that 'a child needs two parents', and therefore gay/lesbian couples make better parents than single mothers in the proper sense. The child asking about who his or her father is, might sometimes be difficult for a single mother to answer, therefore Yulia herself preferred that in the case of her son everything would be 'normal' and 'known'. As for gay/lesbian parenting, it would seem to Yulia to be an even better option if the official registration of such relationships was allowed. In this case such parenting could exist in a more open way. However,

a child must see people of both genders around, so that a homosexual stereotype would not form in him.

Yulia was 'perfectly o.k.' with the resulting sexual orientation of her son 'whatever it be'. She was just concerned that this should be his 'free choice', and not one suggested by the lifestyles of the people around him.

As for religion and the 'eternal', Yulia's life philosophy was as follows:

I consider that one must live in this world in such a way: feeling happy in this life, but at the same time being able to leave it easily at any moment...

Among literary images, Yulia named '*Thais Afinskaia*' by Efremov⁹¹. It was a version of the story of the famous Greek *hetaira*, a concubine of Alexander the Great. Efremov's interpretation of this ancient plot made this woman very active in all senses of the word, the sexual among them being one of the most important, and the '*all-round developed personality*' in the Soviet sense. Thais in Efremov's novel was physically very strong, well-trained and sporty. She also had two children with the large age interval between the births.

To summarise, single motherhood is often discussed by my interviewees in a 'Freudian-like' discourse on fatherlessness and over-powerful mothers, which was common in the Russian press of the time (see Korchagina, 1996; see also Goricheva 1980 for an early example of this view, which went on to become so widespread). The rational cost-benefit analysis and individualist and consumerist approaches are also applied. Some interviewees approved of single motherhood by choice, while others did not: the latter saw this as irresponsible either for economic reasons or because the child would be deprived of a father. To them, single motherhood was more justifiable if it was the result of a mistake. Some did not believe that it was ever anything but the result of a mistake, with opposition to abortion on religious grounds deciding the matter. The more religious among the interviewees did not see any counter-indication for single motherhood (if it was not done by choice), because it is a difficult trial, and to live a difficult life is a good thing for a Christian. Thus, in my view, it could be said that they were expressing some degree of opposition to contemporary consumerism.

The essentialist view of sex roles, expounded in the later years of the Soviet era, is frequently evoked in this sample, too. According to this view, every woman is 'naturally', above all, a mother if she is 'normal' (see Attwood, 1990); this is female 'pre-destination'. Therefore it is important to have a child whether or not one has male support. The

⁹¹ Efremov Ivan Antonovich (1907-1972), Soviet science fiction writer and paleontologist. The novel '*Thais Afinskaya*' was his last work. It was first published only in 1973.

individualistic pleasure one gets from a child, the feeling of self-realisation through motherhood, and of the child being a 'life anchor' for a woman, also seem to have formed important motivations for single motherhood for the women in my sample, even (or especially) in our difficult time of economic crisis, a shortage of meaningful job positions, and weakening social links.

All the same, the economic crisis had resulted in a number of changes in the lives of single mothers. In these individualistic times they are parenting at their own risk, and, unlike in Soviet times, they cannot rely on significant help from the state. Relatives do help sometimes, but this is not automatic. Yet single motherhood is the fate of a growing number of women, many of whom decided to have a child within marriage or cohabitation but then deserted, or were deserted by, men who could not provide for their families anyway.

These considerations were also applied by the interviewees to lesbian motherhood (at least where this was also single motherhood). Some of my respondents saw this option in a more negative light due to a general hostility towards homosexuals which was common in the last years of the Soviet era (see on this, for example, Attwood, 1990). Others, however, thought that providing there were two 'parents', and the child was not deprived of male role models (one respondent even suggested that one of the lesbian parents performed the function of a 'male' role model), since gender role education still seems to be considered essential, then this was 'normal'.

CHAPTER 9.

Large families: how many means many?

As it is possible to see from Chapter 2 of this Part of the thesis, most of my interviewees considered one or two children per family to be the 'normal' size. Everything beginning from three-four children per family meant 'having many children' for Lada, Yana, Kira, Lidia, Galia, Alla, Veronica, Valeria, Maya, and Vera. Vika was perhaps joking, but she said that 'already one child' meant a large family for her personally. Yulia was resolute that only 'more than 5 children' constitutes a large family.

Practically all the women whom I spoke to, besides mothers of large families themselves (Yana, Kira, Lada, Vika, Lidia, Janna, Raya, Galia, Alla, Veronica, Valeria, Maya, Polina, Vera, Yulia), believed that it would be *impossible or difficult to give to each child* in a large family as much of *economic security* and of *maternal love* as a child in a small family would have. Many interviewees thought that in the majority of cases large families were happening simply due to the parents' *lack of control over their own lives* (Kira, Lada, Lidia, Janna, Raya, Alla, Veronica, Valeria, Maya, Vera, Yulia), including *lack of reproductive control* (Lada, Vika, Lidia, Raya, Veronica, Maya, Yulia). Some even considered parents of large families to be *stupid* (Kira, Janna, Raya, Alla, Veronica, Valeria, Yulia), *irresponsible* (Kira, Vika, Lidia, Janna, Raya, Galia, Alla, Valeria, Maya, Polina, Vera, Yulia), inclined to manipulate the fact of having large family in order to *receive help from the state or private benefactors* (Galia, Alla). Several interviewees (Kira, Alla, Valeria, Maya, Vera) emphasized that others considered having large families to be behaviour which *did not accord to the norms*.

However, some of my interlocutors (Vika, Janna, Raya, Galia, Veronica, Maya, Yulia) distinguished between *two types* of large families, the first being '*alcoholics*', to whom all of the above could be applied (Alla advised coercive sterilization of them; Vika stressed that even they ought to choose their reproductive options themselves), and the second consisting of '*heroes*' (Lada, Galia, Yulia), who intentionally and consciously gave birth to many children. These 'heroes', in addition, were devoting all their lives to their numerous children's upbringing, because such was their *choice* and they preferred the *child-centered style of life*, according to Vika, Lidia, Janna, Galia, Veronica, Maya, Vera, and Yulia. On the other hand, Maya and Raya stressed that whether a family was child-centered or not did not necessarily depend on the number of children in it:

it is possible not to love an only child, and it is possible to love all of them, when there are ten.

The state ought to stimulate child-loving people's fertility by increasing child benefits (Yana, Kira). If the family was rich even without child benefits, it ought to have as many children as would be biologically possible, according to Galia. 'Good' large families actually represented the *best conditions for children to be brought up in*, in the opinion of Yana, Kira, Galia, and Veronica. Even some of the least maternal among the interviewees, who could 'under no circumstances' imagine themselves in the role of mothers of many children (Vika, Valeria), agreed with that. However, Polina and Alla opposed all kinds of large families, and consequently all kinds of special benefits to them, which could lead only to the increased reproduction of 'less adapted' people, in Alla's view. Polina and Alla considered growing up in a large family to be 'distorted' conditions, since it tended to educate in people the harmful inclination to have many children in their turn, according to Alla, and because

lack of maternal love in the early years of the child's life is not less horrible than the devouring over-protective mother's love for her only child,

in Polina's view. She thought that the child from a large family would miss 'the experience of being needed by others', and it would be very difficult to compensate for this later in life. Valeria believed that *no* family was rich enough to afford even four children, and Maya opposed large families as a phenomenon for the reasons of 'overpopulation' on the world scale. Yulia thought that growing up in a large family did not provide children with 'a good female role model', since their overworked mother would not be able to serve as such.

Kira stressed the *role of the father* in the creation of a large family. In her view, only with a very much family-oriented husband was such a choice possible for a woman. On the other hand, Vera knew several single mothers who consciously and intentionally gave birth to more than two children, having no reliance on male support.

Even the 'good' large families still seemed to be problematic even to the most well-disposed interviewees. According to Yana, Kira, Lada, Lidia, Janna, Galia, Alla, Valeria, Vera and Yulia *mothers* of large families '*overburdened themselves*'. As Alla put it, 'the difficulties of everyday life corrode the happiness of motherhood in this case.'

Mothers of large families also had very little '*personal space*', in the opinion of Lada, Alla, and Vera, and low *economic security*. As Kira, Valeria, and Vera stressed, in a situation when women could be abandoned by their husbands at any moment, mothers of large families risked very much, having no jobs (and no possibility to combine a job with childcare due to having so many dependents), and therefore no right to a state pension. According to Valeria, it was the biggest mistake on the part of a woman to think that the

more children she had, the less the possibility that her husband would not desert the family. The more maternal among my interviewees (Yana, Lada, Kira, Galia, and Vera) could imagine themselves having more than two children, if only they could have more *information* concerning these families' life, or if it would be biologically (in terms of better fertility or a larger 'stock of energy') and/or economically 'feasible' for them.

Nadia was herself the mother of four sons. When she spoke about it, she was shy at first and almost apologized: 'of course I thought that I would have one, or a maximum of two kids.' When she was a teenager, she looked at the other women who gave birth to more than two children with surprise and a kind of fear:

if the kids exist, one needs to take intense care of them... so more than two kids was a lot of responsibility for me.

Nadia always was responsible in her attitude to everything, to her studies, for example. She thought that things should be 'either done properly, or not done at all'. Her own early upbringing as a child was a negative 'departure point' for her: in Nadia's view, her mother did not pay any attention to her at those times, Nadia was always alone, no one cared about her. Therefore Nadia always wanted to have a daughter, to show that it is possible to do things differently: 'in order to kind of repeat my own childhood but in better conditions'.

This desire for the birth of a daughter was one of the reasons, why Nadia had her four sons: she tried for a daughter again and again. Nadia always wanted children, and connected this to the fact that she loved to play with dolls as a child:

You know, girls play with dolls, so maybe I initially wanted a child just as kind of a doll which would be mine.

However, Nadia believed in the 'maternal instinct', some 'remains' of which existed even in relinquishing mothers, in her view. According to Nadia, the 'paternal instinct' existed in men only after they were thirty years old, and therefore it was better for a woman to marry an 'older' man, who will feel ready to be 'a responsible father'.

Nadia's first marriage as a teenager was concerning children. Her husband was the only son of 'well-to-do' parents, he was egoistic, did not want children, and ended up soon living with another woman while Nadia was still living with his parents. At this point she left, after she already had aborted two pregnancies from him in rapid succession. His parents did not want her to leave; and her own mother did not want her to return home, since she was then busy with 'her own life', which meant a second marriage and a new young daughter from this marriage. Nevertheless, Nadia did return home and lived there for a while.

Nadia's mother never was pro-reproduction. She was in favour of her elder daughter's early abortions, and when Nadia became anxious about the possibility of infertility associated with this, her mother was very flippant: 'who cares about the future!'

When Nadia started to have her sons in her second marriage, her mother 'tolerated' only the birth of her first grand-son. She thought the second was already 'of no need', and Nadia simply hid the following two pregnancies from her mother until very late. Nadia believed that women like her mother should not have children, since they could not love them, and are not ready to 'refuse things to themselves' for the children's sake.

Nadia's second marriage happened just a few months after the divorce. Her second husband actually 'chose' her a long time ago, but did not start courting her because there was a wedding ring on her finger. But, as soon as the ring disappeared... Since it was very difficult for Nadia to live with her mother, she felt extremely unwelcome at home, Nadia had no reasons to delay the second marriage.

Nadia never intended to 'just stay at home with the kids', she was not 'very domestic' by nature. Her second husband wanted children, but 'like myself, he certainly did not want four of them.'

The present situation was finally due to several reasons. First, Nadia felt extremely uncomfortable even thinking of having an abortion after the birth of her first child. She did not 'understand' how other women can do this after they already know what a child is. The second circumstance, in a way, followed from the first one: since Nadia felt very responsible, she could not remain just a biological mother for her sons. She wanted to do things 'properly', to mother them intensely. Therefore she stayed home, teaching them, and visiting various study groups with them. She has done all this for many years in spite of her higher education and her actual desire to work. Nadia did not believe that anyone else would be able to mother her sons with the same quality which she herself was providing.

It was a real psychological 'barrier' for Nadia when she considered having the fourth child: 'Three, it sounds normal, but four is already many.' As for the possibility of having more children in the future, there were no psychological problems anymore, only economic ones:

maybe, in the future... when our situation will become economically better off. After all, I still do not have the daughter I wanted...

The economic problems consisted of having just a small two-room flat to accommodate the whole family, without realistic prospects to improve the situation.

Post-factum both Nadia and her husband enjoyed their large family:

Once we said to each other: look, they [the sons] are all different, so how would it be possible actually to choose just one or two of them?

Nadia loved them all, had a different special attitude to each boy, respected and enjoyed their different personalities, and tried to provide each with the development which suited him.

As for her own maternal feelings, it is interesting to note that Nadia admitted that only beginning from her third child did she start to 'actually simply enjoy motherhood' from the very moment of birth. With the first child she was very anxious about 'doing something wrong', and with the second there were still some worries concerning 'his health'. Nadia believed that this may have been intensified by the circumstances of the second birth, in a bad Soviet maternity hospital, where she was left alone giving birth practically until the very last moment, and had to go into the corridor to ask someone for help *in* this last moment. Her third son was born in Cuba, however, where her husband worked at the time, and Nadia had the full attention of medical professionals, no one was 'rude' to her, 'they did not yell at me, they are not like our doctors.' After the birth, her third child was not taken away but was with Nadia all the time, and her husband could easily visit her in the hospital. This was not at all like the Soviet-style hospitals. Therefore, the couple decided to pay for private treatment for the fourth birth, already back in Russia, since they wanted to try and repeat the experience of the third one. As for the possibility of home birth, Nadia 'was not afraid' of this the fourth time and would have agreed to it, provided that 'we could invite a doctor to our home', and only if her husband, who was never present at the births of his children, would not be so much afraid of the process.

All of her pregnancies and births were easy. However, Nadia believed she had reproductive health problems, some hormonal cycle 'fluctuations', which prevented her from successfully using her preferred mode of contraception, that of counting the days of her cycle. Accordingly, she thought, her fourth pregnancy was due to 'the mistake of my health.' Nadia did not want to use the pill or the IUD because of their side effects, and she believed that these methods were 'counter-indicated' to her.

As a result of having a creative approach to her children's education, Nadia, unexpectedly for herself, found a satisfying 'self-realization' in staying with children: 'To bring up children in the way in which I do - I enjoy doing this!' Still, she had some plans to re-start her career, but the impossibility of finding child-care as good as she can herself provide has already stopped her many times. Nadia missed having some spare time for herself, for 'preserving' her personality from 'degradation', and 'simply for reading'.

Society's attitude to large families was almost 'hostile', Nadia believed. More often than not she had to listen to the unfavourable opinions people had chosen to express to her when she walked with all her children in the streets. Therefore she preferred to hide the fact of having four children and, 'if possible', to never walk with all of them at once. Such

a social attitude was 'wrong', in her view; people ought to have more favourable disposition towards childbearing, even in a bad economic situation.

Nadia's children did not participate in housekeeping to a significant extent: 'after all, they are boys'. However, they did baby-sit for each other. They liked each other and very rarely complained (apart from the eldest son) about the fact that they were so many in the family.

Although Nadia did not think that a genetic link to one's own children was necessary (see above, in the chapter on adoption), and the desire to 'continue herself' genetically was not an important reason for having children in her case, post-facto she enjoyed her sons' similarity to herself, her husband, and their kin as a whole.

Concerning politics, Nadia trusted to her husband's 'expertise' and voted for a combination of Lebed-Yavlinsky, which, in his view, combined 'strength and democracy.'

In literature, Nadia preferred the 'shy' Chekhov⁹² heroines, the 'quiet rural women-workers' from Belov's⁹³ stories, perhaps Turgenev's girls, who were 'quiet' as well (see the footnote to Chapter 6 of this Part of the thesis). She did not like Natasha Rostova⁹⁴

⁹² the majority of Chekhov's female, as well as male, protagonists really were 'shy' people, according to many interpreters of his work, in a sense that he stressed that they were 'little', 'unimportant', 'ordinary' people coming from the lower-middle-class strata of the urban population. In addition, Chekhov usually made them personally shy, unambitious, having low self-respect and weak will. If not all of these features, then at least several of them were present in each of the protagonists of the short Chekhov stories (perhaps, with the exception of some characters in his early, humorous novels). Consequently, very seldom they dared to struggle for any competitive 'bonus' in this world. On the other hand, it is usually considered that Chekhov stressed that many of these 'ordinary' people possessed a 'rich internal world' of kindness, generosity, and especially the ability of self-sacrifice for the sake of the others. Such self-sacrifice was even pleasant to them and provided some of them with the meaning for their lives.

⁹³ Belov, Vasilii Ivanovich, born in 1932, a Soviet writer, one of the most prominent representatives of the 'villagers' (*derevenshiki*) school in literature, which propagandised the return to the 'lost' traditional patriarchal values. The peculiarities of Belov himself, in comparison to some of the more severe of his fellow-'villagers' (who were inclined to blame and to show the crisis, if not tragic moments of the destruction of 'old' rural life), included a romantic view of things and the idealised perception of 'old' rural life which he tried to depict in the best possible 'harmonious' way, because it was harmonious, in his view, while urban life was only 'destructive'. Accordingly, his female images were harmonious, beautiful, and hard-working (but they were not victims despite all that!).

⁹⁴ This female protagonist of Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy's (1828-1910) 'War and Peace' (1863-1869) was traditionally criticised in lessons of literature in the Soviet secondary schools for the fact that she finally lost all her personal attractiveness and her personality as a whole when she became a mother at the end of the book. In addition, the majority of school pupils usually felt disgust towards the way in which Tolstoy stressed the biological aspects of her mothering - not pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding, which could be perceived more positively, but meditation over her children's defecation, which the author asserted to be almost the essence of motherhood, and of female personality. In addition, he insisted that this was natural for women, and therefore it was very good for them to be like that. But practically no young

because 'the biological side of her motherhood is too obvious in her.' Nadia preferred not to read 'gloomy' books, like those by Dostoyevsky, or a book by 'one French author'⁹⁵ which described a divorce in a family with four children, a divorce in which not only did the husband indifferently 'leave', but the children eventually left their mother too, so that as a result it looked as if she has spent her life, devoting it to motherhood, in an absolutely senseless way. Nadia's own 'perception of life' was more 'cheerful', but such books tended to 'frighten' her and did shake the foundations of her optimistic attitude to reality.

The age difference between Nadia's sons was quite small, around two to three years. Nadia believed that it was good when a child is born, regardless of the age of his or her mother. She even knew one woman who gave birth at 50. However, in her view it was better to go through birth while you were younger, if possible.

Uliana, the mother of three daughters, had a different life story, the age intervals between her daughters were quite large, about 7 or 8 years each time. She intentionally did not have all her children in one short time period while she was still in her teens or early twenties. She preferred to do it 'from time to time' throughout her life.

Partly, this was associated with Uliana's bigger involvement with her work. She was a drawing teacher and an artist, and enjoyed both pursuits. She preferred to alternate periods of caring for a little baby with periods of high involvement in her work, as she said. Uliana spoke about childbearing 'cycles', which meant time periods before she started to want the next child.

Uliana's relationships with her husbands also differed from Nadia's experience. Uliana was first married as a teenager, as was Nadia, and divorced for similar reasons: her husband's drinking problem and his unfaithfulness. Both Uliana and her husband were of working-class origin, and different childbearing mores operated in their situation: they actually married because of her first pregnancy, on their parents' insistence, but he, too, 'felt pity' for her and did not want her to become a lone mother. Thus, Uliana's first daughter was from this man.

Then the long period of intense studies began in her life. Her mother supported Uliana in her desire to complete a degree, since her daughter was going to become 'the first of all our kin' to actually achieve this. Uliana's mother baby-sat for her daughter's first child in the meantime.

However, at the time of Uliana's divorce 'all my relatives had died - my father, my mother, and my grand-mother.' Uliana could not help thinking that it was partly due to the

schoolgirls could identify with motherhood represented in this way, although some tried to identify with Natasha-the-girl.

fact of the divorce: all the men in their family had drinking problems, but not even one woman had divorced them for that reason. Uliana was the first to actually do so, it was her 'rebellion'. Her mother was very sad about this divorce, and blamed her, not him, having the idea in her mind that Uliana had divorced him in order to 'lead a promiscuous life.' Therefore she was actually very glad to learn that Uliana was about to marry for the second time very soon after the divorce. 'To choose someone' was definitely better than free love, in the mother's view. When the mother was actually dying, her parting words to her daughter were:

Do whatever you want, have as many divorces as you want, and as many abortions as necessary, but you must complete your course of study!

This impressed Uliana, and she acted according to her mother's will. Her first abortion came soon after the first daughter's birth:

Because she was still too young, and I needed to study, and I was already divorcing my first husband...

Then Uliana married her second husband, who was a friend of the first one, and had her second daughter, all while working during the day and studying at night. Now, Uliana's new mother-in-law baby-sat for her. After that, Uliana had four abortions in succession - with half-year intervals in between - because she wanted to fulfill her promise to her mother and complete her studies. Contraception 'did not work' with her: with the pill, Uliana had such strong side effects that she was admitted to the hospital in a state of toxic shock; the IUD did not suit her because of the constant problem of the 'falling womb'. All the other methods have proven to not be reliable enough.

However, Uliana was not happy with having numerous abortions: she always had dreams about these possible children of her, while aborting them. She gradually moved in a 'pro-life' religious (Orthodox) direction. This coincided with her next period of 'desiring a child'. This time, however, she had to wait three years for conception to happen. Uliana was humble during all this time, she prayed to God, asking him to forgive her and give her a child, visited the church and spoke often to the priest. She believed that her infertility was a legitimate consequence of her 'sins': five abortions.

Everyone around Uliana was against her having the third child: her husband, her mother-in-law, and other relatives all thought that 'three is too many', especially taking into consideration the fact that Uliana lived in a one-room flat with her husband, the two older daughters, a dog and two cats, so that the adults slept in the kitchen. However, in this

⁹⁵ Herve-Bazin (born 1911), *Anatomy of One Divorce* (it was first published in Russian in 1977 in the magazine 'Inostrannaya literatura', NN 2-3).

case, as well as in some other cases in my sample, the woman's desire proved to be the decisive factor in bearing a child. Moreover, since Uliana was 'totally opposed to abortions now', she claimed that she would bear every child with whom she happened to fall pregnant in the future, and to use no contraception. When I asked her what she would do if she fell pregnant just a few months after this birth, she replied:

no, it is not probable that God will allow that, it would be too difficult for me, so I will address God in a serious way and ask him to wait a bit.

Uliana's husband was a driver (and therefore the car was her 'second hobby', she knew the names of all the parts, and could help her husband repair the engine), who has been constantly in and out of work throughout their marriage. As she joked, 'he always loses a job as soon as I get pregnant.' Therefore Uliana imagined him actually baby-sitting for her third daughter, while she went out to work, since 'whatever the salary, there always is some work in the school', and even this small salary was of course better than nothing. Uliana would enjoy doing child care herself this time if her husband happened to find a job; both possibilities appealed to her now, since she loved both her job and being with her children.

She surprised me by having so harmonious a psychological state, while being in such a hard economic situation. All things seemed to be balanced in her life, and she had a good possibility to switch from one side of her life to another when there were problems somewhere. It was even physically so. As Uliana said,

if I have a headache which started at home, this headache disappears as soon as I come to work; and if the headache starts at work, it stops when I come home.

Uliana worked a lot in both places; but the psychological compensations described above seemingly gave her additional energy to do so.

All the pregnancies and births were relatively easy, but this third time it was all especially enjoyable and a 'divine' experience for Uliana. She constantly felt an intense 'gratitude to God'. All her births took place in a hospital setting, and the attitude of this woman of 'worker-peasant' origin (in her own words) to 'natural' childbirth was as follows:

if I lived in a village, or in the countryside... And if I was walking in a field, and, by accident, I would begin to give birth... there, it would be natural, you would do everything yourself. I was afraid precisely of that, and I came to the hospital in advance, as fast as possible, because if some accident like that were to happen, who

knows, maybe I would not be able to manage this myself, because I do not have any special knowledge in this area, nothing...

Uliana never breast fed for long, and was afraid to try to do so now, since she had 'breast inflammation' both previous times. Uliana liked children, she loved to work with them, and her daughters were becoming her pupils, as soon as they were grown up enough to take a paint brush in their hands. There was no strict border between 'her own' and 'others'' children for Uliana.

Uliana 'always knew' that she was going to have

three daughters, like in a fairy tale, and like it was in my grand-mother's life.

Like many other Soviet children, Uliana spent most of her childhood with her maternal grand-mother, and she was very close to this woman. However, when Uliana was pregnant, she always hoped that she would have a son 'similar to my husband.' Nevertheless, Uliana always easily accepted the fact that each child was a girl, since

I knew that it was my destiny... even when I dreamed about the aborted children, all of them were girls... I never had sons.

In addition, in the same way as Janna, she enjoyed both control and lack of control over her own life:

it is always so with me, when I want something very much, just the opposite happens to me, and then I like what happened, too.

Desire to have children seemed to Uliana to be 'natural' in all people: having children was 'like the grass growing, the same thing'. It had nothing to do with 'the continuation of the line'. Uliana was even a bit afraid to think of her daughters as a continuation of her kin, since she believed this kin contained 'poor genes'. The desire for the next child was always a 'desire for change' in Uliana. It always came to her 'when life was becoming boring'.

The two first children, in addition, were wanted because of Uliana's love for their fathers, and the desire to 'repeat' these fathers by having sons by them. Uliana's last daughter was, on the other hand, born 'burdened' by her mother's numerous religious and symbolic expectations: Uliana believed that it was not a 'simple' child, that there was some 'high predestination' meant for this girl by God. Uliana, the pseudonym I chose for this interviewee, was actually the name she insisted on giving to her third daughter, against the will of all her relatives. It was the name of the saint who 'promised' this child to her; and this was the name of her preferred literary heroine, Uliana Gromova from *The Young*

Guard' by Fadeev⁹⁶. As a child, the interviewee was 'very much inspired' by this heroic image, precisely because it was heroic,

while I did not have such a strong will, I always cried in difficulties... But I wanted to be like her.

Perhaps, Uliana's everyday reality of a Soviet-style superwoman was associated in some ways with this early heroic dream of hers.

Nina's case was different from two previous ones in that her family was really 'large', even for those who would consider a family with three or four children to be 'small'. Nina had eight children. Her background was very different from all the other interviewees', since she was born and lived almost all her life in a village. Recently, however, she moved to Moscow in the hope of getting a flat there as an inheritance from an elderly woman whom she promised to care for until the latter's death.

Nina took two of her six children with her: the youngest daughter who was one year and six months old, and another one, who was eleven years old then, the latter to act as baby-sitter. Nina was a widow at the time of her departure from the village, since her common-law husband had died. In their native village 'everyone' was in common-law marriages, it was not usual to register unions. She remained alone with the children, relying only on herself and on her mother, who also brought Nina and four other children up without their father's support. However, unlike her mother, Nina did not stay alone for long. Soon she met another man whom she agreed to live with. This man was a Tadzhik, ten years her junior, who recently divorced his Tadzhik wife because of the latter's infertility. A group of Tadzhik men arrived in Nina's village in search of a better life, since there was a civil war raging in their own country then. Consequently, Nina and the 'Tadzhik' (she always referred to him in this way), moved to Moscow together with her two children, while the remaining four children stayed in the village with Nina's mother, relying on market-gardening which was kind of their 'family business' in which all the children's labour was used.

Soon Nina got pregnant by the Tadzhik, this time with twins. However, like the majority of her children, the twins were daughters. This was a problem for her new partner,

⁹⁶ Fadeev, Alexander Alexandrovich (1901-1956), a Soviet writer. Uliana Gromova was a real figure, one of the members of a clandestine organisation of youth who intended to resist German occupation in the city of Krasnodon during the Second World War. They were discovered, tortured, and executed by the Nazist administration of the city. In *'The Young Guard'* by Fadeev (first published in 1945, a new version with the changes made by the author in 1951) Uliana was represented as a somewhat gloomy figure of a young 'serious' girl with some 'psychological depth' in her and with genuine heroic aspirations, not as the accidental young victim of the events, as later researchers sometimes interpreted her, together with the other members of this organisation.

or, rather, for his Tadzhik relatives who were also rural. They were not sure whether to accept these daughters as their legitimate kin. They would have had no doubts had they been the sons. Therefore Nina wanted to relinquish these two last daughters at the maternity hospital. To take the babies home without their father's agreement would be 'a shame' in her view, without even considering whether he would be able to provide financial and other kinds of support, if he agreed. The Tadzhik actually had very low earnings from his work at the factory, the salary was paid irregularly, and, in addition, he had problems moving around the streets of Moscow, since the Moscow Police tended to stop all men with 'Caucasian', i.e. Southern, appearance without reason, taking them into the Police office or beating them on minor pretexts.

Finally the Tadzhik's relatives agreed to accept Nina's daughters as their new kin, since their father actually had no other children, and she was happy to bring them into her home despite her poverty - she did not have even one nappy prepared for the twins. After this heart breaking situation Nina did not want to have any more children, even though her new partner might want to have a son: 'if I have even one more child, I will already go to the madhouse!'

In addition to these eight children, Nina had a son who died at the age of 1 year and 9 months due to an accident with some electrical device. He was her first son, and she was in a deep depression after his death. Then she had two other children, and tried to reduce her fertility after that, using abortions and the IUD. But the IUD did not suit her, it simply fell out of her womb soon after being inserted (perhaps, the doctor who inserted it was not a good professional, or it was the wrong model, or the size was wrong). As for abortions, Nina was actually afraid of having them, and had only two. Consequently, she bore four more children after these first attempts to reduce her fertility, not even counting the last two daughters from a new relationship. Nevertheless, after this last birth, Nina was determined to try the IUD one more time.

All this did not mean that Nina did not enjoy her large family. She liked having all her children around the table, 'it is like my own kindergarten', as she said. However, she did not enjoy working in an actual kindergarten: 'I have not enough patience', as she put it. Nina's children were all similar to each other and to their mother, and she thought they were 'beautiful'.

Nina preferred children at the age when they 'begin to walk and to talk' to those who were younger or older than this. Nina's children obeyed her, though she claimed to never beat them. Simply, they 'understand that life is difficult', seeing their mother always working, so the children tried to help her with their own hands, beginning from the age of three or four years. She did not stop them, unlike so many other parents, and work became

their habit, in the same way as it happened in childhood with Nina herself, when she was growing up in similar 'difficult' conditions. She never played with dolls:

My mother was building a house by herself, by her own hands, and I
was the eldest daughter, and you talk about dolls!

Subsequently, Nina worked hard throughout her life: in addition to caring for her huge family, in which, however, both her first partner and her mother were of considerable help, Nina worked in the '*kolkhoz*' most of the time 'on the farm, with cows', but sometimes also 'in the fields, with the beetroots'.

She carried all her pregnancies without stopping this hard work until the term of legal 'maternity leave', and never miscarried. Nina also believed that she 'was never ill'. But of course she had severe varicose veins and almost no teeth; almost all her deliveries were 'difficult', as she admitted. Still, Nina liked her work with cows very much, she did not want to be just a housewife, just a mother of a large family: 'I think I could not just stay at home', she said. She left her young babies home with the other children, and went to the farm to work even during her legitimate maternity leave. And her children

would put the baby in the pram, and they would walk to where I was
in the farm so that I could breast feed him.

Nina breast fed each of her children for more than a year.

She was not very religious, but visited church 'sometimes: the blessed days, the most important days'. So did other people in her village. All Nina's children were baptized. She did not read fiction and did not even watch TV because she had 'no time.'

Neither Nina, nor her new partner had any 'drinking problem'. Her first husband was 'very good' and 'domestic', and not an 'alcoholic', as well. This contradicted the ideas all the other interviewees had concerning large families of 'poor' people and of this size. However, in Nina's village, 'everyone' lived only to have large families

(my neighbour, she has 18 children! And without children, how it is
possible [to live]?)

and to work ('what do we have hands for, then, if not for work?').

This was a very different life style, which the other interviewees might not believe existed in contemporary Russia.

We can see that in the lives of Uliana and Nadia, having large families was a matter of conscious choice for a child-centred life style, a choice they had to struggle to protect in the face of opposition from their relatives, even if they initially felt that they passively accepted events. Neither of them is opposed to the idea of having even more children eventually. An equally important factor in their family size is their negative attitude to abortion which is associated with their religious or moral views, and, in case of Uliana, an

understanding of childbearing as a woman's duty to God. Other women in my sample also evaluated large families from an individualist position, sometimes expressing respect for women who had many children as a result of conscious, '*responsible*' choice. However, the concept of intense mothering, which initially came from Rousseau and has become particularly influential in Russia due to the efforts of family theorists in the last years of the Soviet era, is not compatible with support for large families, since it is considered that mothers of many children are not able to provide each child with all of their maternal energy. Rational consumerist cost-benefit analysis works against large families, too: it makes a big difference whether a family has to divide the same income between three or six people. According to this view, bringing up a large family is also too costly for a mother in terms of money and energy. Some of the interviewees talked in a derogatory way about the '*irresponsible alcoholic*' mothers of 'some' large families, which might be an echo of press articles on cuckoo-mothers (see Waters, 1992,1).

Nina's case differs from the first two considered in this chapter since she had almost all her children in different normative conditions, where a large family was both an accepted norm and an economically efficient investment. Nina's acquaintance with Moscow norms, where children had another meaning, was painful to her, and finally resulted in her not wanting any more children.

CONCLUSION TO PART II: DESIRES AND CONSTRAINTS.

The examination of interviewees' attitudes towards childbearing reveals a general understanding of a '*normal*' family as one having one or two children in a couple situation. They believe that the *imitation* of what others do and the feeling of doing a normal, *natural*, unquestioned thing play a very important role in the behaviour of 'normative' parents. This understanding is characteristic for the majority of the interviewees. However, those who do not feel very maternal seldom see in childbearing anything but normative pressure. They feel that the picture as a whole represents a system of *external* powerful forces which press the woman to do what she would not freely choose herself. On the other hand, women who do feel maternal, and especially those whose lives correspond to this 'normative' picture, feel that they actually *did choose it* (or would choose it). As a whole, the majority of interviewees, whatever their own position, see having 'one or a couple of kids' within a registered or unregistered marriage in a positive light.

Abortion is considered as normative behaviour, too, although many do not accept this way of dealing with pregnancy as something ultimately morally 'good'. On the contrary, it needs *justification*, in the interviewees' view. Nevertheless, an extreme 'pro-life' position, which unconditionally condemns abortion, is not common in this sample. On the other hand, abortion is frequently seen in the light of *responsibility* rather than of *choice*. Many people think it is more responsible to have an abortion than to give birth to an unwanted child and to abandon him or her. Abortion is traditionally seen by many people as a question of the woman's responsibility in several other situations too (see Chapter 3 of Part II).

In such a normative context, a new additional problem of reduced *access* to free or affordable abortion is added to the picture now. Many poorer women do not have this access, and therefore they are forced to give birth to children whom they then have to abandon. At the same time, many disabled and some teenage women encounter the problem of having abortions *forced* on them by direct pressure and indirect manipulations on the part of the medical establishment and their own relatives.

There was almost unanimous hostility to *relinquishment* of babies to the State. Even those who relinquished their babies themselves tended to *blame themselves for not having had an abortion instead*. The interviewees stressed *subjective*, essential aspects of relinquishment, associated with personal and moral deficiencies which were characteristic,

in their view, of the abandoning mothers, and devalued the importance of the *objective*, social constraints such as poverty and lack of legal rights and social benefits.

Lack of maternal love was seen as a *deviation* and a big '*sin*'. It was even more difficult for others to understand than the relinquishment of a child. However, one woman who does live with her unwanted child spoke about this experience in the way in which one would speak about a *trauma*, hard to live through and difficult to adapt to the consequences of.

Adoption has been examined in two competing contexts: as *infertility* resolution (or that of other physical or psychological problems, such as disability, fear of birth, desire to escape child care during the first year of the baby's life), and as *charity*, providing parents for abandoned children. Whether adoption was, or was not, seen as a resolution of the parents' problems, was heavily dependent on the importance the *genetic* links to her children had for an interviewee. There also was a related issue of '*poor quality genes*' which supposedly the majority of children available for adoption have. As for adoption for charity reasons, it was usually considered an act of heroism and altruism, and therefore a thing which was not for everyone.

Infertility was understood in the context of an individual's right to have a child. Both aspects of this, *individualism* and *right*, or even *duty*, of people to reproduce themselves, made sense for the interviewees. Using reproductive technologies was usually seen as not being in contradiction with God's will. On the negative side, problems of the *responsibility* for bringing 'unnatural', '*artificial*' technological children into the world and of the feasibility of resolving infertility, were considered. There also was an issue of comparative 'utility' of a child coming at the cost of such 'expense', in terms of money, efforts, losing other options in life, etc. Successful psychological *adaptation* to unresolved infertility was seen as the *responsibility* of a human in this case and as an indicator of his or her personal worth. An issue of stigmatization of the infertile people for their biological *inadequacy* or for their '*sinful*' behaviour, which was thought to be the reason for infertility, often came across in one or another form.

Those who had personal experiences of infertility talked of a 'battle' against a powerful *medical establishment* in the attempt to make use of it. Those who succeeded differed from those who did not in that the former had a stronger will and an ability to *mobilize* all internal resources more intensely due to *higher motivation*.

Disability was discussed in terms of *responsibility* for bringing 'sick children' into the world, biological reproduction as the unalienable human *right* of everyone, and the feasibility of childbearing and childrearing for disabled women. One of the interviewees, a

disabled mother, encountered many additional *obstacles* on her way to motherhood on the part of medical professionals who were supposed to be actually helping her.

Voluntary childlessness seemed to the interviewees to be related to *individualism* and selfishness, on the one hand, and to the lack of '*life instinct*', on the other. However, according to the majority, it represented quite a legitimate life choice, which was perceived as more *responsible* and a more normative form of behaviour, in comparison to the relinquishment of babies. The more maternal among the interviewees did not believe in *overpopulation* on the world scale, otherwise the choice of childlessness could have more weight in their perception.

Women who themselves had reservations about having children, or absolutely did not want them, did believe in the reality of the overpopulation problem, although they never mentioned it before I introduced this issue into the discussion myself. They chose to remain childless rather because they *disliked babies* and little children, had fears of pregnancy and/or birth as *intrusions* into the integrity of their *bodies*, because of their individualism, and because they were very much '*here and now*' people. Unresolved psychological problems in the relationships with the interviewees' parents were characteristic for the voluntarily childless to the same extent as for all the other groups of women I spoke to.

In the area of *single motherhood*, the importance of a *father* for children and the *hardships* experienced by the single mother were the first things which the interviewees considered. On the other hand, most of them have seen lone motherhood as quite widespread and a 'normal' situation, which, in addition, 'can happen to anyone', i.e., a married woman's husband might leave her. Women assumed that single motherhood could be both *intentional* and '*accidental*'. Voluntarily childless women tended to disapprove of both varieties: of the first for being 'selfish', and of the second for being '*irresponsible*'. Some interviewees distinguished between young teenage single motherhood and that of older women. They have seen good and bad sides in both types. Help from the single mother's own parents with childcare and/or in financial matters was seen as commonplace. Single mothers themselves added to this picture the fact that parenthood for them was often a *crisis resolution*, an 'anchor' which solidified their 'links' with life, provided them with a position in the social system and with the feeling of finally finding the meaning of their lives.

Some interviewees were hostile to *lesbian parenting* and believed that lesbians' children should be 'taken from them' at birth to prevent '*deviations*' in the children's development. Others, however, believed that there was nothing special in lesbian parenting, and that it was actually better for a child to have *two* parents of any kind rather

than just one single mother. The member of the lesbian community, however, asserted that the majority of younger lesbians themselves believed that their style of life was incompatible with parenthood. My interviewee who was a lesbian and a mother at the same time enjoyed both these aspects of her life.

The main reproach others leveled at the mothers of *large families* was that they were *irresponsible*. The interviewees also mentioned the supposed weak will of this kind of parent and the lack of maternal love and economic well-being children in such families could experience. Mothers themselves were *overworked* in this case, in the opinion of other women in my sample. But the interviewees believed in the existence of *two types* of large families: 'irresponsible alcoholics' and 'heroes who preferred a *child-centered* style of life'. Since there are few people in Russia who have even three children, so that *three means already many*, according to my interviewees, *information* about their life is hardly available to those interested. Women who really did have large families confirmed the apprehensions the others had about them being overworked. Willingly or not, all of them tended to be '*superwomen*', *responsible* and hard-working. They also loved children very much, and loved *life* as a whole. On the other hand, they had more ability to *enjoy* some *lack of control* over their lives, in comparison to the other interviewees.

Almost all interviewees mentioned some literary or cinematic images which, in a positive or negative sense, served as some kind of 'role models' for them. I found that these images were surprisingly closely interrelated with the interviewees' styles of life and/or their representations of them, with their attitudes to motherhood and to the spheres of family and sexual relations, and with the overall life philosophy of these women.

The interviewees seldom held any genuine political views. In the rare cases when they had any, their positions in the political field were proven to reflect some important aspects of their overall 'philosophic' and moral position in life.

On the other hand, some women's involvement in religion was surprisingly strong. Contemporary Russian religious 'renaissance' seems to affect all of them, however with different intensity. If for the half of the interviewees it means only superficial interest or normative ritualistic behaviour (still, both were meant to be forever eradicated by Soviet atheistic propaganda prior to Perestroika), for the other half it signifies a deep spiritual and moral search or profound engagement in and strong commitment to the chosen religion. Religion seems to represent the most important (though by no means the only) moral scale to measure people's behaviour against for many of my interviewees.

Nevertheless, not only religion, but all of the following seems to play some role in the context in which women are having children, or not having them, in this sample.

First, there is the *desire* to have a child, or lack of such a desire. Many interviewees name this desire the 'maternal instinct', or associate the desire with such an instinct. Sometimes there is a strong desire to have a son, in other cases to have a daughter, although some interviewees had no sex preferences. The desired number of children seems to directly depend on the intensity of the desire for a child as a whole: most often, those who *want* children *more* intensely, at the same time want to have *more children*.

Second, there are subjectively stressed *reasons* for children, which can include the continuation of the line, the attempt to achieve some kind of immortality through having them; expectations that the children would provide them with security in old age, or that they will 'achieve' what the parents could not achieve themselves; that they will provide the means for the parents to overcome stagnation in their lives; that they will provide some stability in the mother's life, by making her more responsible, turning into an 'anchor' for her. There are also reasons for having no children: they can interfere with other aspects of the mother's life. Alternatively, there may be no reasons: then, having a child, or not having a child, simply is 'accidental', or 'up to the fate'.

Third, the woman's attitude to the *biological side* of having children (pregnancy, childbirth, breast feeding, and her attitude towards little babies and children as such) is very important. Fears and/or negative attitudes and perceptions in this area can lead to voluntary childlessness, especially if they are intense, but only if they are reinforced by other factors. On the other hand, practically every woman has *some* fear of birth, if not of the pain associated with it and the risk to her own life, then that of having a disabled child; and almost no one in the sample unconditionally liked the way pregnant women look.

Fourth, women's understanding of *sex roles* and the *responsibility* associated with them influenced their views on childbearing very much. Their attitude towards the 'superwoman' image was one of the things which divided the interviewees into two opposite groups. Another aspect concerned the degree to which they believed that mothering must be intense. The last issue here concerned female solidarity in childbearing, and childbearing as an 'initiation rite' into the female world.

The fifth area concerns perceptions of the *wider world* by women, of their own place within it, and of its place within themselves. This means first of all jobs, studies and career ambitions, and attitudes to work as a whole. Secondly, this concerns class issues in a broad sense, namely perceptions about who 'we' are, who are 'one's own people', and who are 'they', 'strangers', and which forms of behaviour are appropriate for each of these groups of people.

The sixth group of factors concerns the role both emotions and reason play in the life of any particular woman, or, the value of *emotionality* and *rationality* for her.

Seventh, the perceived and real availability of various *resources* plays an important role. The resources include personal energy and abilities; the ability to perceive others as a resource when necessary; the ability to evaluate how much energy is needed for a task; the security and stability of the situation; the perception of children themselves as a resource; the conditions which are personally appropriate or acceptable for having children; money, sources of income, availability and quality of paid services and of state benefits; housing; and relationships.

Among the relationships, those to *men* traditionally seem to be the most important for a woman when she considers having a child. Some women in the sample experience a desire to have a child from a particular man when they fall in love with him; others, on the contrary, search for an 'appropriate' father when they want to have a child. Some women do not even want a child, they use pregnancy as a 'tool' in a struggle to keep a man; on the other hand, some are not interested in having a man around, even in a childbearing situation. Sexuality, which is usually an important aspect in relationships with men, is closely associated by some interviewees with the reproductive instinct; however, many other interviewees prefer to enjoy childless sexuality and/or to have children either asexually, or with the unavoidable minimum of sexual interactions.

Other relationships play some role too. First, there is that of the woman to her own *parents*, the attitudes of her parents and the influence they have on her. Secondly, the in-laws play an important role in many women's lives, either helping her with child care or otherwise, or trying to push her away from their son's life. Other relatives and friends (if there are any) often have their say too. The presence of one or other kind of social link in the life of a mother-to-be is essential: the situation of socially isolated women is the worst.

Last, but not least, women's relationship to their own already existing *children* is important: what they mean for their mother, whether she enjoys her mothering of them or not, whether she perceives herself to be a good mother or a bad one, and what these older children's attitudes are towards newcomers in the family.

On the underlying level of attitudes to life as a whole, all of the above is influenced by the *norms* which at least partly rule an individual's behaviour, and by overall personal perceptions of *time*, *power* and *control*, and *life* and *death*.

The life and death 'dimension' comprises attitudes to health, illness, and medical treatment of illness; to *naturalness* and *artificiality*; to the body as something exposed to suffering and change; to the sexual bodily experience; perception of the body as the only reality, or as just one of the available realities; attitudes to pets and other animals; love of life, including its suffering, versus fear of suffering and therefore rejection of some aspects of life, or of life as a whole, i.e. fear of life; and fear of death, and attitude towards death.

For some people, engaging in any relationship with a living thing seems horrible due to the unavoidable death at the end of the relationship, and therefore they feel that this should preferably be avoided. In some of the interview accounts, life appears only in the animal, biological, 'lower' context; in others, it is higher life, one of the forms of religious power which control us.

Attitudes to *time* include perception of time as such, of its content and length. 'Empty' time means *stagnation*; 'full' time means *events*. *Age*, and attitudes concerning *stages of life*, are also important aspects of time applied to childbearing, beginning from the attitude to *childhood* as a stage of life, and going on to representations concerning the best age for a woman to have children (she should either already be *mature* enough or can come to maturity through childbirth; on the other hand, the younger she is, the more energy she has) and the best age gap between children if there are going to be several of them. Attitude to *development* seems to be very important here, since some interviewees prefer developed things/humans in their stable present form to new ones, while others prefer constant change and new life.

Power and *control* factor includes both exerting power and resisting it, and *controlling oneself* as well as *controlling others*. For some people it is very important to have control over their own lives. Others, however, are able to enjoy a lack of such control. *Independence* in a sense both of having no need for other people and being of no need to others is an important value, connected to power and control, and is related to childbearing issues.

I speak of *norms* here in a sense of '*scales*' and '*measures*' people use while they evaluate their own and others' behaviour. These scales can have a religious and/or ethical origin, they can be of a national, subcultural, or legal nature, or they can simply be related to what people see as 'appropriate' and 'not appropriate' (for example, a 'proper' style of life), 'normal' and 'not normal' in a social or even biological sense.

Finally, all these different factors can be reduced to two main dimensions along which all the types of women studied can be grouped. The first one, which lies behind what women do and think about childbearing, is the dimension of the desire to have children and the value associated with children: whether to have children of one's own (I include adopted children here too, since they do become truly their social parents' 'own') seems to be ultimately positive and rewarding, or negative and demanding. Often the desire grows and the value of children becomes more positive only *after* having a child, and even then, gradually, rather than immediately and suddenly.

The second dimension is formed by the value associated to individual desire and choice as such, whatever it be: whether these seem to be an important and respectable justification for people's actual behaviour.

Both these dimensions are either formed by the factors described above, or are at least associated with them. For example, an interviewee usually chooses more 'positively coloured' reasons to have children when she herself has a desire to have them, and more instrumental reasons, such as using a child as a tool in a struggle to keep a man, if there is little independent desire for a child. Inclination to enjoy lack of control is usually associated with the low value attributed to individual desire. Perception of biology and of the wider world is often connected to the choice already made, so that a woman stresses either the excess of suffering or a tolerable degree of suffering in the process of birth depending on whether children as such are for her a desirable thing, or whether she becomes interested in having some kind of career on the basis of her decision to remain childless, since the career seems to be one of the good life options in this case, and a good explanation for others and for herself at the same time. The desire to *produce* life is often associated with enjoying having children; on the other hand, the decision to have no children is often associated with the aspiration to live an *individual* life to the full. As for individual choice, many women who differ from each other considerably in their actual childbearing behaviour understand each other well on the basis of mutual respect of each others' desires and choices, if individualism represents a positive value for them. Thus women who relinquish their babies at the maternity hospital understand very well infertile women who try hard to achieve the birth of their own biological children, and single mothers understand voluntarily childless women. Thus the construction of the following two-dimensional graphic representation of my findings seems to be possible:

problems such as unemployment, unaffordable housing, lack of stability in employment and income, having to deal with indifferent or corrupt bureaucracy, weakening social links (above all, increasing male irresponsibility), and difficult relationships with their partners, parents and in-laws. Therefore, and also due to the reduced access to free abortion, more women now find themselves relinquishing their new-born babies to the guardianship of the State than was the case in the Soviet era. Meanwhile other women try to make use of the new technological possibilities of assisted conception in order to overcome their infertility. As we can see from the interview accounts, they generally meet with oppressive medical attitudes and behaviour, and need considerable financial resources and willpower if they want to achieve their goal. Thus the dream of Malthus, selection of the 'fittest', has come true in a way, since the better-off, stronger-willed, and the more goal-oriented find that all the advantages are on their side in achieving their desire of having their own biological child by means of this new reproductive business.

However, the interviewees themselves tend to explain their own and others' behaviour in terms of essentialism, biological or mystical, and not by the social reasons I have outlined. As was stressed in Part II, and in **section 11** of Chapter 1 of Part I, all this might be due to contemporary cultural trends: on the one hand, rising individualism, which means that many acts of human behaviour tend to be explained in terms of a person's own guilt or desire, and, on the other hand, religion and mysticism. This adds another dimension to the essentialism inherent in the interviewees' explanations. The third and last dimension of this essentialism is provided, or informed by, the press publications of the 1980-s, which were a part of propaganda campaign concerned with 'returning women to the home'. Ideologists involved in this campaign promoted an essentialist view of sex roles based on sociobiology and/or a version of Rousseauian ideas. Since cultural values now tend to be changing in the direction of greater acceptance of voluntary childlessness (see the discussion in **section 11**, Chapter 1, Part I), people who are ambivalent about childbearing might now tend not to have children, while in the Soviet epoch, when propaganda was in favour of having children, they would tend to have had them. A decision is now required in order to give birth to a child, while formerly a decision was needed in order not to have one.

As we can see from the interviews, single motherhood now represents a deterioration of life conditions more than any ideological gain, and life conditions are currently more important in people's view than ever before. Due to this growing concern with quality of life, having a child is increasingly often perceived as a luxury and a sign of ultimate success in life. If the goal is to experience self-realisation through motherhood, it is ultimately enough to have just one child, and therefore larger families seem unnecessary

in such a difficult socio-economic situation. Moreover, some people may begin to consider childbearing an important consumerist value; but this has not become the case for all of us yet. The family is still not perceived in Russia as 'just another life-style choice', as, according to Davies (1993), it is in other parts of Europe.

As for those women who are inclined towards voluntary childlessness, they could always follow this life plan since abortions and some forms of contraception started to be available in Russia early in this century. Some of the voluntarily childless, even the 'rejecters' in Veevers' (1980) sense (see subchapter 2 of Chapter 2 of Part I), definitely were influenced by the norm concerning childbirth, so that they finally did give birth to a child; but the stronger among them could always find justifications for keeping to their decision to remain childless. Every cultural myth provides opportunities for such justifications, if only one tries really hard to find them. Of course it was psychologically difficult to act against the norm; but everyone acting against any norm has problems. For example, women who try to resolve their infertility now often meet hostile social attitudes towards them, and have to rely only upon their own internal strength in their 'struggle.' Whatever the cultural tradition, there always were women who were inclined to become mothers, and those who did not want to be at all. Only the percentages of the two groups differ from epoch to epoch and from country to country, since it was always possible to influence the 'ambivalent middle' by means of propaganda and cultural trends. However, cultural trends have a double nature, since they are not only the means of influencing people's opinions and behaviour, but were also initially invented by people themselves in their attempts to accommodate reality to their personal desires.

In any case, the underlying cultural representations, whether or not they are more favourable to motherhood in Russia than in the West, are just one of several layers of motivation for women to become, or not to become, mothers. There are also the 'objective circumstances', or social factors, even if the interviewees seldom refer to them themselves.

Finally, if the expression 'you never know until you try' is true, then, since it has gradually become easier not to have children than to have them, many people in the present day do not try, and as a result they do not know. At least some of them would enjoy motherhood, if they actually experienced it, especially taking into consideration that maternal feelings are very often learned and tend to intensify with passing time, at least during the pre-school period of a child's life. On the other hand, the good news is that now, in comparison to former times, it is less probable that one will have a child if one really does not want to. That is a positive development since it can be a traumatic experience, as was the case for at least one of my interviewees.

CONCLUSION: THEORIES AND PRACTICES.

In conclusion, we will go back to our earlier discussion of the possible influences on Russian women's attitudes towards mothering, and see to what extent they can be applied to the views of my interviewees.

I argued in Chapter 2 of Part I that it was highly likely that not only Marxist and Christian ideologies were known to my interviewees, but also functionalist, Rousseauian and Freudian ideologies, although possibly in a somewhat distorted form and through the mediation of Soviet sociologists and psychologists. For example, they may have known of Becker's theory through the work of A.I. Antonov and V.A. Borisov, at least according to O.D. Zakharova (1996)⁹⁷. As noted earlier, the work of Parsons, the functionalist sociologist, was translated and published in Russian as early as 1972⁹⁸, becoming a covertly accepted methodology for the majority of Soviet sociologists. It could be argued that a form of Rousseauian theory was heavily propagandised by adherents of the 'women, back to home' movement of the 1980-s, such as I. Bestuzhev-Lada (for example, in an article in a very popular newspaper 'Nedelya', issue for 15-21 August 1988). Lynne Attwood (1990) discusses the promotion of sociobiological views on sex roles by ideologists of the family in the late Soviet era. Journalists in the 1990-s, on the other hand, often refer to Freud's views (see **section 11**, Chapter 1, Part I). Therefore it would not be surprising for the women interviewed for this research to make use of all these discourses.

The views of contemporary feminists are less familiar to Russians. However, there are certain points on which the interviewees came themselves to some of the ideas put forward by contemporary feminists. One example is the understanding of abortion as a woman's choice, which is on the current feminist agenda.

As well as looking at cultural trends which are likely to have directly or indirectly influenced my interviewees' views on reproductive options, I will also make some reference to the ways in which these views sometimes seem to echo Western ideas or theories which have not been disseminated at all in Russia and are hence unlikely to have had any influence over my interviewees. I do so in order to indicate that my interviewees, despite being in a culturally different situation, came themselves to ideas similar to those held by Western commentators, just as they came to some feminist ideas.

⁹⁷ Becker himself was first translated and published in 1961 (Bekker, G., Boskov, A., *Sovremennaya sotsiologicheskaya teoriya*, Moscow: Inostrannaya literatura, 1961).

⁹⁸ such as Levada Yu., who now is working at VTSIOM - the All-Russian Survey Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (see his *Lektsii po sotsiologii*, in series *Metodicheskie posobiya*, Moscow: IKSI AN SSSR, 1969).

There also are recent Russian cultural phenomena which have influenced the interviewees' views. The most important among these new cultural trends are, on the one hand, the *Christian* 'renaissance', and the inclination many people have to mysticism in a wider sense; and on the other, *individualism* and *consumerism*, which have also been on the rise since 1985 as a consequence of Russia's move towards the market.

As can be seen from the analysis of the interviews, my respondents' evaluations of normative families have *social*, *biological* and *economic* dimensions. At the social level, the interviewees support a *complementarity* of genders, along the lines elaborated by Parsons (1976). Social explanations in a wider sense were also offered, with many of the interviewees believing that the main reason for childbearing within normative families was the desire to *imitate* the behaviour of others; this was especially the case with prospective parents, who imitated the behaviour of their own parents. A 'Rousseauian' understanding of motherhood as a '*civil duty*' was sometimes mentioned.

There are three different aspects to the *biological* dimension. These are the *hedonistic* aspect; the *pro-life* aspect; and the '*natural*' aspect. The hedonistic approach considers children and childbearing either as a source of pleasure, or as a means of prohibiting pleasure. 'Pro-lifers' explain the desire to have children in terms of love of life, and an inclination to childlessness as a lack of such love. 'Naturalness' is interpreted along Rousseauian lines, seeing an inclination to motherhood as 'naturally' inherent to women.

Economically, childbearing in normative families was viewed by the interviewees as a *bargain*, a deal which a woman makes with a man in return for his support. Having more than two children, however, was normatively prohibited by the limitations of wealth (the economic dimension) and energy (an essentialist, biological explanation).

There is a 'scale' of moral attitudes towards *abortion* (attitudes which are often associated with Christian discourse). My interviewees use the same foundations for the evaluation of abortion as the general public in the United States, as outlined by Luker (1984). They cite the same circumstances as justification for abortion: if the pregnancy resulted from rape, or if the child would be severely disabled. Single pregnancy and poverty were seen as less acceptable reasons. While 'pro-lifers' would forbid abortion in all cases, my interviewees (like most Western feminists, see Petchesky 1986, Dworkin A. 1983; Dworkin R. 1993) tended towards the opposite position, that of universal access to abortion 'on demand', which is not surprising when one takes into account the Soviet history of free abortion. This probably also explains why there is a difference between the 'middle' position on abortion held by the women in my sample, who, as I have noted, are members of a particular generation of Moscow-based women, and the 'middle position'

held by women in the USA. The opinions of my interviewees were concentrated a little closer to the 'radical' pro-choice end of the scale.

An important problem which has been raised by several researchers concerns who controls abortion. The apprehensions held by, for example, Rosen & Benson (1982), Dworkin (1983) and Kaufman (1984), are confirmed by the actual experiences of some of my interviewees, who found themselves in situations where abortions were forced on them by their male partners (Lidia, Nadia) or by the medical establishment (Veronica). Others, however (Vika and Valeria) made the decision themselves. The Russian medical establishment seems to hold a unique position in this respect, since abortion was a profitable business for doctors during Soviet times, with doctors able, illegally, to earn a lot in this way. Legally it was free, but women who wanted better conditions of treatment and better care preferred to pay something to a doctor they knew.

The *relinquishment* of a child was viewed by my interviewees almost as the indication of an illness in a psychotic sense. This view is similar to the Freudian interpretation (see my discussion on Freudianism in Chapter 2 of the Part I), but it was also put forward in the Russian press in the early post-Soviet period (see Waters, 1992,1). If social explanations, such as poverty, were offered by the interviewees, then some essentialist and individualist considerations were also added, relating to the personal 'strength' or otherwise of the relinquishing mothers. The attitudes towards the children involved was also essentialist and biological ('poor genes' were mentioned); or an economic cost-benefit analysis, from the point of view of 'society', was applied. All these ideas can also be found in the 1980-s Russian press (see Waters, 1992,1). Some interviewees took from a charitable, usually Christian, position in relation both to the relinquishing mothers and their children.

Adoption was often seen by the women I spoke to as infertility resolution which was done in the interests of the parents (this can be seen as an individualist and consumerist approach, and as an 'economic' cost-benefit analysis), and less often from a charitable and/or Christian approach towards the abandoned children. This is, perhaps, a consequence of the Soviet/Marxist tradition which held that collective upbringing was better for children (a position elaborated by Makarenko, for example, in 1937 (1950)). If one follows Triseliotis' scheme (1997), applied by him to the history of adoption in the West⁹⁹, my interviewees' attitudes seem to be at the stage of development at which

⁹⁹ He sees adoption as going through several stages. At first, abandoned children were not needed by the state or society at large, and therefore care for them, if there was any, was left in private hands or to the Church. Then, with the onset of the industrial revolution, the state became interested in these children as future workhands, and they were raised in state-run children's homes. Then, by the end of the XIX-th or the beginning of the XX-th century, it

adoption is viewed from the position, and in the interests, of the adoptive parents. Adoption is undertaken mainly by working class families because of the widespread concern on the part of middle class women (linked to the essentialist-biological position) with the supposedly poor genes of the children available for adoption, while people who come from working class backgrounds might believe that their own genes are not much better (see the case of Uliana). To some women in this sample, genes also seemed to be important in the sense that they ensure similarity between parents and children, but not in the sense that the children's 'quality' is associated with the 'quality' of their genes. Therefore, for them, adoption seemed to be a form of self-deception, which would not really resolve the problem of involuntary childlessness. All the same, many of the interviewees considered 'social' motherhood to be more important than biological motherhood. This might result either from the fact that social explanations were prevalent in early Soviet ideology, or from the influence of 1980-s articles in the press condemning 'cuckoo-mothers'. The concern about possible abuse by adopters which was expressed by some of my interviewees is also addressed in Western social policy, which uses special methods for controlling and monitoring adoptive parents (Howe, 1998, Triseliotis, 1997). However, Western social policy on adoption receives little attention in Russia and so could not have influenced the views of my respondents.

Infertility and reproductive technologies are seen as moral concerns by some Western authors (Stacey, 1992; Edwards et al., 1993; Franklin, 1997; Achilles, 1993; Almond, 1995; Cole, 1995), who are unhappy about the separation of reproduction from sexuality, and feel that donor insemination and secrecy about the child's origins are morally problematic. These are less often dealt with as moral problems in Russia. However, there was some preoccupation on the part of the interviewees with the 'artificiality' of the 'technological' child, which might be due to the essentialist 'naturalist' Soviet propaganda of the 1980-s). Concern was also expressed about new forms of kinship: for example, the question of who is actually the mother in the case of surrogacy remains an unresolved dilemma for Vika. This is also a concern for some Western authors (for example, Ulanovsky, 1995; Walby, 1990).

was acknowledged that such care gave poor results in terms of their quality as future workers, and (paid) fostering was promoted. In the 1920-s adoption, which was thought to serve the interests of parents, thus resolving their infertility, started to be preferred to fostering. But, up to the 1940-s, adoption was practically limited to working-class families due to the prejudices people had concerning the 'poor genes' of children available for adoption. At the next stage it became increasingly a middle-class phenomenon, still serving the parents' interests. Currently, there are too few babies available for adoption, there is huge demand for them, and adoption is considered to serve the interests of children.

The women in my sample seldom expressed the view that women's desire to have children might be socially constructed. This may be due to the influence of essentialist 'Rousseauian' and sociobiological propaganda of the 1980-s. Even though a few of my interviewees thought that motherhood might be socially constructed in themselves and others, even they thought that it was impossible 'to forbid the desire' in other women (as Veronica put it), and assumed that some women felt a 'genuine' desire to have a child. These interviewees were in favour of reproductive technologies on the basis of individual rights. Concern was expressed about the 'inhuman' power of the medical establishment and the harmful effects of treatment. It could be argued that this concern stemmed from the 'individualist' position. Concern about the money and profit which 'doctors' extracted 'from our female suffering', in Galia's words, and with the low probability of success, suggest that the consumerist 'cost-benefit approach' is also being applied. However, like some Western commentators, my interviewees suggest that the best solution is not to reject reproductive technologies completely but to take control of them (at least at the personal level, since they did not suggest organizing self-help groups for this purpose). All the same, one interviewee (Kira) saw psychological adaptation to infertility as a 'duty', in the religious sense; the woman had to find a way to avoid falling into depression if her infertility was unresolved. The tendency to stigmatise infertile women and to blame them for their own infertility, ascribing it to 'irresponsible sexual behaviour', might be partly attributed to the influence of publications which appeared in the press on this subject in the 1980-s. This in turn probably comes from the essentialist view of sex roles prevalent in the late Soviet era.

There is also a tendency to stigmatise *disabled* women who want to be parents, which probably has a similar cause (see Waters, 1992,1). According to some of my interviewees, motherhood is 'practically forbidden' for the disabled, with the implied assertion that 'inadequate' people have no moral right to reproduce themselves. This point of view is not openly expressed in the West; however, some authors hold that such prejudices do exist among people dealing with disabled people, such as medical professionals and even the disabled people's own relatives (Campion, 1990; Finger, 1984; Saxton, 1984; Wates, 1997). Some of the interviewees looked at the question of parenthood on the part of the disabled from an individualist point of view, considering it their right to have a child. Cost-benefit analysis was also sometimes applied, in judging the feasibility of parenting for the disabled.

As for the *voluntarily childless*, one such woman (Polina) tried to interpret herself in a Freudian way, using such Freudian concepts as the 'over-loving mother' and the mother who rejected men, thus forming inclination to active childless (hetero)sexuality in

her daughter. She also tried to reconcile her choice of childlessness with her involvement in Orthodox religion, and found that difficult. Maya, who is 'not sure yet' whether she wants to be a mother, also explains herself partly in Freudian terms as the daughter of a woman who rejected men. Other interviewees considered voluntary childlessness and ambivalence towards childbearing as an individual's right to choose, and also looked at it from a consumerist position when they measured the subjective 'utility' of a child with other competitive 'goods', i.e. with other things a childless woman can do with her life but a mother cannot. Some of the women took a 'Rousseauian'-Soviet position and saw giving birth as a women's 'duty'. Essentialist 'biological' explanations were also applied here, with reference to an 'illness of the maternal instinct'.

Concerning *lesbianism* and motherhood, some Western authors have suggested that most, if not all, Russian lesbians are mothers (see, for example, Griffin & Mulholland, 1997). Lynne Attwood has argued that social reasons for lesbian motherhood are relatively widespread in Russia (1996:164):

given the pressure on women to marry and have children, many lesbians have done so before they realized, or accepted, their real sexual orientation. Accordingly, a high proportion of lesbians are single parents, while lesbian couples are likely to be bringing up children from both previous marriages.

I would argue that this is not the case for the younger generation of lesbians, however. Yulia, and the lesbian friends who introduced me to her, thought of her as highly unusual in being a lesbian mother. Artificial self-insemination is a less feasible option for lesbians even in Moscow than it is in the West. For a lesbian to have sex with men, either before she considered herself a lesbian, or even from time to time afterwards, is just one of the ways that a lesbian can become a mother in the West (Fox & Fumia 1993, Griffin & Mulholland 1997, Ali 1996), but it remains practically the only possibility for lesbians in Russia at the present time. Furthermore, the essentialist view that lesbians do not make good parents seems to be held by lesbians themselves in Russia as well as by other members of society. For all these reasons, while in the West lesbian motherhood is now on the rise (Griffin & Mulholland, 1997), it seems that in Russia there is the opposite tendency: according to Yulia, in the past lesbian motherhood was more widespread in Russia because it helped to hide lesbian identity. Some of the interviewees expressed essentialist hostile views of lesbians as a whole, which might be attributed to the influence of press articles in the 1980-s (see Waters, 1992,1). Others, however, saw lesbian motherhood as acceptable, and even less problematic than single motherhood; this view might arguably have been informed by essentialist late Soviet-'Rousseauian' view of sex

roles, which saw motherhood as the essence of womanhood and considered the woman's attitude towards sexuality as less important.

Some interviewees believed that husbands were still a scarce resource in Russia. This really was the case after the Second World War, but now it is a traditional view rather than something reflecting statistical reality. The interviewees looked at *single motherhood*, first of all, from the economic point of view of feasibility. *Single-mothers-by-choice* were sometimes referred to in a rather Freudian way, being blamed for the effect which fatherlessness and the over-powerful position of the mother would have on the children. Some single mothers in the sample actually spoke of fatherlessness as more of an advantage than a disadvantage, because men could bring violence into the family or be just an additional burden for the mother who thus could offer less of her attention to the children (for example, Vera and Yulia). However, the majority of respondents saw the presence of a father while the child was growing up as essential on the grounds that children needed models of male as well as female gender roles.

Teenage single mothers were welcomed by some interviewees since their behaviour was thought to be more 'natural' and less 'calculated', and they saw this as an advantage. Others held the opposite view, however, preferring more 'responsible', older, 'single-mothers-by-choice', because their behaviour was thought to be more 'economically' justified. From the Christian point of view, single motherhood was seen as the result of a woman not accepting abortion, and as a difficult life 'ordeal' which was a good experience for a 'genuine' Christian.

On the subject of *large families*, the interviewees expressed reservations about them being 'irresponsible', and about the 'over-reproduction of the unfit'. Such views might be attributed to the influence of press publications in 1980-s concerning 'irresponsible alcoholic' women who were said to have given birth to many children and then abandoned them all (see, for example, Grosheva, E. (1988), *Nenastoyashii dom*, in: *Semia i shkola*, NN 11-12/1988, pp. 28-31). Some thought it was good to have many children, but felt the need to justify their position, and also stressed that a 'large family is not for everyone' (as Galia put it), and that it was a matter of individualistic choice. Some of the women also applied a cost-benefit analysis, considering the advantages and disadvantages which large families brought to both the mothers and the children. The range of these advantages and disadvantages was similar to that elaborated in Land's research (1969) of large families in London¹⁰⁰. According to my interviewees, consumerism competes with an inclination towards childbearing in some people; this notion is backed up by the work of the

¹⁰⁰ main advantage is that it is good for children education to grow up in a large family; main disadvantages concern poverty and over-burdening of the parents.

demographer Antonov (1990). The essentialist ('Rousseauian') view which many women in this sample expressed, that mothering must be as intense as possible, also makes it less likely that they would choose to have a large family. The Christian position, however, as expressed by Uliana, approves of large families.

A number of Western writers (most notably Joanna Hubbs in *Mother Russia* (1988) have argued that maternal images played an especially powerful role in pre-revolutionary Russian culture. Even if this were true (and there is no conclusive evidence to support the argument), maternal heroics were overexploited by Soviet ideology, to the extent that there has been a backlash in younger people who now seem to be practically immune to the influence of such images. In any case, there were always other, more liberal tendencies in Russian cultural views concerning motherhood, at least those characteristic for the educated class, which allowed for the possibility for a woman to do other things as well as mothering, and also for more male interest and participation in the upbringing of children (see, for example, Herzen, [1852-1868] 1986). I must also stress here, again, that there was a strong movement in favour of childlessness in the revolutionary circles at the end of the XIX-th and the beginning of the XX-th centuries. The revolutionaries thought of the family as being a 'backward' institution, which would prevent them from full engagement in revolutionary 'work', which, they thought, was their real 'predestination'. These revolutionary women do not serve as role models for the present generation of women, since the 'revolutionary', goal-oriented version of voluntary childlessness of the late XIX-th and early XX-th centuries also seems to have become 'compromised' by Soviet ideology. Russian women in the present day are searching for more consumerist role models of childlessness.

There was a contradictory development in the Soviet Union, which continued throughout the various periods of Soviet history. Both trends, that is that which favoured childbearing and that which opposed it, were present, though to different extents at different times. Early Soviet history was characterised by a liberal attitude towards abortion; this was followed, by the 'hero-mother' period under Stalin; and finally there was a strange attempt to opt for both things simultaneously, so that women of the last Soviet epoch could conceptualize themselves as self-sacrificing hero-mothers, who could at the same time abort ten times more children than they gave birth to. Often, this was not the fault of the women themselves: they lived under the constraints of being obliged to participate in the work force, having poor childcare options, and suffering from the acute housing shortage. The essentialist view of sex roles meant that they had to do all housework without help from their husbands, and services aimed at helping them with this

work were undeveloped. So the only way in which they could reduce their work-load was to reduce their fertility. The majority of women did so.

The current Christian cultural trend has led to a re-consideration of this maternal image and to a change in attitude towards both abortion and childbearing. However, this change is not absolute. Few women accept the idea of unrestricted 'natural' fertility. They can now use contraception instead of abortion, which most women refuse to see as a 'sin', despite the Church's teaching on this matter. The attitude of these contemporary Muscovite Christian women towards reproductive technologies is also positive. The version of Christianity which they have embraced is, then, not very traditional, as well, it seems, as most other contemporary versions of Christianity; but it is, all the same, a genuine *Christian* faith which forms an important part of life for several interviewees.

A number of traditional approaches to mothering in Russian culture have changed in recent years. In the past there was a strong tradition of combining motherhood with work; of women helping each other with childcare either for free or for very little payment; of childcare being very cheap in general; and of mothering not being considered 'real' work. Yet although this has changed, the situation is still far from the Parsonian 'ideal' of complementary gender roles, with women devoting themselves exclusively to unpaid work caring for their families. In any case, it seems that according to the Russian version of culturally defined motherhood there is less reason for a woman to reject motherhood for the sake of personal development, or to feel oppressed by motherhood, since becoming a mother has not required a real switch to another social position in terms of practical everyday activities. Now this is the case for a small proportion of women, but this is a new phenomenon which dates back to the 1980-s. Childcare institutions still operate and are still cheap. State nurseries and kindergartens cost 83 roubles per month per child; this is also the official 'minimum salary', but nobody can actually live on this amount, which is equivalent to about 2 British pounds. Single mothers and parents who are officially considered 'poor', pay half that amount. The official average monthly salary in Moscow currently is slightly above 2000 roubles, which is equivalent to about 50 pounds (see www.mosstat.ru), and using state childcare is still seen as 'normal', with even full-time housewives sometimes using them, if they find that their initial 'choice' of intense mothering was not right for them.

Essentialist arguments remain strong in views about gender roles in Russia. Even in the past, we can see that this essentialism was not entirely due to a purely Soviet ideology since it was propagandized in the 1980s, the era in which the final decline of 'Sovietism' took place. On the basis of what the interviewees said, I would argue that this essentialism is now undergoing a decline, for some people at least, in that most people have now gone

back to the idea that women should work rather than sit at home. However, the process of liberalisation of views concerning sex roles is only just beginning. Even those who see gender roles to be essential, all-absorbing, a natural 'given', no longer necessarily include motherhood as such in the female role. Such essentialism exists happily in some childless marriages, and even in the views of some lesbians, as we have seen in the interviews.

The new ideologies concerning gender issues which are currently appearing in Russia are borrowed either from the West or from Russian history. At first glance there is nothing that new; traditional ideas about gender roles, individual rights and the need to adhere to the laws of God all are deeply felt, and accepted as genuine, by the individuals who believe in them. Perhaps, only the rise of hedonism in Russia seems to some people as something slightly alien to Russian 'cultural roots', being so much in opposition to the idea of 'pre-destination' (see **section 11** of Chapter 1 of Part I). According to many researchers, hedonism was also felt as something alien in the West when it first made its appearance; but it is further from traditional Russian ideas than it was from those in the West.

The ideas of 'race suicide', or the race being 'tired', seem to have been formed in Russia absolutely independently from similar concepts which appeared in the West in the 1940s, although there is some similarity in the cultural situations. This similarity, it seems, mainly concerns change in attitude towards fertility, with people increasingly seeing childbearing not as some natural unquestioned process, but in a more rationalistic light, which presupposes cost-benefit analysis and decision-making in these matters. The contemporary Russian situation is, in addition, characterised by a loosening of the work ethic: people are no longer willing to work with 'heroic' intensity without reward, something which was required by the old maternal ideology. After all, such 'heroic' work presupposes belief in some 'higher goal'; however, currently most people tend to have the feeling that the 'end of the world' is near and, unless they are deeply committed to religion, hold few beliefs.

Russia has a long history of strong and oppressive belief systems, and one could argue this has led to three different types of reaction which can be observed in the present day, when old official communist ideology collapsed. The first, for people who prefer to go on 'living under pressure', is to embrace an alternative strong oppressive ideological system, such as religious orthodoxy. The second is to enjoy the search for, and partially pledge oneself to, a new belief almost every day, but without making any real commitment to it. The third is to try not to believe in anything at all. All of these reactions could be observed in my interviewees, and all of them seemed to be new to the women themselves.

In the West, for such differing views to coexist at one and the same time is perfectly normal. However, it is still unusual for Russia. Perhaps, for that reason, the

attitudes and behaviour of the adherents of these different views tend to be less moderate and more defensive in Russia. This might help to explain why some of the opinions expressed by the women in these interviews will sound rather harsh and illiberal to Western readers.

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