

Representation of Homosexuality/homosexuals in Georgian Media

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Introduction

One of the goals of journalism is to have an impact on human consciousness and behavior to socialize the person in accordance with the certain ideals. These personalities together create public opinion. Although, other societal institutions have their impact on formation of public opinion, intervention of the media is somewhat uninterrupted and sustainable process. Due to this fact, media represents the most powerful tool in forming public opinion.

According to majority of experts, development of independent media is one of the achievements of Georgia's democratic transformation and by degree of its development is ahead of many other civil society institutions (study – *Media Map of Georgia*, Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) Tbilisi 2004). In reality, how free is media from totalitarian way of thinking? During Soviet period, media was owned by the state, which itself was the main ideologist and censor. Negative Soviet stereotypes about "different" thinking or behavior not only are still existent, but often even stronger. This creates conflict with the processes of adaptation to the democratic values. "State led homophobia is now interiorized. Methods for prevailing the 'other' is well mastered by society..." (E. Baraban).

Totalitarianism and authoritarianism are incompatible with pluralism, namely, with sexual pluralism. During Soviet times, not only 'different' sexuality but sexuality in a very traditional term was very restricted topic for discussion. From 1990s on, taboo was lifted upon general sexuality talks. 'Shansi' (chance) newspaper was the first Georgian language paper to publish an article on prostitution, and was eventually condemned by the Georgian Church. However, sexuality would still become more and more discussed topic. Georgian public 'admitted' that phrase "we do not have sex" did not quite reflect on the reality.

On initial stage, articles would touch upon minor sexual disorders, abortion, ADIS and Prostitution. The term 'homosexual' was first seen in Georgian printed media also in the context of AIDS and Prostitution. Except one or two articles, homosexuality was mentioned only in articles on show business, which mostly were copied from foreign magazines.

Situation changed rapidly from the year 2000 on, when homosexuality gained political importance. Papers were colored with loud titles such as: "Georgia is ruled by homosexualists" (Rezonansi paper # 107); "despite the fact that 'blue' people [label for gay] do not procreate, they still increased in numbers" (New 7 Days paper # 17); "from the 'blue' to the 'black' [person of criminal mentality] – political palette" (Meridian 44 paper # 7); "Ass-er European Gentlemen" (Our Prose newspaper #11); "Enemies of the people, KGB agents and ... Pederasts" (Georgian Times paper # 9)...

It is important to note that media became active simultaneously with redistribution of powers in the government during 1999-2003. Politicians were said to be expressing their concerns about homosexuality so frequently that 'fight' against homosexuality almost became election slogan for political parties. One would often here from the TV such phrases as: "We need to gather all homosexuals in one ship and sink it in the sea", or "If we look to this through democracy – we need to ignore this topic, and through dictatorship – sick needs to be killed in the cradle". Besides pro-fascist speeches and talks about sexuality of certain politicians the generation of myth on "blue conspiracy" had started actively, that "they are going to come to the power" ("non traditional sex" is necessary condition for decaying everything traditional, by occurrence of "non-traditionalists" of this type into the power yet invisible full stop is placed upon retaining and strengthening of national consciousness" Rezonansi paper # 107)

It is accepted and credible concept that social phobias and group hatred manifestations become more sever during social-political crises. During these periods, it becomes very actual to create image of visible enemy, image of the "stranger". According to S. Cohen, media has its biggest share in generating the moral panic. It is due to media that apocalyptic assessments of the situation and stereotyped image of the "stranger" spread.

Pre-election period media is usually very rich in homophobic rhetoric. This even got through humoristic radio arts – "hide the guys, pederasts are approaching" (Radio 105). Though, analysis of discourse strategies of the media of this period is the subject of yet another study. These processes were evidenced in other former Soviet states as well.

Since the revolution of roses, panic around "conspiracy of blue" slowly faded out. As seen below, homosexuality is not discussed in political context any more. Articles on homosexuality move from the first pages of leading newspapers to the yellow press.

Noticeable changes were evidenced in the methods of constructing the image of homosexual - from "stranger", "other", "them" to "sick and pervert of ours" and the sickness became possibly contiguous.

Though, the message was softened in a way that open and direct call for violence against homosexuals was replaced by concealed discrimination and irony ("In the play, Mephistopheles dressed in medieval outfit looks very comic. He has an accent of homosexual..." New Version paper # 138).

Finally, we need to note that it would have been extremely interesting to trace dynamics of representation of this topic in particular press editions throughout the period of 2000-2003, though, majority of those either ceased existence, or changed profile, geographical coverage, audience and for this reasons it had become senseless to include those in this concise study.

Methodology

Research Categories

Who is talking?

1. journalist
2. reader or accidentally chosen respondent
3. politician
 - 3.1. ruling
 - 3.2. opposition
4. representative of religious institution
5. representative of show business
6. expert/professional
 - 6.1. Psychologist
 - 6.2. Sexologist
 - 6.3. Venereologist
7. LGBT person
 - 7.1. lesbian
 - 7.2. gay
 - 7.3. bi
 - 7.4. transsexual
8. LGBT persons family members/friends

Opinion

1. Positive
2. Neutral
3. Negative

Object of homophobia

1. "non traditional" sexuality
 - 1.1. Lesbianism
 - 1.2. male homosexuality
 - 1.3. bisexuality
 - 1.4. trans-sexuality
2. Specific representative of LGBT community
 - 2.1. lesbian
 - 2.2. gay
 - 2.3. bi
 - 2.4. Transsexual

Description of paper publications according to profile:

1. entertaining information
 - 1.1. sports
 - 1.2. Show business
 - 1.3. other
2. politics
3. Society/social problems
 - 3.1. crime
 - 3.2. other social problems

Purpose of the study:

Representation of Homo/bi/transsexuality and LGBT persons in Georgian Media (01.09 – 31.12.2005)

Objectives of the study:

1. Revealing quantitative indicators: how often is discussed:
 - a) homo/bi/trans sexuality
 - b) LGBT persons
 - c) How often are LGBT persons able to speak for themselves?
2. Revealing quantitative indicators in relation to identified categories of LGBT representation.
3. Differences between various press editions in terms of aspects of representation.
4. Whether homophobia is discussed as problem of society.

Working hypotheses of the study:

We can assume that attitudes in studied editions towards LGBT are negative in general. Homosexuality is identified as a problem, not homophobia. Consequently, homophobia is not identified as societal problem. Information on homo/bi/trans sexuality is often incompetent and is intended to create negative attitude. Not only yellow press, but also, democratic value oriented editions contribute to dissemination of negative stereotypes on LGBT.

Study covers period of 1 September to 31 December 2005.

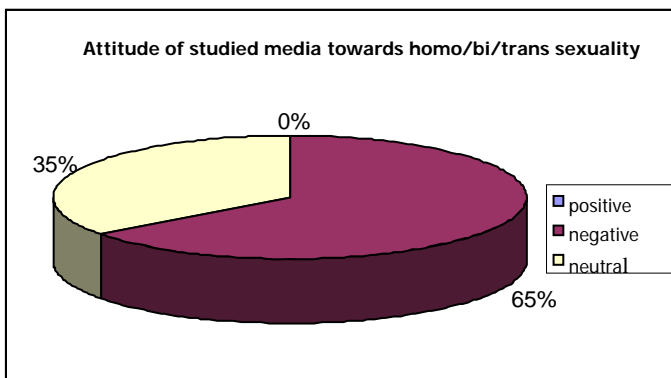
Following printed press was selected for the study:

1. "Rezonansi" newspaper – daily; political, societal edition; national distribution; politically neutral.
2. "Akhali Taoba" (new generation) newspaper - daily; political, societal edition; national distribution; very homophobic during previous period.
3. "Akhali Versia" (new version) newspaper – every other day; political, societal edition; national distribution; oppositionary press;
4. "Sarke" (mirror) magazine – weekly; yellow press; national distribution; one of the most readable editions in the country; without specific circle of readers;
5. "Max – the magazine for real men" – weekly; erotic edition; national distribution; audience of 16-45 age group;
6. "Tskheli Shokoladi" (hot chocolate) magazine – monthly; high polygraphic edition with ambition of being elite read. Issued in smaller numbers; reader – 20-45 age group.

Articles, which did not cover homosexuality directly but had used term to emphasize certain issue or create certain attitude, were also included in the study.

Total of 54 articles were analyzed.

Neutral – negative rhetoric

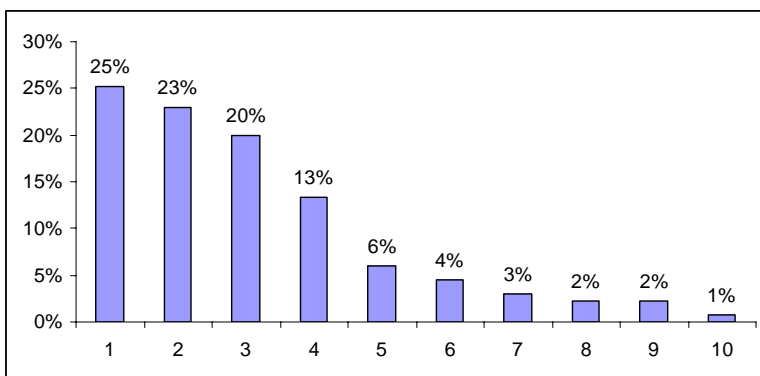


As study showed, negative rhetoric cases were almost twice as many as neutral. If we exclude article from "hot chocolate" on Pier Paolo Pasolini and his art, in general terms most neutral was "Rezonansi" newspaper (negative – 33%, neutral – 67%). This can be explained by the fact that in most of appearances articles include information from foreign press about famous LGBT people in sports, arts and show business. This edition refers to 'experts' most frequently compared to others (psychologist, sexologist). In the 2 detailed articles about sexual perversions and STDs LGBT are also mentioned, though correctly. This was the only case during the study when homosexuality is discussed along with other forms of sexuality.

Analysis of the material also showed that bi and trans sexuality never become a serious topic for discussion. Discourse stays within homo-straight matrix.

Weekly erotic edition "Max" was found as the most homophobic press (negative 87%, neutral 13%). The whole gradation of homophobia is present in this edition starting with open and direct phrases provoking violence to ridiculing. However, editors try to dissolve heavy gender stereotyped and feminophobic material with slight homoerotic content.

Frequency of disclosed homophobia according to different forms



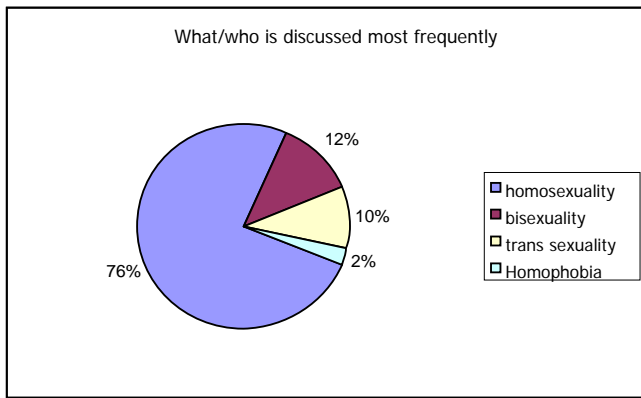
During study process certain forms of homophobia were distinguished, which are presented above according to frequency of occurrence.

1. Concealed discrimination (propagating "positive" gender norms);
2. With the purpose of discrediting of LGBT, relating them with societal deviations such as drug dependency, robbery, prostitution;
3. Creating negative image of LGBT (connected to specific accusations);
4. Mentioning LGBT in insulting context;
5. Proving inferiority of LGRB persons;

6. Accusing LGBT persons in attempts of negatively influencing general public;
7. Emphasis on domination of LGBT persons in politics, show business or other spheres;
8. Supporting judgment of facts of LGBT discrimination;
9. Direct urge for discrimination and violence (by pointing at LGBT in general or concrete persons);
10. Citing homophobic texts without comments;

High frequency of concealed discrimination relates to the existence of the firm gender stereotypes in the public. Need for construction of the strict gender roles for "real" man and a woman is persisting problem of Georgian media. Processes of revisiting traditional values are progressing very slowly.

“Fashionable awfulness”



In general, media touches upon the topic of homosexuality and gets less concerned over certain personalities. If we group findings according to types of studied media, we conclude that this trend is apparent in social-political editions. Less cases, when it comes to concrete persons are about show business representatives worldwide, and titles such as “Elton John has officially become a “wife”, “Daughter of Ali denies her lesbianism”, “Was Jimmy Hendricks “blue”?!” prove existence of stereotype about western origins of homosexuality. (“We are fed with well packed low quality culture. And the most important thing is that we tend to like this. This (homosexuality) has become an instrument for creating image of oneself. My neighbor’s son was claiming that he was different from the mass for so long time that he eventually became gay” “Rezonansi” # 107)

This method can be viewed as an attempt to remain distant from the ‘different’ sexuality. In the quoted information we can sense neutral attitude or a light irony. This attitude in its turn is substantiated by distancing the issue – abstract discussions on homosexuality of people living somewhere in the west do not threaten sexual identity of the respondents.

On the contrary, yellow press systematically publishes material about the issue in general as well as interviews with concrete persons. Consequently, phobias are unfolded in these very cases. One more detail to note is that majority of interviewees are sex worker homosexuals. This also strengthens the stereotype about perverted nature of homosexuality, and relates it to the lifestyle necessarily resulting in HIV/ AIDS and other STDs and the threat of spreading these.

Occurrence of homophobia as “sign of soberness of society”

Study proved hypothesis that homophobia is not perceived as a problem. The fact that term ‘homophobia’ was seen only once in all studied material speaks for this assumption, especially, in the case, where homophobia is perceived as ‘the only healthy’ policy.

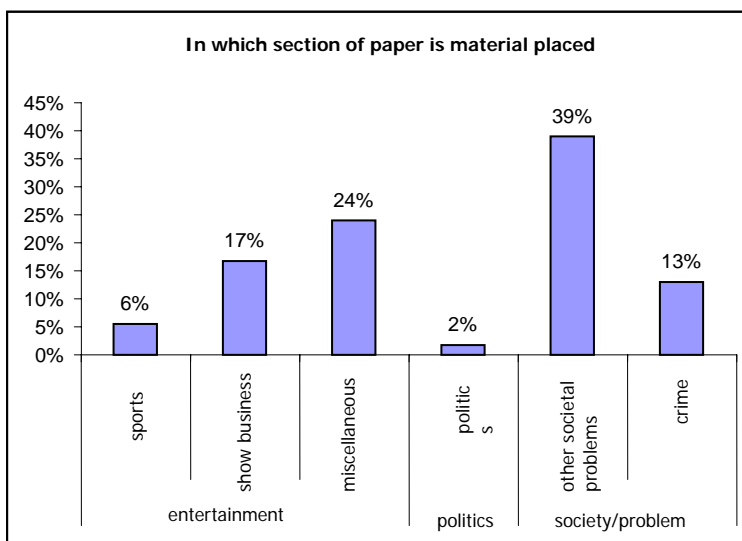
“...unnatural relations and derived aggressiveness threatens purity of the society, its gene, and its future, is a destructing power and consequently represents a very dangerous phenomenon. Society is obliged to protect its future!” “akhali 7 dghe” (new 7 days) #17)

Labeling LGBT as a sexual minority, per se, determines necessity of preserving social hegemony and importance of its preservation for heterosexual society. And eventually, this hegemony is referred to, while justifying discriminatory policies and forcefully retaining dominant system of values.

According to Gregory Haereck, in societies, where aggressive masculinity cult prevails, ideal model of heterosexual relations becomes a form of power. Thus, occurrence of homophobia is perceived not as suppressing human liberties, but as a natural and common sense attitude toward sexuality different from that of such society.

According to one of the respondents, homophobia “is a sign of soberness and wisdom of the society, when society strives to achieve balance, and for this, attempts to give more legitimacy to natural relations in state life as well as in private lives of people, as a guarantee of continuity of life”.

“Homosexuality – sickness of perversion?”



As we noted above, hysteria connected to homosexuality during 2000-2003 is eased. In the studied material, in as few as two articles did politicians touch upon the issue of homosexuality (both published in “Akhali Taoba” (new generation)). Word “homosexual” is present in the titles of both articles. It is rather frequent occasion in Georgian press, when title is meant to bear negative connotation and contributes to forming negative attitudes even in those cases that are not related to homosexuality.

One of these articles is describing the position of the politician from the ruling wing, another belongs to opposition representative. In the first article, opposition criticizes government and accuses in “decaying of everything Georgian and traditional”. Buggery is mentioned only with the purpose of stressing negative attitude. Nevertheless, it is present in the title “Trading orthodoxy in buggery is

not pro-western”. “Akhali Taoba” (new generation) # 356).

The same is evidenced in the second publication. Article is about prisoners’ conditions and institute of “thief in law” [head of criminal syndicate in factual control over the order in prisons]. Interesting fact to note is that respondent “recalls” homosexuality, as dangerous social deviation for the nation, while talking about robbery and drug dependency. This article

became of particular interest also due to the fact that respondent is Head of the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee Elene Tevdoradze. We are therefore quoting her in greater detail below:

"...our problems today, are unemployment, drug dependency, following the criminal tradition and changing orientation.

- What do you mean by changing orientation?

- I mean sexual orientation, certainly. To my opinion it is big misery when so many young people change their sexual orientation. If we do not take proper care of this, we might be facing a terrible catastrophe tomorrow.

- In your mind, what are the ways of combating the problem of changing sexual orientation?

- Those, who were born with this orientation, we cannot do anything about. But we all know perfectly well that many change orientation as they copy others. This awfulness is regarded fashionable for some reason. We shall not enable our youth to think about things like this. Mass change of sexual orientation could be more harmful than following criminal tradition." ("why does Georgian youth change sexual orientation?" "Akhali Taoba" (new generation) # 307)

Media analysis shows that 'nontraditional' sexuality is mentioned along social deviations (robbery, prostitution, drug dependency) and is discussed within a similar context (52%).

"Colonel Ms. Tsitso Kikalishvili expects that teenager killers will be added to the group of homeless-beggar-prostitute-homosexuals". "Akhali Taoba" (new generation) # 239; "Experts state that age of prostitutes is lowered in Georgia, and in boys there are signs of homosexuality". "Akhali Versia" (new version) # 167

This discourse strategy is aimed at portraying homosexuality as a threat. Two different phenomena are being related to each other through signification, so that the "threat" is artificially inflated and negative effect is intensified.

Another factor to consider is what kind of material is placed adjacent to that of homosexuality on the same page. In one case, two adjacent small pieces of information announce about factors causing cancer and opening of the website of Satanist group (Rezonansi # 213). In the other case, next to the title "Homosexuals – sick or pervert?" we see the small article about saint, who could cure illnesses ("Matrona – protector of the sick" Rezonansi # 177). In the third case, when ¾ of the page is devoted to the interview with trans sexual ("I was a boy by appearance and ideal woman from the inside") we see the big title for the rest of the page left – "make fun of your problems", describing laugh therapy methods (Rezonansi # 181).

According to Gregory Haereck, homosexuality, like gender is societal construct. "Being a homosexual means to play the role that society perceives as one for homosexual". By spreading myths on homo/bi/trans sexuality, media eventually adds to the reasons for stigmatization of people and prevents their integration into society.

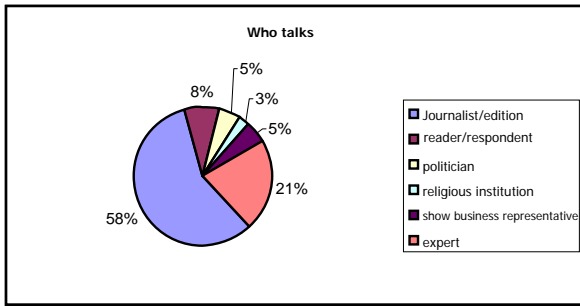
This study did not intend to include myths in categories of analysis. Though, as it was seen during the study, media approach is very standardized and can be easily categorized and included as a subject of future research and quantitative analysis. However, here we would rather limit to listing most popular myths and stereotypes spread by media:

- a) Homosexuality is destructing phenomenon that threatens the future of the country, is a precondition of demographic disaster;
- b) Number of homosexuals will increase if society does not speak up for the heterosexuality as of the only proper type of relationship;
- c) Georgian homosexuals change orientation mostly because of the fashion;
- d) Sexual experiment is dangerous. If one happens to have homosexual relationship at least once (even forcefully) will change sexual orientation;
- e) Homosexuality is sickness that can be treated through medical intervention;
- f) One can always identify gay and lesbian judging from outward appearance or manners. All gays are overemotional, impulsive men, with artificial voice and fake manners. According to the same logic, all lesbians are masculine looking women;
- g) There is a gay mafia in a show business and politics. This creates obstacles for career advancement of heterosexuals;
- h) All homosexuals practice improper lifestyle. There are no monogamous couples among them;
- i) Lesbians are women upset with men, or never had chance to meet a 'real' man.

'As it is commonly known'

According to Foucault, when we bring sex into the discourse, it matters who is talking, not only what they talk about. We have already discussed attitudes of politicians (5% of cases). Show business representative position can be summarized by phrase "they are accusing me in homosexuality, however, I am heterosexual indeed" (also 5% of cases). Position of the orthodox church (3%) is explicit. They will never forgive propagating this sin, though welcome repenting sinners to the bosom of church. In case of the two biggest groups journalist/edition (58%) and experts (21%) we will discuss this separately, as they seem to be creating the entire negative picture.

Legitimizing of the methods of assessment of the situation and reality created by the media is done in two ways. One of the methods is to appeal with an expert opinion. It is important to note that despite the fact that it is yellow press that touches on the issue (61%), it is social-political editions that refer to experts more frequently. According to S. Hall and C. Critcher, we need to understand two factors while analyzing relationship between experts and media. On one hand, media objectifies opinion of the concrete expert and generalizes it. On the other, media itself speaks on behalf of the public and adds credibility and authority to itself (media is the mirror of society). Consequently, experts and other official sources also relay on media's



prejudices as to the objective screening of public opinion.

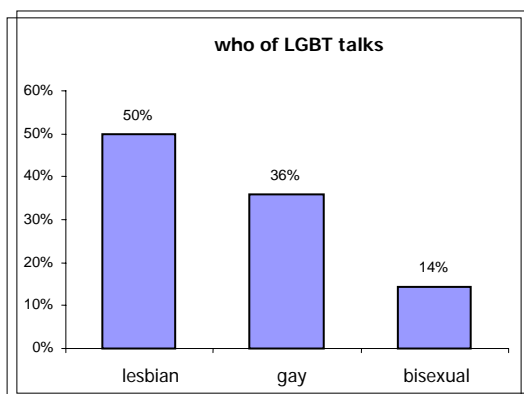
In general, during similar studies we define experts as separated group from other respondents. Sometimes, expert can be LGBT representative, politician etc. In order to have more comprehensive analysis we defined as experts: medical and other professionals (Psychologists, sexologists, venerologists). Emphasis was made on medical aspect of the issue to the extent that only debate that takes place on a larger scale is about to admit/deny homosexuality as sickness.

One more noticeable detail found during the study is that most popular expert for media is venerologist, who rather mentors the nation than talks based on concrete knowledge. This person is very fond of dramatizing and painting apocalyptic picture. It is rather paradoxical that head of the Skin and Venereology Scientific Research Institute, professional doctor opposes "sexual education" in higher grades at schools: "those Americans that were ousted from their own country because of their perversions, made up text books with questions and answers. Questions about sex, masturbation, lesbianism, and homosexuality were answered in such an interesting way that this would inevitably provoke interest of teenager to see all these in practice..." More than that, this expert examines homosexuality and prostitution in same context. When he speaks about country statistics, he always conducts selective typology. e.g. "survey showed that 58% of women were prostitutes and 30% of men homosexuals".

Perhaps, popularity of this particular expert in media can be explained by the fact that he always says what media expects to hear from him. In this case, media is not interested in showing objective reality, but justifying its own opinion referring to convenient experts.

Another important strategy often used by media is monopolization of the discourse. In articles written solely by journalists or containing journalists' analysis repeatedly appear statements such as "as it is commonly known...", "everywhere, in all countries..." In this way, discussion is being neutralized and own opinion is presented as the only accepted discourse.

Opportunity for self representation



According to Pierre Boordieu, censorship is connected to opportunity to express self, which is restricted or inaccessible to representatives of certain groups. There are no specific LGBT editions in Georgia (except one issue of online magazine, which is not accessible to wider public). Only opportunity is to speak through the yellow press. We can conclude that LGBT have very restricted chance to represent themselves in serious media editions in Georgia. About them and on their behalf everyone else is speaking: journalists, politicians, doctors, religious institutions, family members, random respondents ... everyone, who does not bother to discuss this issue. If we compare, LGBT themselves constitute only 21% of all respondents (among them 50% lesbians, 36% gay and 14% bisexual). Though it seems not a very low percentage, we need to consider that 35% of these interviews are published in erotic editions, the rest 65% in "Sarke" (mirror) magazine, that is a lead yellow press. During the study period, we could not trace any interview of article

with/by homo/bi/trans sexual person in any of the serious editions regarding the topic of our interest.

Conclusions

- What matters for social-political press is not showing homosexuality and problems within this context, but construction of 'nontraditional' sexuality as societal problem. Consequently they allocate more space for general talks about the issue through invited experts. They resort to monopolization of the discourse and in a limited doses give opportunity to LGBT to represent themselves;
- In analytical publications, non-heterosexual behavior is contemplated upon only in medical or religious aspects;
- By spreading certain myths on LGBT, media supplements to their stigmatization and prevents process of coming out and integration;
- Homophobia is not identified as societal problem;
- LGBTs are represented exclusively in yellow press. Most of respondents are shown from negative side. Consequently, images created by these media strengthen overall negative image of homosexuality.

Sexual self-identification, internalized homophobia and coming out problems (interview analysis)

On question about when they identified themselves as homosexuals, every respondent answers differently. Though, the tendency among male homosexuals identifying themselves in early age compared to women is present in these cases. This tendency is confirmed by the majority of scholars (Dank, 1971; Weinberg, 1978; Cass, 1979; Stanley, Wolfe, 1980).

Lesbian experience shows that, except two cases, all of them identified themselves pretty late, often after unsuccessful heterosexual experiences:

"I changed my orientation, and you know why? Cause I feared relationship with men. I once ended up brokenhearted and I could not afford ending up the same way again... I got convinced that women are able to understand each other better than a man and a woman. N.G. 25 years old."

"I thought I loved one very good looking man, who married another woman. Although, I never found myself in depression, still I was upset. Right then, I happen to become very close to friend of my sister. I was 24... Friendly feelings slowly grew to passion. We did not speed this process up. We just felt being together and we did not deny our feelings. Tata, 36."

"I hated men. Right then, I discovered that two women can also love each other, and not only spiritually... Perhaps there was always something masculine in me. And the circumstances were favorable... This discovery confused me first. It was like catastrophe. It felt like world split in two pieces and I was in between. However, I was in love, in a real one. Nata, 41."

"I have met Nina long time ago. We come from the same village, with same interests, and both of us divorced. Nina married earlier than me. We had friendly relationship. Once, she was late and decided to stay at my place. We talked all night. We even did not touch each other but in the morning we decided to divorce our husbands. We did not love them. We did not do quite a good job when decided on and the way we married. In few weeks since this talk, her husband died and I confessed that I was in love with her. I did not have any intention to hide this feeling. Nato, 25."

According to Stanley and Wolfe, regardless the fact that most lesbians identify their real orientation at early age, at that time, they tend to believe that this is only temporary phase in their lives (Stanley, Wolfe, 1980).

"... closeness of mine and her was neither planned, nor forceful or accidental – it was very natural, slightly surreal and surprisingly supreme... the first thing I thought about, when I woke up in the morning, was "My God, I am a lesbian for sure! I will never marry anybody, I will not give birth to a child... what would my mother think about this?!" Then, she woke up, smiled at me, kissed me on my nose and said to me: "It was fabulous, wasn't it?" I felt that we both changed a little... I would like to note that I am going to marry man and create a normal family. Iza, 26."

One gay man tells, how sexual assault in his childhood influenced definition of his orientation, which is of course not supported with any scientific evidence. It is interesting that this person considers his homosexuality as sickness and probably by emphasizing this, he tries to justify his "unnatural" behavior.

"I was 14, when this happened. My older relative in Kaspi town raped me and everything started since then. G.M. 50."

There are some respondents, who claim that they felt themselves different from early childhood, which is also less probable. In early childhood, child is exposed to heterosexual role modeling. Assumption that everybody is heterosexual almost inevitably makes child consider oneself heterosexual until reverse is proved (W. Masters., V. Johnson).

Respondents touch upon origins of homosexuality as well. Reasons that they refer to are many, such as: improper relationship between parents, hormonal disorder, negative sexual experience with person of opposite sex, etc.

"I had very feminine manners from very childhood. First I thought that this was happening because father died early and I was raised in female surroundings. But now I realize that even if father was alive it would have hardly helped the fact that I was born homosexual and literally did not have any masculine qualities. This is inherent by all means. Irakli, 24."

"Guess it is because of access hormones and the fact that I cannot engage in sexual intercourse with person of opposite sex is not my fault. It does affect me, cause I also want to be like majority. Nata, 28."

"-I had a very unpleasant life. When I was 16, one guy was in love with me, and I did not feel the same... He asked to marry him several times, but I would refuse. Once, when I refused again, he just raped me. After this, I hated men."

- Did you decide to become lesbian because you were raped?

- No, I did not decide. This was decided by itself, and was substantiated by my hatred toward men. Ana, 20"

"Because of father's aggressiveness, I always stayed with mother. I was watching her and following her example. I never tried to become like my father. David, 21."

Admitting self-sexuality does not necessarily mean getting used to it easily. Strictly defined gender roles and prejudice to the different sexuality in the heterosexual society, in most cases causes feeling of inferiority in homosexuals.

"I tired to get used to my wrong orientation. It was very hard, but I did this. Renewed attempt to become normal can bring me to suicide... I would not miss an attempt if I were sure that there is 100% guarantee that I will become normal. Nato, 28."

"We are not well treated by the nature and live hard lives. Many homosexuals do not realize this, but I am sure at some point they will also admit. David, 21."

"This is sickness, it cannot be treated and has to ruin your entire life... I attempted to abandon this path. Did not date anybody for one year, left for Russia, tried to resist, but when I drank, everything changed back. Sometimes, I say to myself that this is the time to finish everything but then something switches my mind back. G.M 50."

"I do not know what to do. I feel hatred and compassion towards myself. If I knew there was a medicine for this, I would take it and forget everything... I do not want to be part of small number of people, who are never understood, are always avoided, and ashamed of themselves. I do not want to be ashamed of myself. I am in love with the life... So, I want to be cured. Ana, 16."

In as few as three interviews did respondents consider themselves normal and did not suffer internal conflict. All three of them are lesbians of age 25, 36, and 41.

"- Lesbians, as well as gays, are considered sick by psychologists. What is your opinion on this?"

- Everything is conditional including being sick or healthy. I am what I am and I am pretty happy with this. Tata, 36”

“ First I sinned with woman out of curiosity or love, but I do not regret this. Do not get me as I was propagating lesbian love. Of course not, but I cannot say that it is in any way bad either. Nata, 41.”

“- meaning that you are happy with your orientation?

- to be honest, yes. (laughs). I have got a partner, with whom I feel very happy. We live together and have good understanding of each other. Nata, 25.”

Likewise getting used to own sexuality, “coming out of underground” is also lengthy and often painful process. Some had passed the barrier, while others are afraid of reactions by their parents and friends. They are deeply affected by inability to create “normal” family...

“I go crazy even by imagining that some one might learn about me. What can I expect then? Maybe stubbing and hell. If that girl learns about me, she will never look at me any more. I also feel bad about parents. If they learn that I am of this kind they will either commit suicide or kill me. Ana, 16.”

“I left my family and totally depend on myself. They know that I’ve got someone. Though, they have no idea, who this person is, of what sex. I do not maintain contact with them. Even if they learn about me, will not have right to interfere, as I am grown up person... I am not going to live with or get advise from people who want me to be thankful for giving birth to me. N.G. 25.”

“- Does anybody know about your sexual orientation?

- If you mean my daughter, she does and this is not a problem for her. About others’ opinion I do not really care. Nata, 41.”

“Psychologist was the first person I have ever told about this. This person conducted some courses to me after which I felt relieved a little. Irakli, 24.”

“I got used to the idea that I will never be able to create a family and live with man. If I do, I am sure that life will be very much strained. Nato, 28.”

“Nato (25): “I told my husband, who in turn told my father, and now you see that this is my home. I wait in the bar. Parents could not get rid off me completely and sometimes give me some money. But they have no desire to live together with me unless I “retain my mind”.

Nina (23): “My parents are guessing something, but they rather let this go. In this situation, I feel sorry for my younger brother. I don’t want him to know the truth. Me and Nato are dreaming of leaving for abroad, where we would not need to hide anything.”

“Sometimes, I hang it on study, sometimes, on absence of good guys. My father will kill me if he finds out. K. 28.”

According to Coleman, homosexual couples find it difficult to live together, as they do not have role models and society is judgmental. It is also rare that respondents talk about relationships. And it is very descriptive, when they do so.

(Most important is to be committed in lesbian love. If one is up to long term partnership, than she is not supposed to cheat on her partner. Me and N stayed together for four years. We would go to parties, cinema, theatre, hang out in parks... This was very romantic. N felt that I could give her more than any man would. Tata, 36.)

(I have got a partner, with whom I feel very happy. We live together and have good understanding of each other. Nata, 25.)

Only one respondent speaks about legitimizing partnership, however, only on surface.

(Georgian lesbians are also against of same sex marriages. “If we marry, I am sure we will be bashed or destroyed mentally”, - writes one girl. As long as she remains closeted, she does not feel discriminated. However, she is sure that it is way too early to speak about rights of sexual minorities. 13.10.2005)

Conclusion:

- 1) Phobia and hatred towards ‘different’ sexuality that exists in heterosexual society is well reflected in inferiority feelings among majority of homosexuals.
- 2) During representing themselves, they revert to homophobic terminology. Quite often, they themselves demonstrate homophobia towards themselves and other forms of sexual diversity.
- 3) Very small parts of their conversations are devoted to description of sexual/corporal experiences and partner relations.
- 4) Majority of interviewees are traumatized, lonely personalities or well concealed couples. They do not discuss coming out, existence of community, necessity of protection of their rights or legitimization of relationships. Majority of them prefers to remain closeted than to be politically active.