

International Psychoanalytic University

Bachelor Thesis: Emancipation of Highly Educated Women in
Georgia

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for the degree of Bachelor of Psychology

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Abstract

This study deals with the current topic of women emancipation in Georgia. We also reflected on the political implications of our position as foreign researchers. The country is experiencing a huge shift from a very orthodox, traditional cultural focus after the separation from the USSR to a more western-orientated, liberal society with the younger generation today. We chose to interview 11 women in Tbilisi, Georgia and thereby gather information about current attitudes on gender roles. The criteria for our sample was, that they had to be married 5 - 25 years and English speaking. The women we interviewed are 28 - 52 years old and do all have an academic background, which is why our study is called “Emancipation of highly educated women in Georgia”.

In analyzing the material, we considered our countertransference and also briefly described the historical and political background of Georgia in order to understand the Georgian identity. We focused on analyzing the family structure and the couple relationships in marriage to differ our findings from quantitative evaluations like the Gender Gap ranking and to get a deeper and psychological understanding of the state of the emancipation standards in Georgia.

Keywords: emancipation, Georgia, women, qualitative research, couple relationships

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Emancipation of Highly Educated Women in Georgia

Why study a culture through the lens of women's emancipation? Fair question. Isn't it already adopting an ideological point of view to begin a research? Sure, it is. We should not deny it. Especially in a country like Georgia where the position of women is key to the identity of the country, since early ages already. Rustaveli's 12th century poem, "the Knight in the Panther's skin", a specimen of Georgian secular poetry, celebrates the Georgian woman. Women at that time were engaged in politics as well as in the social and cultural life like former Queen Tamar (Baramidze & Gamezardashvili, 2001). A prominent Georgian icon, Mother of Georgia, a 20-meter-tall aluminum statue dressed in a Georgian national dress, symbolizes how important women are for the Georgian identity. It tells every visitor that women are very powerful. Powerful, be it as housewives dealing with the nurturing of the family, as mothers, or as the main flagship of the country's identity. Therefore, intending to grasp the emancipation issues in 2018 by interviewing eleven Georgian women as a research team coming from Germany means to *dig in the core of their flesh*.

It has become a wound, an open wound as men's attitude changed radically after the fall of the Soviet Union. The economic collapse shook up the country so deeply that many men lost their jobs, their prestige, their position in society and reacted by drinking, taking drugs and leaving a lot of responsibility on the women. Unfortunately, in many cases these men reacted by using violence to try to give the impression that they still have the power. Many women nowadays, however, with western influences, aren't as willing to put up with these conditions as the previous generations. There seems to be a change going on, which appeared to us as a gender war. The Centre for Social Studies (CSS) which hosted us in Tbilisi, helped gather the sample of the interviewees and let us have a room to conduct the interviews, is engaged in this war. The Center is linked to the I. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. It's main founder is Prof. Marine Chitashvili. The members of the CSS are all women, and the first interview we conducted was with their specialist on gender studies. The CSS members conducted studies on men's violence towards women and the submission of women pervasive throughout in the country with the help of European Commission funds. They interviewed the new generation in the hope of change and are right now working on work imbalance. In conducting this research in Georgia, we were part of their political involvement. This became very clear as we discovered the sample of the eleven women we were to interview, colleagues, relatives or friends of the CSS members. These women were all presented as "emancipated". They were academic women, having a job in a foundation

engaged in social studies, leadership or scientific research, sometimes with managerial positions. The proficiency in English was among the first criteria in selecting them. We had the strong feeling that our colleagues from the CSS added another criterion, the women were all somehow reflected on the topic of emancipation, or in the eyes of the CSS, maybe even emancipated. In Europe, emancipation of women is still ongoing. In a recent article in the weekly Spiegel magazine of March 2018, Heide Pfarr, former minister for women in Hessen and very engaged in the topic of emancipation, explains that most women she knows, even very much emancipated, don't manage a real equality in private relations (Hoffmann & Stuff, 2018, p.64).

Our interviewees were concerned about the possible non-representativeness of our sample. "We are untypical" as they always said. So, beyond the criteria of high-education and being all working women, they saw themselves as a relatively few emancipated ones in an otherwise traditional society. Defining themselves against the traditional model, which they took time to depict in the interviews, our Georgian participants were concerned about giving a clear picture of the Georgian society. Some of them were scientists or researchers and had the hope that a scientific research could help to change the perception of gender roles. We felt as they would unconsciously give us the mission to be part of the gender emancipation change process in Georgia. This responsibility felt very present during the twelve days spent in Georgia. "The personal is political" (Hanish, 1970) is a political argument from the 1960s students movement in Germany. It is the idea, that intimate manners, such as relationships or parenting should belong to political debates. We had this argument in mind and thought that, with analyzing intimate relationships, it would be the best approach to get a deep and comprehensive understanding of our topic.

We were aware that to many of our interviewees, we were considered authorities on emancipation because of our status as Western European citizens. As we conducted the interviews and reflect on their content off-line, this became more and more evident. As social psychologists with a psychoanalytic orientation, we think that family is the first lens through which people structure their comprehension of the society they live in. The interviewees often lacked a meta-analysis level to get out of this primary level of understanding. This is why our focus on couple relationships, which in this traditional context tells much about the family structure, was so decisive in our research. As the traditional family home is a multigenerational home including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, interviewing about couple relationships means also interviewing about the nucleus of Georgian society as it is perceived and lived. We got a view of an ongoing process on the transmission from

generation to generation of deep assimilated values and of the changes orchestrated by historical and political events. In studying the couple relationships, we could grasp contrasts and ambiguities linked to this evolving balance between tradition and emancipation. The very limited collective social system sustaining the structure with medical, employment or pension supporting systems makes the Georgian family structure still essential today for our interviewees, because the family is relied on for financial, logistical, and even psychological support. In the process of qualitative research as we conducted it, our first finding was that analyzing these interviews enabled us to grasp the Georgian culture in more general terms. Even if it is based on eleven interviewees of a selected sample, the coherence of their comments across all interviews as well as with general studies on gender roles in Georgia encouraged us to do so. The first goal of our research was to study the Georgian society under the lens of the family structure.

Yet, our focus did not stop there. We wanted to be more specific. Is it possible to grasp gender equality issues in the core of the society, that is in the couple relationships, especially in a country, where tradition seems to still accept the submission of women? It seemed to us that private relations should reflect where Georgia really stands. Already the first discussions with the Center of Social Studies about the sample criteria gave us a clue. Should we want to study couple relationships in a stage where they are already quite settled, that meant with already experience in long term relationships. We were told that then we should adopt as criteria that they should be married. This is a specific hint of Georgian culture, as apparently, there are officially no couples living together in Georgia outside of marriage. We then looked more closely at the couple relationships to get a picture of their emancipation in this specific context.

This had also consequences on our own subjective view as researchers, especially for the interviewer. Indeed, as we reflected the certain “political-socially engaged” angle in which we were invited to conduct this research, it was also important to reflect on our own subjective approach coming to Georgia. What kind of observers were we? Frédérique, French, 48 years old, was married at the age of 24 with a French husband and separated two years ago. Being herself a working mother, she observed couple relationships of friends, colleagues and relatives and grasped gender emancipation issues in France as well as in Germany, where she lived already ten years. As a woman interviewer, Frédérique was able to have a quite intimate relationship in the context of these questions with the women she interviewed. She felt how careful she had to be to stay as objective as possible while conducting the interviews, especially when a story, an example or a value statement reminded her of her own experience

or that of friends. As psychology students, especially psychoanalytically oriented students, we knew how the unconscious processes plays a key role in the conversation between the interviewer/interviewee relationship. This is why it is important to mention, that the recent separation of the interviewer after 25 years of couple relationship lead to much self-reflection on these topics. Being a working woman with management and consulting positions also led Frederique to reflect much on the topic of emancipation. David, 25 years old, was very engaged in gender issues themes in the former university where he studied Communication & Cultural Management. He founded an online magazine together with friends, that also addresses emancipation. Not directly involved in the interview relationship, his role in listening offline to the recorded interviews, as a man, was a good addition to Frédérique's point of view. He considered himself to be self-reflexive in his role as a man, a "modern man" in terms of emancipation. Therefore his opinion often was similar to Frédérique's, even though he was less emotionally connected with the topic. The research we present in this bachelor thesis is the result of our teamwork in the analysis of the interviews and the findings we present on the subject. Also important to mention are our two mentors, Prof. Dr. Dr. Kächele who, as a very experienced researcher in psychoanalysis, who also introduced us to the Georgian society. He was especially useful during a first trip six months before this bachelor study when he pushed us to dig for contrasts. Prof. Dr. Langer, a specialist in qualitative research through his experience of conducting research studies in different countries of the world like Iraq and Afghanistan, also made us accept the "political" engagement seen by our counterparts and our subjectivity in the conduct of the study.

1 Research Methodology

Qualitative Design

We used a qualitative method by interviewing eleven married women on their past and present couple interactions and the gender issues related to them. This presentation is meant to approach the subject of Georgian women without a particular theoretical approach. This type of qualitative research has been developed for example by L. D. Rennie as a way to conduct psychotherapy research. Yet, as he explains, such an approach was originally termed “grounded theory” by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 for qualitative sociology research. We were interested in the fact, that “the theory is developed in a bottom-up, inductive way, in which preconceptions about the topic of interests are put aside as much as possible, so that the resulting understanding or theory is closely tied to the data from which it is derived, or grounded.” (Rennie, 2006, p.61). So we did not have any hypothesis beforehand on what we would find in order to stay very open with the data we would gather.

Field of Research

As background information, the population of Georgia in 2014 comprised of 1.951 million women and 1.779 million men, as the government statistics published. (National Statistics of Georgia, 2015).

The object of our research is the point of view of highly-educated Georgian women on the matter of gender equality in long-lasting couple relationships and how they see the subject of women’s emancipation nowadays in Georgia. Highly-educated means that they have a University degree.

We conducted eleven in-depth interviews of one hour each. In order not to have the interpretive filter of a translator during the interview, we decided to conduct these interviews in English. This decision has pros and cons. It did not enable to conduct interviews of women who were not proficient in English, with less education or coming from rural regions of Georgia where they don’t have the opportunity to learn English and who speak either Russian or other local languages. Interpreters could also have had an understanding of the Georgian culture, but the information given by the women would have been mediated. As we were intending to ask about intimate matters, we wanted to avoid a triangulation in the interview relationship, as the psychoanalytic approach of therapy also avoids it. This enables to create trust in the relationship at the beginning of the interview and gives more possibilities to

analyze the emotions and reactions of both the interviewer as well as the interviewee in the interpretation of the results.

Sample Selection

In order to be interviewed, the women had to be from Georgia and living in Tbilisi. They had to be English speaking, which means in Georgia to have learnt English at a University level. They had therefore to be highly-educated with an academic background and in a relationship for more than five years and not more than 25 years. The 5 to 25 year timeframe was set in order to have a sample of interviewees in a limited generation and age, letting aside other variables linked to history and therefore enabling better comparisons between them on the subject of gender equality issues.

As we explained previously, the sampling was chosen by Prof. Marine Chitashvili from the Centre of Social Sciences in Tbilisi. She was very keen on helping us to conduct this research project after our first visit in October 2017, where we already had met her at the presentation of the Centre for Social Sciences about their report - National research on domestic violence against women in Georgia (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze & Chachanidze, 2010). Her main task was to select the sample of women we would interview and to organize the meetings. Prof. Chitashvili was careful about choosing women of different ages which would give us a full image of the last 25 years and the great turnaround since the independence of Georgia in 1991. To clarify the definition of relationship, when she suggested that the participants thus had to be married for at least 5 to 25 years, she explained that in Georgia, couples are considered as being married as soon as they live together. Only 9 were officially married but all were considered to be married according to widespread social customs. To gather the sample, Prof. Chitashvili and her colleagues of CSS opened step by step their professional or private network. At the beginning, we had only few interviews planned. As the first interviews went well, it became easier for them to open their network and complete the list of eleven participants. As we were working on an intimate subject, this felt that this was indeed a sign of trust towards our research process.

Interview Design

In order to cover all topics related to couple interactions described during the interviews, we researched theories or descriptions of this intimate exchange between two persons. To design the interview guide, we based ourselves on two theories, one from Niklas Luhmann, a social psychologist who wrote “die Liebe als Passion zur Codierung von

Intimität” (Luhmann, 2015) and one from the research team consisting of Reis from the University of Rochester and Shaver from the University of Colorado, who got well-known for their work on intimacy. (Reis & Shaver, 1988). Both elaborate on the decoding of intimate relationship.

The theory of intimacy of Reis und Shaver of 1988 describes precisely the intimacy process as an interpersonal process between person A and B in different steps: “The process begins when one person expresses personally, revealing feelings or information to another. It continues when the listener responds supportively and empathically. For an interaction to become intimate, the discloser must feel understood, validated, and cared for“ (Reis & Shaver, 1988, p.367). Reis & Shaver’s intimacy model “is intended to be transactional: intimacy occurs between two people, A and B, who influence each other's feelings and behavior over time.” (Reis & Shaver, 1988, p.375). They describe this process with 1. the expression of A’s motives, fears and goals, then 2. the impact of B’s motives and interpretive filter, 3. B's Response to A's Self-Expression and finally, to close the process, 4. A's Interpretive Filter and Reactions to B's Response. To test if the model was empirically sustainable to describe an intimate relationship, we suggested this model in a university psychology seminar on test construction before the beginning of the bachelor thesis in one of our to try to validate their model with the explorative construction of a questionnaire. Our approach was to identify six indicators and test if intimacy, as Reis & Shaver’s theory supposes, can be defined as an interpersonal process between two persons which implies mutual: 1. sharing of internal states, 2. existence of sexual attraction, 3. validation of one's own experience and feelings, 4. understanding, 5. sharing of desires, 6. sharing of phantasies and 7. sharing of anxiousness. In a first step, we tested this questionnaire online on a sample of 50 European participants (women as well as men, with no further filter). Participants had to think of an intimate relationship and evaluate it based on different items within these indicators. Our outcome was a very good reliability regarding this questionnaire with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.93 and an average Inter-Item Correlation of .312 (results unpublished). So, the questionnaire as a first version was reliable to describe an intimate relationship as a whole, whereas the different item correlation for each indicator was not so convincing. As it was only an exercise for a course, we did not work on a following version to improve it, to widen the sample or publish it. Yet, it showed that behind this model, participants could understand the process of intimacy they were experiencing. We did not enquire for any social or cultural interpretative filter influencing the intimate relationship. This is why we built our interview guide with the same subjects mentioned above.

We therefore designed a problem-focused interview with a semi-structured interview guide using the intimacy model of Reis and Shaver (1988). In the “open” modus of a semi-structured interview, the ability to express their feelings, wishes and anxieties were asked in relatively few, opened-questions. The interview started briefly with their biography and went then directly into the description of their relationship with their husband, beginning with an open question and moving onto more details: how they describe it and then asking for more details on how they express their feelings and worries, how they manage decision-making or conflicts in their relationship with some concrete examples. The interviewer also added additional questions during the interview that were not part of the guide but contributed in gaining a better view of their inner representations of relationships: their family model, coming from their own parents or the parents of their husband and the expectations they had on marriage before they met their future husband.

The last part of the interview was more focused on gender equality issues in couple relationships in Georgia and their appreciation of the society they lived in. As a last question, the interviewer asked what would stay in their mind from the interview. It was a tool to see what was important for them and what emotions the interview provoked.

Interview Procedure

The CSS made a room available for the interviewer for the whole period of her stay in Tbilisi (12 days, from the 15th to the 29th of March 2018 by Frédérique Legrain) to be able to conduct the interviews. Five interviews out of eleven were conducted at the workplace of the participants. The interviewer introduced the project with the information consent form, let the participants ask questions if they needed to and had them sign the consent form. They all agreed with the procedure, including the recording of the interview, and signed the participant consent form. The interviews were tape-recorded. The interviewer did not mention any biographical information, except of her being French and German and therefore not native in English, as she did not want to influence the interviewees with her own biography.

The use of the English language as the language used for the interviews is also important to mention in the experience as it was neither the native language of the interviewer nor of the interviewees. At the beginning of the interview, if they expressed concerns about using the English language where they may not be at ease, the interviewer would always assure them that both were using foreign languages and that they should therefore ease up, as there is no issue of speaking correctly. The interviewer had the feeling during the interview that it settled a kind of equality in this regard in the relationship, since as interviewer, she

sometimes also had to look for her words. As she did not have a translator or somebody available to explain the cultural meaning of a word, it reinforced the attitude of the interviewer as researcher without predefined assumptions. This is why she sometimes asked the interviewee about a word they were using, as the interviewer had not properly heard it because of their Georgian accent in English or because of an apparent specific meaning. This enabled us to sometimes not take for granted an information and the explanation on a word they used gave more information to the interviewer on the culture.

Ethical Committee

The project was presented to the Ethic Commission of the International Psychoanalytic University at the end of January 2018 and was accepted in March 2018. We had agreed with Prof. Chitashvili that the approval of the IPU commission would apply for the conduction of the interviews in Tbilisi as well. There were no financial agreements between CSS in Tbilisi and the International Psychoanalytic University in Berlin and between the researchers and the interviewees. The interviewer paid for her own costs to fly Georgia and her stay there.

Preparing the Data

We decided to transcribe five interviews - using the transcription program "F5" - to focus on the data we thought was most relevant and representative, as they were also representative of different ages. We pointed out the pauses in seconds and when there was a special moment as laughing or sighing. We attempted to transcribe the conversation as accurately as possible and therefore did not correct language, syntax, grammar or pronunciation.

We listened together to all records, exchanged on our thoughts, feelings and reflections on our experience during the listening and made notes of the important moments of the interviews. We also used the psychoanalytic technique of identifying our countertransference experience in order to better analyze how they really felt about a subject beyond their saying. The special moments we identified in the interviews which would bring interesting material for our analysis were then transcribed if they did not belong to the 5 transcripts we had already made.

Analysis of Interview Results

We took notes of our thoughts regularly during the period of listening to the audio files, to document how our understanding deepened with listening, talking together about it and writing the bachelor thesis. The interviewer also wrote a “journal” on her impressions after each of the interviews. We tried to make sure to stay close to the material of the interviews and used few theories to help us analyze their content, as we wanted to follow the model of an empirical qualitative study.

2 Georgian History and Gender roles

2.1 Georgian History

Georgian women understand themselves as part of a longstanding cultural tradition. Therefore, in order to better understand their words and their current realities, it is worth considering the history Georgian social roles and politics. The participants of our research were born between 1968 and 1991. The criteria was that they had to have been married for at least 5 to 25 years. Therefore, the historical background we will highlight about Georgia is rather focused on the last 50 years.

We identified three major phases in this period that help us better understand gender roles today. We focused on events that we think have had a huge impact on today's family models and examined under which circumstances emancipation - a concept that is described in more detail in the next chapter - is now debated in society. We identified the following three phases: During the Soviet Union, right after the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, and the ongoing societal debate in the last 10 years.

Georgia declared its independence on the 26th of May 1918, but was occupied by the Russian Red Army only three years later and incorporated into the Soviet Union. On the 9th of April 1991 – still before the collapse of the Soviet Union – Georgia declared its independence. However, the conflict with Russia is still ongoing today ; long-standing political conflicts over Georgian territory with Russia led to the Russo-Georgian War in 2008, with terrorist attacks and deaths on both sides.

After speaking to mostly ethnic Georgians, we, as researchers got the feeling that the tensions between Georgian and Russian ethnic groups are not resolved. Many claimed that most Georgians today dislike the Russian influence in their country and are proud of the very core of Georgian culture, which they would like to preserve. Some regions in the north of Georgia, like Abkhazia and South Ossetia seek separation from Georgia and their own independence or affiliation to Russia, which as we understood increases the perception of a threatened culture.

Throughout this investigation we got a picture of a strong Georgian identity as one which emerged in reaction to the many ethnic conflicts their people have faced. In fact, we would suggest this cultural disposition, which has recently been growing increasingly conservative, has taken on paranoid characteristics. Georgia has a long history of ethnic conflicts, including not only the recent Russian ones, even dating back to the invasion of the Mongolians in 1243. They also had many conflicts with Turkey and Iran throughout history.

The central location has been identified as a main reason for these invasions, as well as the religion.

Interviewee: I mean the location that we have, the influence, the culture, a lot we are surrounded by all muslim countries, basically except for Russia here and Armenia. (Interview 5, 00:39:16)

Because of this constant threat, it reinforced the strong autonomous identity that Georgia has always had. Its language is one of the oldest languages in the world and is not connected to any other linguistic group, just like its alphabet (Georgia Insight, 2018). Georgians today are still very proud of this uniqueness, which was also very important during Soviet occupation for preserving its identity. In addition, the women in the interviews showed great pride that Queen Tamar of Georgia, who reigned in Georgia from 1184 to 1213 was the first queen. At that time - quite interesting regarding our topic of emancipation - women were really “admired” as in the famous poem, “The Knight in the Panther’s Skin”. Queen Tamar commissioned her poet, Shota Rustaveli, to write a poem giving women an elevated status admired (Baramidze & Gamezardashvili, 1968, p.32). This supports the point made by many of our interviewees: that the very core identity and culture of Georgia goes back a very long time and is intertwined with deeply-rooted gender roles.

Interviewee: We are proud of our King Tamar and then we are proud that we had a women that was not a queen, but who was a king, so basically this equality was part of georgian culture. It’s not like only men would be kings. There were ruling queens who would erm be as equal as men. And also this poem that we have, the 12th century poem of Shota Rustaveli. There it’s also completely about gender equality and women are leading in that poem in everything. So women are main characters and they make key decisions. (Interview 5, 00:35:28)

As our interviewees told us, in this period after the independency where the traditional values from the Orthodox Church are revived, for these women, who seek for emancipation models, the poem is currently referred to as evidence that historically the Georgian culture had a more egalitarian approach towards questions regarding gender. In referring to this poem and Queen Tamar, they want to underline that these so-called traditional values don't belong to the Georgian identity. According to them, the important role of women has been forgotten and they want to revive it in this period of tension where the Church tries to reinvent traditional values to stress their position of submission of women. Indeed, the Orthodox Church regained much of its power after the independence of Georgia and imposed very normative traditional values. 84% of Georgians are Orthodox Christians (National Statistics

of Georgia, 2016, p.9). Studies such as the *National research on domestic violence against women in Georgia* report about this revival of, even “reinvented”, conservative family traditions (Chitashvili & al., 2010, p.15). A younger interviewee (28) explains more concretely how she experienced it:

Interviewee: there was then first president of Georgia who was then killed and there was other military forces.(...) By the period everything disappeared, there was no food and people were desperate. Everyone was, my mother was working in the university before, she stopped it and she was sawing (unun.) and selling them for example. And sometimes we didn't have money for the bus and we were walking to my grandmothers house which was far. It was quite ok by the time but it brought the disappearance of hope. This brought this underage marriages at that time, lack of education, no one had time for books by that time and the church had great power. In school, I hated that lesson, lesson of religion. It was not history of religion, it was like church in the classroom because we were burning candles. This is the philosophy where women should obey. (Interview 11, 55:47)

In the interview, she further explains, as many interviewees that the school system has not changed nowadays and still plays a huge counterpart in the emancipation process that is ongoing in Georgia today. They further explain how they are careful to make sure that their children will not be too much influenced by the traditional values preached by the public schools. And they try to compensate for the general discourse at home or look for rather modern private schools for their children.

Even if the shift to a more liberal culture does not yet have an impact on the school system, the interviewees told us that a lot has changed in the last ten years. That is why we identified this decade as the third phase for our work. The 28-30 year old interviewees would speak of the new generation, anyone that was even a few years younger than them, as if they themselves were old and living under the traditional model. They felt very removed and distant from the younger generation. We looked for political and social events which would confirm this change in the way of thinking around 2008/2010. The same ideals that our interviewees describe were echoed in the platform of the Georgian Dream Coalition, elected in 2012, whose goal was to promote democracy in Georgia and a European- and Euro-Atlantic integration reinforces this trend. As reported in the official Georgian document, *Reform in Georgia*, issued in October 2015, they signed an Association Agreement with the EU on 27 June 2014 and took measures to meet the European standards (Administration of Georgia, 2015, p.3). Furthermore, the document *Reform in Georgia* insists on their action plan to women's rights. It describes how to deal with the problems of gender stereotypes, the position of women in decision-making and the problems of domestic violence (p.3). A new

law regarding gender equality was already in place in 2010, which was supported by the United Nations Development Program Project (Chitashvili, Javakhishvili, Arutiunov, Tsuladze & Chachanidze, 2010, p.19). This law bans sexual discrimination and ensures equal access to education, the freedom of choice of a profession and professional promotion. It also envisions the equality of rights of spouses, equal obligations of women and men towards children. For the current government gender equality is a necessary element in the transition of Georgia to conform to European standards, with the purpose of entering the European Union.

2.2 Gender Issues

After examining the past historical events and taking into account the input provided through our various interviews with Georgian women from different age groups, we attempted to gain a clearer understanding of gender issues in today's society. As we have previously mentioned, the input we received from our interviewees was very similar across all interviews. They feel that the present ideals of society are holding women back from being fully emancipated, as there is this attempt to restore traditional roles. In one of the preliminary steps to study the current situation, the government mandated that several organisations issue official statistics to assess gender equality in Georgia. Research foundations received international support for conducting studies on gender issues (National Statistics of Georgia, 2015, p.3). The initiative stemmed from the Georgian government, which sought to comply to EU-standards (Administration of Georgia, 2015, p.3). The final report - the *National research on domestic violence against women in Georgia* - gives an important insight on the Soviet period of Georgia: “The lack of data on domestic violence as well as on women's issues is very much determined by the Soviet past – the issue of gender equality was solved by the Communist party officially and formally and there was no need to collect any data on social issues like gender-based violence and discrimination, as such injustices did “not exist” in the Soviet Union” (Chitashvili et al., 2010, p.15).

Each year, the World Economic Forum issues a *Gender Gap* ranking of 144 countries: In 2006, Georgia was ranked in the 54th position whereas in 2017, it had dropped to the 94th position (World Economic Forum, 2017, p.158). In view of the statistics, we can describe women's issues in Georgian society as follows: even on the level of higher education (tertiary education), the access to education is balanced between men and women: secondary education attainment rate is 91.4% for women and 92.3% for men, and tertiary education attainment rate for women is 29.8% and 30.6% for men (World Economic forum, 2017,

p.158). The proportion of women in Parliament is currently 11,4% (National Statistics of Georgia, 2015, p.62). Access to work is an important parameter for the measurement of gender equality as well. In 2014, the labor force consisted of 57% women and 77% men (National Statistics of Georgia, 2015, p.39). The wages are illustrated in the chart below. These factors are all taken into account in the *Gender Gap* scores.

in %	female	male
Unemployed adults	10.2	13.5
Discouraged job-seekers	27.4	72.3
High-skilled share of labour force	15.4	16.1
Contributing family workers	33.3	14.7
Own account workers	21.8	42.4
Mean monthly earning (1.000s, local currency)	0.6	1.0

Figure 1: Workforce participation (World Economic forum, 2017, p. 158)

In these statistics, the number of discouraged job-seekers is very high for males, 72,3%. A possible explanation, given by our interviewees, is located in their description of the independence from the Soviet Union as an economic crisis. Many lost their jobs and men turned to alcohol and drugs to escape from their problems. For example, one of our interviewee explains:

Interviewee: (5) in my age, it's easier to find job for women than for men

Interviewer:

Interviewee: and because they do nothing and they are lazy (l) traditional lazy.

Interviewer: traditional lazy, what does that mean, traditional lazy? That means from family, generation to generation?

Interviewee: yes, yes

Interviewer: it is normal to be lazy?

Interviewee: (l)

Interviewer: or what?

Interviewee: in, when I live in USSR, in Soviet, the women were at home and men work and women do everything at home, then in traditional, women do everything plus job and men do nothing and minus job

Interviewer: ok ah yes, what is new, they lost the job

Interviewee: yes

Interviewer: after the transition with soviet union, it is what you mean. But they didn't take a new role for that? They just give up the job.

Interviewee: it, for new generation, for younger people, I think it has changed maybe a bit, but for us, (I) not. (Interview 5, 00:24:33 to 00:25:59)

This period after the independence lasted around 10 years as our interviewees describe it and it seemed particularly difficult for men of that generation to get a job during that time. One interviewee, on the other hand, told us that those men who went into this depression phase after the downfall of the Soviet Union, were attractive to many women because they were seen as strong and manly.

Interviewee: Who would not be drinking or erm doing drugs even worse. And there are a lot of people who even do that. Actually this doing drugs and erm this is erm a bit romanticized in Georgia. So this type of men were erm, women loved this type of men, this is really weird. And I mean those who did not study and that was, you know the fashion that erm, those who would do drugs or I don't know had guns and erm a bit of a criminal authority type of guys, it was very in. (Interview 5, 00:14:46)

We picked up on another possible factor during our interview. They viewed the rising domestic violence as a reaction to this loss of prestige in society which produced a feeling of failure for these men in both society and personal relationships. The *Gender Gap* report states that 50% of all Georgian women will have experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner at some time in their life (World Economic Forum, 2017, p.158). Moreover, the power of men over women in the family is highlighted as a necessity for controlling women:

Besides physical, emotional, sexual and economic forms of violence, there are other forms which are grouped under the umbrella of acts of control. 35,9% of women reported having experienced acts intended to control their behavior by their husbands or partners. (Chitashvili & al., 2010, p.36)

The acts of control from men towards women take specific forms:

29.0% reported her partner tries to restrict her contact with her family
 11.6% reported her partner expects her to ask his permission before seeking health care for herself
 11.1% reported her partner gets angry if she speaks with another man
 5.5% reported her partner is often suspicious that she is unfaithful
 4.0% reported her partner tries to keep her from seeing her friends
 3.9% reported her partner ignores her and treats her indifferently
 3.8% reported she has given up/refused a job for money because her husband/partner did not want her to work
 2.4% of women reported her partner insists on knowing where she is at all times
 1.4% of women said her husband or partner prevented her from attending a meeting or participating in an organization. (Chitashvili & al., 2010, p. 37)

Yet, it seems that some women have accepted and integrated this imbalance in their relationship to their husband and want to let him have the control. One of the interviewee talks about her parents:

Interviewee: he is a physicist and he is living more than thirty years in Germany, in Switzerland and my mother is a germanist.

Interviewer: ok.

Interviewee: and she also lived in Germany. However, despite the fact, her personality is much weaker. And all the time she is asking an advice of my father. She has, she is afraid to make individual, her own decisions. She's not asking because she is for equality and for equal power but because she wants to give him all the decisions, because she wants to make him responsible for everything what's going on in our family, mostly. (Interview 1, 00:13:00 to 00:13:38)

She was talking about her mother's generation. The same attitude still holds true with the current generation. Other young interviewees also mention the same attitude as shown in the following interview:

Interviewee: at my home I had a little party for chatting (laughing), girls we are at my home. And we called to my girl to come and she said: I have to go at home to clean the floor and then I will come. We are surprised. Why today? Can you make it tomorrow? They are living alone, no mother, no children yet. But she cleaned the floor and then came. (Interview 4, 00:30:58)

This attitude is confirmed in more general studies: 50.7% of women think that a good wife obeys her husband even if she disagrees (Chitashvili & al., 2010, p.38).

2.3 Marriage as an Example of Traditional Social Institutions

By looking at marriage in Georgia today, we can identify how traditional mindsets continue to operate in today's society. As previously mentioned, when we established our research approach in preparation meetings to our Georgian colleagues, the specific definition we were using stipulated that participants had to be married for at least 5 to 25 years. This was surprising for us as researchers coming from Germany. From our point of view, it does tell a lot about the key role played by tradition in the couple relationships in Georgia, as interviewees report:

Interviewee: in Georgia, your end point is to get married, I knew that everyone sooner or later gets married, my experience outside of Georgia, Berlin, was the first person I met who said I don't want to get married. (Interview 2, 00:07:40)

Interviewee: erm, (1) no I knew that I would get married because erm, thanks to my family, because they were very traditional and I was expected to have family. (Interview 10, 10:05)

Women still get married quite early compared to other countries:

Average length of single life:	female 23.7	male 28.0
Proportion married by age 25:	female 47.9	male 21.7

(World Economic Forum, 2017, p.159)

The average age for marriage is much higher in Germany.

Average length of single life:	female 32.0	male 34.2
Proportion married by age 25:	female 6.5	male 2.3

(World Economic Forum, 2017, p.161)

23.7 years old is the average age of marriage in Georgia and this has not changed in recent years really. The interviewees also mentioned that often their husband was their first relationship. They also said that they did not have sex before meeting him but that they could have had boyfriends before. While many of our participants married older men - in average five to eight years - were often satisfied with the fact that their husband had previous experience.

Interviewee: he is older than me, 8 years older than me, we both knew what we wanted, it helped. (Interview 2, 00:04:46)

What became clear is that marriage is understood according to social understanding rather than a legal document. Even interviewees who were not legally married described themselves as married. What counts is the institution of marriage as social traditional model:

Interviewer: and why do you think this institution of marriage, for all the couples is so important that they stay together?

Interviewee: well, I have to mention the culture, traditions

Interviewer: you think it's tradition?

Interviewee: it is tradition. Yes, we are quite traditional society here. And we are in quite strict framework, still, implicitly maybe and it's kind of coming, its in genes and when kids are growing in this society, they learn this, it's coming with education, modeling, family, kindergarten, school, with all the conversations, it's coming by itself. But you know, to break this, it's not that easy, so the institution of marriage is really, I can't say it's old dated, outdated or whatever but you know, people are, I know couple who have together more than twenty years, we have friends, my first boyfriend I mentioned
#00:41:28-7#

Interviewer: ok

Interviewee: they are having two kids, they are married even longer than us and they, officially, they got married three years ago

Interviewer: ok

Interviewee: just because they need some papers for something

Interviewer: ok good

Interviewee: so they were not married official but they were running family like we did, so, you know, you can find that kind of couples but the majority of course, they are eager to fit in that cultural script I mention, it's kind of ought to be happened, in this time frame, in this age frame, in this way, that way, with all traditions, all rules, so it's not easy to take yourself out of the cultural context. (Interview 7, 00:40:28 to 00:42:13)

The way they describe themselves as being married without actually being married reveals the ability of the Georgian society to cope with strong traditional rules. This manner

of speaking creates a space in which personal paths can creep in the official model. This is actually done with humor:

Interviewer: ok, ok. All right. And so, about the...about yourself, the time before and the time you got married, can you tell me a bit, because I hear that in Georgia, marriage is a very important thing

Interviewee: not for me (I), not for me

Interviewer: not for you. Ok. (I) So

Interviewee: we are not married in juridical, how to say, in official

Interviewer: ah ok. You live together but you're not married as such. Ok, I understand. But do you say you are married or do you?

Interviewee: = I say I'm married.

Interviewer: ok, oh, yes.(I) Ok, that's fine.

(Interview 3, 48 years old, 00:14:28 to 00:14:54)

The interviewer had to laugh as she said "I say I'm married" with much confidence and no shame. Compared to other parts of the interview where she was very tense, this felt relaxed, even light hearted.

Our interviewees told us that they had the feeling that the coming generation who are now about 18 - 25, can live together without getting married easier. Our sample of married women did not have the feeling of belonging to this generation. This would mean that change is really recent and that it's not accessible for all.

Interviewee: I'm sure that people now, they don't have this issue. They can now (1) first move in together and they are not labeled as married. (Interview 2, 00:43:37)

2.4 The Question of the Patriarchal Family Model

The Georgian society is very often described as patriarchal. For example a recent article on a German radio show stated: "Zum anderen sei die konservative georgisch - orthodoxe Kirche sehr einflussreich und die Gesellschaft sehr patriarchal strukturiert." (Dornblüth, 2018). Does it just appear as a patriarchal system in the framework of the European standards, which tend now to be recently applied in the country? An answer starts to emerge if we even consider the place of living for young couples. If we look at the first

years of marriage, generally young couples live in the family household of one of their parents until they are able to buy their own home. There is no support for unemployment, no collective social security insurance except for specific cases. The percentage of households owning their own dwelling is 89% in Georgia (National Statistics of Georgia, 2015, p.37). The wages are so low that it takes years before they are able to buy their home and they end up going into debt because of the loans used to buy the home. This is confirmed by the statistics; the household is still multigenerational in more than 30% of all households (National Statistics of Georgia, 2015, p.38).

The multigenerational setting encourages the transmission of traditional values. Our interviewees report how this impacts their way of living on a day-to-day basis:

Interviewee: But i knew that it was something wrong. You know, you don't feel like you are in your own home, because it's their home. It's not yours. Yeah, there are a lot of things that you have to restrict yourself and this also has an impact on the relationship obviously. (Interview 2, 30 years old, 00:24:29)

Interviewee: now I remember everything from this period and it was very very good that erm, well it has its pros and cons when we were living with the family of my husband. Erm, (1) that stopped my husband to feel himself responsible for us, for his wife and child. He thought that why do you need me when you have my father, my mother at home and they can help you if you need to go out, leave your kids to my parents and they will be (1) happy to help you and you can leave. He was not acknowledging he had, because there was always somebody who could help us. Even buying products, his husband, his father was doing this. He had no responsibility to do anything. (Interview 10, 00:18:59)

So the family as a vehicle of traditional values, especially in the realm of Orthodox Christian values, is a core structure in Georgia, as one among many interviewees points out:

Interviewee: yeah you know church is a very, how to say, it's a country where we allow our traditions and allow our stereotypical gender imbalance, gender role, power imbalance and it is said that for example men should have more power, that men are more clever, there should be, hm, the place for a woman is, first of all, is family and she should care about the children, grow up the children and for man he should be the main breadwinner and main decision maker. (Interview 1, 00:07:00)

It is very interesting to think about why she considers the church to be a country. Of course it might have to do with her not being a native English speaker, but listening to the interview and having the given context, it was very clear that she knew what she was saying. For her, the church seems to be very external to Georgia, so different from Georgian law and Georgian culture. It might then furthermore have to do with the time of the Soviet Union,

during which there was no official religion. One could interpret her statement as her seeing the church's influence as a threat to the Georgian identity, when she says "it's a country where we allow our traditions and allow our stereotypical gender imbalance, gender role, power imbalance" (Interview 1, 00:07:00). She uses very negative adjectives to describe the way the church influences the culture.

Patriarchy, as most know the general definition, is "a social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; broadly : control by men of a disproportionately large share of power" (Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, 2018). Considering the identity of Georgia as we described it, could we not even speak of matriarchal features? Is the Georgian society so specific, that it represents a hybrid system? The interviewee Nr 9, 50 years old, gives us her clue:

Interviewee:.. when you come to Georgia, especially in Tbilisi, different city in the world have their own business card. For Rome it is Coliseum, for Paris this is Eiffel tower, for London this is Big Ben, for Tbilisi, this is mother of Georgia standing up on the hill. This country is about women. It's not shown very well. It's like hidden but this exists. It does not exclude violence against women. This also exist, the whole situation. This is total matriarchal. Every issue, every step, every movement, in family, this every step is made by women. But in Georgia, I don't know how, we have somehow managed to put on a front page man (I) he is everything but this is not the case. And this is not also very wise from the women to underline this position. Because, if you're not underlining, you will not get this resistance from the man. What, what are you talking about. So it should not be underlined. It should not be vividly put on his eyes, but this is the case.

Interviewer: it shouldn't be underlined that women actually decide a lot

Interviewee: they should be kept in a secret because it goes on its way very well.

Interviewer: so that's maybe a reason why...

Interviewee: we never had this, you know, women revolution. We just have rights. And we know. We know what we decide finally (I). It doesn't matter what the man say or the man will do. Finally, he will do what we want. (Interview 9, 00:46:19 to 00:51:22)

To understand the model explained by this interviewee, we turned ourselves to the psychoanalytic explanation of Jessica Benjamin (1988) about the construction of patriarchal constructions of gender: In her book the *Bonds of Love*, she analyzes and searches for the roots of patriarchy and the submission of women intertwined with it. She agrees with Freud's

analysis that links masculinity with desire and femininity with object of desires, but disagrees on its being unavoidable. For her this remains a psychological construction. She reminds us that “maternal identification is the initial orientation for children of both sexes. (...) Girls sustain the primary identification with the mother while boys must switch to an identification with the father.” (p. 90). Benjamin further explains that “the idealization of motherhood, which can be found in both anti-feminist and feminist cultural politics, is an attempt to redeem woman’s sphere of influence, the power of the apron strings.” (p.92). This seems to be typical of the historical Georgian position of the woman as the family nurturer and as the mother. For example, a younger interviewee, who sees herself as “emancipated” explains her inability to let her husband decide anything about their children.

Interviewee: when it comes to children, I am the dominant person, my husband doesn’t have that strict, I have more rules when it comes to children, he loves to spend time with them, I like to fix the rules for child raising, I think I have the role, he will call me to ask. (Interview 2, 00:29:18)

Even if she sees this as a personal trait of hers, as she explains that her mother has been working all through her life, following Jessica Benjamin, this does not change the deep integrated mother role she has inherited from her mother. Even in Western cultures, this deep integrated nurturing and mothering role is still very present. Working mothers in France or Germany, even if they accept to delegate parts of the child’s care to children’s structures or nannies, are still responsible for organizing the schedule of their children. They more often than before delegate parts of the tasks to their husband but an equal responsibility share is not yet at hand in most countries, as Auspurg, Iacovu and Nicoletti confirm (2017, p. 118). The fact that some women decide freely to stay at home and take care of the children would not be the proof of the contrary because of biology but because of psychological and social models still deep integrated. Recent social models which started in the Nordic states of Europe like Sweden tend to show how men can take over children care roles successfully, and in a fully collective organized system. This is for sure not the case in Georgia. Following Jessica Benjamin’s theory, this women’s proudness of their role as nurturer and mother, and therefore decision maker in these fields would still be a sign of a strong patriarchal model in Georgia.

We can identify the presence of the traditional model by the lack of sharing of household:

Interviewee: he hates to do the dishes, so I do it mainly, but he bought the washing machine (I), so it’s not a big issue. I also do the main washing, yes. (Interview 2, 00:29:58)

And interviewee 3:

Interviewer: ok and so maybe now we talk about the gender issues in Georgia. How would you describe it, the relationship between women and men. Is there equality or imbalance? In general, what is your view?

Interviewee: it's unbalanced of course

Interviewer: and why, or what is sign of imbalance for you?

Interviewee: (2) to say about us, I work all the day and he is with child when I come home I make some meal and wash something to do, he helps but it's not enough I think (I) and it's in my friends' family, it's worse situation. Wives work, they do everything what women do and some do what men do in traditional Georgia. (Interview 3, 00:21:42 to 00:22:52)

But didn't Georgia manage to build a balanced society between masculinity and femininity during the time of Queen Tamar? In Interview 5, we get an insight of one possible explanation:

Interviewee: so I think this is like, the way we have this now it's some erm version which has been misinterpreted a lot and maybe a mix of social and economic crisis and some frustration and everything together, I mean otherwise georgian values is not what you see in statistics. That's not georgian values. Like this complete violence and femicide is (1) something very distant from real (I) pure georgian values. It is that men are strong, but it is that they take care of women and they carry women in their hands, not like beat them and kill them. (Interview 5, 00:36:51)

Some of the interviewees state that the present gender issues are so present that they lead to a setback, a reverse movement in favor of men who more than ever have to establish their power in an arbitrary way. So Georgia may be in a hybrid system searching for a new identity. It is a strong conflict between a so-called patriarchal system resurrected by the orthodox church after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the women capacity in the Georgian culture to react in difficult times which led them to take over the lead in the family, even in breadwinning, during the last 25 years.

Could we go as far as claiming that there is a "gender war" right now in Georgia? This conflict is fought subtly within the families. In Georgia, the modern women know it best; they talk about it, but they can not really do much for the society. They try to change their own destiny, driven by the will to not live like their mothers' generation. The society itself doesn't seem to change fast enough. And if it doesn't change, then they can also only do so much.

3 Gender Equality Issues in Couple Relationships

3.1 A Sample referred to as “Emancipated”

We looked for general definitions of emancipation to make clear what we mean, when we talk about emancipation. We started with Karl Marx because his legacy influenced the Soviet period of Georgian culture. Marc Rupert synthesizes Marx's view of emancipation: "equal status of individual citizens in relation to the state, equality before the law, regardless of religion, property, or other 'private' characteristics of individual people"(as cited in Thoene, 2016, p.12). Other definitions are more generally described and fit our understanding of emancipation quite well: “Befreiung aus einem Zustand der Abhängigkeit; Selbständigkeit; Gleichstellung” (*Duden*, 2018). Another definition of “to emancipate” is: “to free from restraint, control, or the power of another; especially: to free from bondage” or as “to free from any controlling influence (such as traditional mores or beliefs)” (*Merriam-webster dictionary*, 2018). We are aware that those definitions describe an ideal state of equality that is maybe never to be achieved. However, even if it is not fully achievable, we are using the concept to measure to what degree the women in question are emancipated and meet these criteria.

In the introduction, we did not elude the fact that we felt that our research may involve an ideological dimension. As the Western values are looked up to in Georgia, researching gender equality issues is already a statement. This becomes really clear as we reflect on our sample of interviewees. The fact that we couldn’t control our sample is important to take into account in our analysis. These highly-educated women, all belonging to the professional or private network of CSS were all working women in research foundations, banks or digital companies. We had the feeling that the interviewees had a good level of reflection on the relevant topic as well as a good perception of the Georgian society, a perspective which we believe was influenced by their level of education. They were not randomly chosen but rather invited by a colleague, friend or a family member linked to a CSS member to participate in our research. When the interviewer had a room at CSS to conduct the interviews, the colleague kindly introduced the coming interview with the remark that “the coming person you will see is emancipated”. This happened for all interviews. We felt at the beginning of the time in Tbilisi that it could be because of the fact that they all worked and were showing their ability to reconcile career and family life. To analyze this, John Archer and Barbara Lloyd (2012) focused on the difference in perception of working women and non-working women:

Participants were asked to rate the traits associated with women and men whose occupations were not specified, and of women and men when they were labelled as either homemakers or full-time employees". "Thus, the important feature for assigning traits seems to be occupational role, rather than assumptions about the basic natures of men and women, which is what we would have expected from Lueptow et al.'s findings. Additional support for a link between stereotypic traits and the role of homemaker or full-time employee comes from an earlier study by Locksley and Colten (1979), who found that trait descriptions of 'woman' and 'housewife' were similar, but differed from those for 'career woman', which were more instrumental. (Archer & Lloyd, 2012, p.24)

This could explain the strong motivation of all our academic women to have a good career. It was overemphasized to such a degree that we felt they might be trying to hide something. As we were analyzing more and more, we understood that they were very much aware of the fact that they are not as emancipated as they would like to be and that they were not as emancipated as most women are in western countries. They feel this and they know that the reason is mostly that they face so many burdens in their country with the orthodox church having such a huge influence, the men unable to provide economic care, prone to substance abuse, having low feelings of self-worth for decades and then getting aggressive out of frustration with their own lives. These women have to carry all this. They are proud of how far they have come in such a challenging environment. That is why they as a group present themselves as more emancipated as they really are and compare themselves with others which are not emancipated as much. We were not able to check how they would define emancipation, as we did not ask in the interview guide, which could have been interesting.

3.2 Interpersonal Process in Partner Relationships

Our focus on couple relationships and the level of gender equality in this regard was key for us in order to go beyond the general criteria of the World Economic Forum (2017) we already mentioned on work and education. Interviewing on such intimate relationships, we thought that it would allow us to better assess how "emancipated", in the sense of the general definitions we mentioned previously, they really felt.

Interviewer: and your relationship to your husband, how do you share the workload at home?

Interviewee: well yeah, I think my family is very unrepresentative in that sense, because I'm also not a typical Georgian woman. You know?

Interviewer: yeah, if you went abroad and etc.

Interviewee: and etc. And also erm I earn at, at the moment more than my husband does.

Interviewer: ok.

Interviewee: this could also be sometimes a problem. If you are, if you become too bossy, I don't know. This is the human nature. Because you have this feeling that you are earning more and you are (I) more important. But without that, even my husband is also not a typical Georgian I would say, because he takes care of erm (1) our son. Actually I was abroad for six months, I just came back. I did my PHD visit in Sweden and I took my son with me, but then I sent him back for two months. For the last two months I was alone and he took care of him completely and erm, he was cleaning and cooking and whatever. They also usually go on a vacation alone if I don't have a day off, which is also very untypical, that the father takes the son alone on vacation. (Interview 5, 00:06:38 to 00:07:50)

But this emancipated relationship is not the case for all of our interviewees. As we have shown earlier, interviewee 2 for example, a bit younger as our previous interviewee, has difficulties in sharing maternal activities, like taking care of the kids, with her husband. Gender roles, such as motherhood are deeply integrated in the inner representations of women and also of men: she sees the risk that the idealization of motherhood “pursues this end by idealizing women's desexualization and lack of agency” (Benjamin, 1988, p. 92).

Our hope was therefore that, in studying intimate relationships, we would be able to better assess how far women can develop a balanced relationship with their husband, without the frame of traditional gender roles ruling most of the relationship.

For Luhmann (2015), what is to be communicated to the other, is the fact of making one-self subject of the communication and communicate what he calls one's “Weltentwurf”: “der Einzelne muß nicht nur in dem, was er selbst ist, er muß auch in dem, was er selbst sieht, Resonanz finden können” (p.18). An important aspect of communication in relationships is taking into account both aspects: who the person is as self and also how they design their world. In doing this, two partners will build through differentiation a common private world, that allows to integrate the world of the other (p.18). Luhmann asks if balance than exists between “Erleben” and “Handeln”: “Das Besondere (und wenn man will: das Tragische) der Liebe liegt in dieser Asymmetrie, in der Notwendigkeit auf Erleben mit Handeln zu antworten.” (p. 26). Luhmann sees therefore the difficulty of having to confirm or decline the egocentric “Weltentwurf” of the other. He further says that, “Liebe besagt: dem anderen zu ermöglichen, etwas zu geben dadurch, dass er so ist, wie er ist“ (p. 30). Taking Luhmann's concept, we went on to ask ourselves if our interviewees are able to express their “Weltentwurf” to their husbands, have it accepted and validated by them. Or do their husbands expect from them to be in a gender role, for example by expecting them to care of

the family? Luhmann describes how intimate relationships can unfold. He relates it at a historical time, the end of the 18.th century, in his book where Europe was especially driven by traditional values and shows how this new code of interpersonal interpenetration was a way of getting out of this traditional model of relationship in marriages. Reis & Shaver (1988) go in the same direction when they claim that “people generally choose to interact with others who are likely to confirm their views of themselves and the world” (p.381). This is why we asked our interviewees a lot about their fears, wishes and hopes, whether they are able to express this towards their husband and whether he takes this into account. Are these women able to build a common private world with their husband without predefined gender roles? In order to more closely consider this question, we looked closer into the interviews. Interviewee 1 describes how difficult it is with the influences of the traditional model:

Interviewee: but still this cultural attitude still works and still have influence on you, especially when you are young and especially when you try to build your own family and sometimes the problem was exactly in that case, he tried to be more the main decision maker for example

Interviewer: hm.

Interviewee: and when I ask him why are you doing your own decisions, why don't we talk about this issue, he sometimes was exactly as a stereotypical way, you know I'm a man in the family so I have to do it, but then I understand that he had more responsibility. He felt that he is more responsible to take care, to be a breadwinner, to have everything perfect in the family and that's why he thought that he should be more active, he should do more thing than I. (Interview 1 00:07:37 to 00:08:22)

Reis & Shaver (1988) described this as being an interpretive filter influencing the interpersonal process between a person A and a person B. The interpretive filter of the Georgian women may therefore be the social and cultural view of gender equality or emancipation they built for themselves by taking into account their readings and liberal online media. The interview 1 we quoted before is interesting because she describes the interpretive filter of her husband at the beginning of their relationship as one based on the traditional model and the assignment of gender roles.

John Archer and Barbara Lloyd (2012) in their review *Sex and Gender* searched for theories on stereotypes, attitudes and personal attributes and mentioned a study by Eagly and Steffen (1984) that: “Gender stereotypic traits were linked in people’s thinking with men’s and women’s traditional societal roles” (p.24). Our interviewee 1 describes how this Georgian stereotype influences men’s traits:

Interviewee: because he was not able to understand and it's a big problem in Georgia, because of all these stereotypes and gender role division. A priori, men have opinion, everything they do is right, everything they think is right and they know better. (Interview 1, 00:39:32)

This is why, for our interview 1, as she further on explains in the interview, she initiated the change process at the level of the interpretive filter in the interpersonal process with her husband. She invested a lot of time in reading gender studies, also for her job, and convinced him step by step to change his point of view. According to her point of view, she managed to change his interpretive filter.

Interviewee: and now he understands that he won't lose this power, because it's not about having power as a really Georgian man, but it's about having your own individual agency. (Interview 1, 00:16:25)

3.3 Level of Emancipation in Partner Relationships of our Sample of Georgian Women

As our interviewees all have a high education, it is interesting to point out the effect it may have on their relationships. Chitavili & al. (2010) found that among the 44.9% of Georgian women who believe that it is important for a man to show his wife or partner who the boss in the family is, accounting for education makes a big difference: with no education, 65.7% of women agree; With an incomplete secondary education, 53.4% agree, with a complete secondary education 52.7% agree, with a technical education 48.6% agree and with higher education only 36.1 % of women agree with the statement (p. 38). As we explained the limitations of this sample belonging to an informal network of “emancipated” women, our sample of participants belongs to that fraction of higher-educated women not agreeing with the statement. In analyzing the interviews, we tense the feeling that they all adopt a non-conformist attitude on the traditional Georgian society. Our participants very often used phrases like: “I'm not typical” or “my husband in not typical for the Georgian man”. Origins of such a non-conformist attitude differ. Many of our interviewees have spent time in other countries (Interviewee 5, 10, 11,6,7, 8 and 9) and describe the impact it had on them, for example interview 5:

Interviewee: I lived in the US and it's changed my mentality completely. When I went to the US I thought differently about many things including like different races, different religions. So I was very close-minded. So all I saw was white orthodox Georgian people (I). (Interview 5, 00:17:28)

They no longer accept the traditional role model of housekeeping, as they also want to have a successful career and are striving for much more self-realisation in life. Some had a very bad parental role model at home, with a father drinking and practicing violence towards their mother (interview 5). These women refused to live like their parents did and were therefore open to the western idea of emancipation. Others did have a good parental role model, but were still raised with very traditional values with typical gender roles. Those women's drive was to go a step further and with the influence of western ideology in Georgia to try to be a part of the new movement (interview 1, interview 8, interview 2, interview 10). We could also feel this motivation they had to be more equal than their parents in the definition they often gave of themselves as “strong women”. They often used the wording “my position” to evaluate their power in decision-making processes with their husband. It seemed to reveal the necessity to stress it. For example, the wording was used by a 44 years old woman, (interview 7) who described the process of discussing the future orientation of their 19 years old daughter with her husband. They talked about whether she should apply to US universities the present year or the coming year to improve her chances to be accepted. The interviewee described that each family member had a different opinion over many months:

Interviewee: it wasn't fight like a fight, but we had this, this decision still. I'm holding still the position. Why not, let's her experience this no and proceed in this no. Let's reflect her on that no. (Interview 7, 00:13:51)

And then further on, the interviewer tried to better understand the way she handles conflicts in her relationship:

Interviewee: so if you compare, asked ten years ago, fifteen years ago? Now, we compromised both sides more in the past.

Interviewer: ok, interesting.

Interviewee: yes. So you know, I don't know why I never thought about that, but I (unun.) meant to stay on my position more and more and more. (I)

Interviewer: hum.

Interviewee: but it depends, it really depends, he has the tough position time to time and it depends on the subject.

Interviewer: yes, but then, still as a woman? Where do you see, so you say, you developed your position and you stand to you positions.

Interviewee: not because I'm a woman.

Interviewer: I said not because of gender, as a person.

Interviewee: yeah, as a person, yeah you know, that was one of my problems from the beginning, I mean from teenage years, which I learnt to defend my position, to say no if I think no and speak up. That was one of the problems, when I started psychology major, that was one of our (unun.) mastered during my supervision, with X, she was my teacher and I learned to say no (unun.), but to stand but with time, it's more, it's easier and easier with time, especially in long time relationship, he knows me well but you know, to be honest, he is the one who compromises more than me.

Interviewer: ok.

Interviewee: yes.

Interviewer: hm hm and this, this saying no, does it have something to do with recognition of your position?

Interviewee: no, it's not only recognition of my position about others, it's about myself to stand, to stay in my framework, let's say. (Interview 7, 00:15:32 to 00:17:16)

The final goal could be that there would be no "social sex" as she explains:

Interviewee: well, we are good friends. Let's start with this. You know, that's a question I must quite often see. We're married almost twenty years and we have been dating before four years and knowing before that almost three years. It's really long time relationship. So, we're coming up to twenty, twenty-five years, a bit more. So we started as friends, so all our marriage-friendship relationship can we describe with the proposition, the proposal, like, he made a proposal, so he's told me several sentences and he is still keeping that promise that there will be no gender in our relationship, there will be only biological sex.

Interviewer: ok

Interviewee: so no gender roles, no these balancing of (unun.), you're a woman, I'm man, you have to do this, I have to do this. No, we are equal. That was his. So, in Georgian, it sounds more adequate, more nice but there will be no, the exact wording he told me, there will be no social sex between us.

Interviewer: ok

Interviewee: yes. He still keeps his promise. So we are good friends, good partners, lovers, keeping family, traveling together, raising kids, even working time to time. He has totally different occupation, totally different specialization, but we cross each other quite often and we live in harmony, let's say.

(Interview 7, 00:02:38 to 00:03:30)

This interviewee's ideas seem to parallel a concept introduced by Lynda A. King and Daniel W. King (1997) named sex-role egalitarianism. It was defined as an attitude that causes one to respond to another individual independently of the other individual's sex.

“The construct of sex-role egalitarianism is intended to reflect what King and King (1993) characterized as the “bidirectional” (p. 2) movement from traditional to nontraditional gender roles. That is, the construct subsumes both beliefs or judgments about the role behaviors of women and beliefs or judgments about the role behaviors of men.” (King & King, 1997, p.72).

An intimate relationship that has this attitude of sex-role egalitarianism, as described by interview 7 previously, seems to be very far from everyday reality in Georgia, even for western countries. In this example, even if she claims to have a relationship without “social sex”, in the counter-transference experienced by the interviewer this came across as if she was in a permanent fight to manage this equality. That stands for a wish for sex-role egalitarianism in her relationship. Other participants described this decision-making process differently:

Interviewer: in general, how would you describe your relationship to your husband?

Interviewee: ah. Sometimes, in different topics, we are opposite, opposite. But this is not the classical situation which happens in Georgia. I have my own voice so I can argue and stay to my point of view. So we can make discussion and generally I'm staying with my position but it doesn't mean that it's something like a conflict or etc. in the family, no. Normally it's a discussion. Each of one can stay with its own position. (Interview 8, 00:02:33 to 00:03:16)

All along this interview, we got the feeling that she refuses any emotions in her relationship. Later on in this interview it becomes very clear that they communicate only on a very cognitive level. The woman seems to be uncertain of how she could get more emancipated within the relationship and is unable to communicate her desires on an emotional level. So she is not able to communicate her “Weltentwurf” and to have it validated from her husband.

On the other hand, in analyzing the interviews, we sometimes also had the counter-transference of oppressed women in a relationship-status, from which they can not get out. For example, interviewee 3, 48 years old, is suffering from the oppressed relationship she has with her husband. She always had the goal of independence, moved in with a classmate at the age of 38 she had not seen for 20 years and told everyone that they married and got a baby at the age of 46. Her husband seems to belong to what our participants describe as the ‘lost’ generation – those who suffered from the collapse after the Soviet Union and who lost their jobs and prestige:

Interviewee: no, no, I talk erm about it. He was angry. I thought that he was angry in general, maybe it was something, not my fault, but it depends it on me how to (1) look in, at his behave and as I was erm very emotional, I thought that he (2) behaved not very good (1). He (1) spoke loudly sometimes and (3) he teached how to be with the child (1)

Interviewer: hmhm.

Interviewee: and I did not like it.

Interviewer: do you think it's a man's thing or it's more a personality thing?

Interviewee: I think it's a personality thing. (Interview 3, 00:10:34 to 00:10:48)

Later, she explains how she regularly gives up in the decision-making process:

Interviewee: because, and some decisions, and I agree, sometimes I don't think that he is right but I agree because it maybe about what (3) like about little things, about what to (4) wear this thing or something I like, this kind of decisions and (Interview 3, 00:12:41)

She has very long pauses, where it was clear to see that she is doubting her own words. She says that she is independent, but then sometimes one can notice that she is very uncertain. She then says that she wants change in the society, because she does not to manage to change her own life in that way. She says that this reaction of her husband “is a personality thing” but wants society to change and makes general statements about the laziness of this generation of men who lost their jobs avec the fall of the Soviet Union. For us it seems to be a mix of both. As psychologists we know, that people react differently to environmental changes, but it is very much a consequence of the fall of the Soviet Union, because it really, on a very substantial level, changed the life of Georgians very much and affected men the most.

One participant is a good example of a relationship which started in a traditional model and developed herself more in the sense of Luhmann's interpenetration. Interview 10 explains that when she met her husband, she was not really in love, used to be influenced by traditional values. They lived 5 years with the parents in a multigenerational household. Her husband did not do anything in the household or to take care of their child. It's only when they moved in their own apartment that they started to talk, sometimes night long, about their couple relationship. They both expressed their wishes and anxieties and worked to build a new private world where they would feel good.

3.4 Sex

On the topic of sex relationship, it was difficult to get any precise answers of our participants. We had positioned the question at the end of the interview guide, as it seemed to us that it is the most intimate question on their relationship. They described their relationship with their husband during the whole interview, mostly based on the attitude of "positioning" themselves towards their husbands, using arguments, compromising and not showing many emotions. It therefore felt for the interviewer very inappropriate to ask this question on their sex relationship. To answer the questions, they mostly spoke in general about sex in society, or what their friends say about it and then sometimes dared to say if they had sex or not, and for some of them said if they have good sex or not.

Interviewee: it's a, in terms of perspective of equality in Georgia, I would say more broadly and then I will switch to my private example, it's a very big problem, because this is a topic, it's not talked about, it's a taboo, especially women sexual freedom, women sexual and reproductive not only health but also rights. Ok we have lot of (unun.) regarding reproductive rights.

Interviewer: we have lot of ?

Interviewee: reproductive health. Because, Georgian women are supposed to bear their children. But when we talk about sexual rights, my sexual desires for example as a woman, my sexual freedom, my sexual decisions, it's absolute taboo and in most experiences of couple, women don't know that they have to talk about their sexual experiences as well. They just have to say to their partner that you know, I don't like it or I like it. (Interview 1, 00:46:03 to 00:46:45)

The most self-aware women of our interviews, like psychologists or scientists in the field on gender issues, stated that they were able to express their feelings and wishes to their husband and refuse to have sex when they did not want to. This was surprising for us interviewers coming from western countries, because in our understanding of relationships,

this is a very basic agreement. In Georgia it seems to be something that is noteworthy, as if it would be special. One of the reasons is their inability to evaluate it is that they lack experience and most of them married the first man they had sex with. The study on domestic violence gives us background information: 16% of Georgian women think it is a wife's obligation to have sex with her husband even if she doesn't feel like it ; But the difference of attitude changes a lot with the level of education: 50% of the women with no education do agree, 12.9% with incomplete secondary education agree, 9.6% with complete secondary education, 8.1% with technical education and 5.4% with higher education (Chitashvili & al., 2010, page 39). Only one woman (interview 10) opened herself about her sex life and how she found out, coming from a very traditional family, that she could gain equality in this concern. It was her husband who was very liberally raised who helped her to be more confident and self-assured about sex. Otherwise sex seems to be a real taboo in Georgia.

Interviewee: I think a lot of things have changed for last eight years, but the decision of getting married came from my family. I was not, if my family has supported me and told me that erm ok, try to live with this guy and then decide if you want him or not. No, when my husband, my father found out that I was in love with somebody, there was a panic at home. For one week nobody was talking with me and I had big trouble and then, when he came to his conscious, he just started asking me: What is your plan for the future? What are you going to do? Are you going to erm, be and meet somebody outside and do not having any touches or something and is it ok for you? And it is not ok for our family. They pushed me to this decision

Interviewer: really pushy.

Interviewee: and if they haven't I think we could have lived together for some period and then we could have made decision to marry or what to do. Yes, so it's not right. And I always share this opinion with my friends. There are some of them who just erm, is very irritated with this command and erm they also have traditional families and they believe deeply that it's not ok.

Interviewer: even as women? As erm girlfriends?

Interviewee: yeah, no. They do not receive my commands and they are very frustrated. (l)

Interviewer: and why?

Interviewee: I don't know. How can I allow somebody to have sex with me without knowing his family or something like this? Or without having erm (3) well how can I say? We sign the paper the paper when we are getting married and also in the church we are erm (1) how can I say it? It's an traditional Georgian orthodox erm (2) when the priest erm let's you, unites you. I don't know what is it called? Ok,

ok. One is usually manner of getting married. Just signing papers and you are in marriage. And the second way erm, and we do both of them. We go to the church and we get married there. So without a pray of the priest I can not allow somebody to erm, to have sexual communication with me and so on, sexual relation.

Interviewer: yes ok.

Interviewee: so yeah, they erm explain it with faith and that our religion doesn't allow us to have sex without being married erm, yeah it is

Interviewer: = so it is erm (1) very strong moral? Erm.

Interviewee: yes I share this thing before getting married, but then I thought to myself, such a stupid thing I have done. Ok, it is very good and everything, I like everything, but if I didn't like this, what could I have done and I have to ruin everything or I couldn't have enough courage to ruin everything and being happy, so. It's not right. (Interview 10, 00:40:20 to 00:42:44)

3.5 Friendship

In a heavily disputed culture, why is friendship the word they use to describe their way to live the transition from a traditional model-orientated couple relationship to a more emancipated one?

Like we already mentioned, it was very striking how many of our interviewees described their relationship as a friendship. The first question of our interviews was always: "How would you describe your relationship in general terms?". Seven out of eleven interviews said something like: "First of all it is a big friendship," although they often had very different types of relationships. It came to our mind that western European married couples would not say such a thing, or at least not in the first sentences. In Germany, for example, it seems to be clear that a married couple is also good friends, at least if they are not in a fight, or about to break up. In the understanding of the interviewees, friendship is a necessity when it comes to married couples. It is described as the basic premise of the relationship.

Interviewee: erm, (2). First of all, we are friends, because he is very supportive. I cannot say the same thing about me erm, because I am more, erm I have more difficult nature. I need more support than I can share (1). (Interview 10,00:02:26-0)

Another interviewee describes how her partnership evolved:

Interviewee: so we started as friends, so all our marriage-friendship relationship can we describe with the proposition, the proposal, like, he made a proposal (Interview 7, 00:02:38-8)

She continues a few seconds later:

Interviewee: yes. He still keeps his promise. So we are good friends, good partners, lovers, keeping family, traveling together, raising kids, even working time to time. He has totally different occupation, totally different specialization, but we cross each other quite often and we live in harmony, let's say. (Interview 7, 00:03:30-1)

Two more examples also talk about friendship in the same way:

Interviewee: so, I would describe it as big friendship actually and as big love, as a (1) a partnership, as a, I don't know (.), in a very positive way. Of course, we have a lot of problems as well, I mean more basic problems but our friendship last for fourteen years because of the big friendship and because of respect. (Interview 1, 00:04:10-6)

Interviewee: erm (.), it's like something like friendship more than this equal relations and I don't (I), and I think that we are more friends than couple. (Interview 3, 00:01:45-7)

Friendship is a safe place. It is a relationship between two people, usually paired with equality. As we mentioned in the previous section, violence is a big issue in Georgian relationships. With analyzing the interviews, when the interviewees described their relationship more as a friendship then as a couple relationship, we got the impression, that they wanted to exclude violence and bigger confrontations from the picture.

Interviewee: so, I would describe it as big friendship actually and as big love, as a (1) a partnership, as a, I don't know, (.) in a very positive way. Of course, we have a lot of problems as well, I mean more basic problems but our friendship last for fourteen years because of the big friendship and because of respect. (Interview 1, 00:04:10)

And this grew from a friendship to a more balanced relationship

Interviewee: at first time, in twenties (I) it was difficult to respect each other's different and various opinion, you know, and there was lot of trouble and lot of (.) power misbalance (I) but with all these years we grew up and we understood that sometimes (laughs) we can struggle about this power imbalance but mostly we had this equality. (Interview 1, 00:06:10)

To come to a conclusion, traditional families were structured with strict social rules, gender roles and relationships were all about duties for living together. Couple relationships used to be defined in the frame of these rules. Friendship is for these women their way of describing a kind of idealization of equal relationships. In the interviews, they explain how they are able to talk about everything with their friends and describe the period before marriage with friends as a period of relative freedom. They were even able to have sex, although it was officially not allowed by their parents and the society in general.

Our analysis on a meta level is that the use of the word friendship is a sign of the transition from a traditional model to a new model which is not yet really defined. Following Luhmann (2015), “Die jeweilige Semantik der Liebe kann uns daher einen Zugang eröffnen zum Verständnis des Verhältnisses von Kommunikationsmedium und Gesellschaftsstruktur.” (p. 24), Georgians do not have concepts or the words to describe this shift. Or communication in partner relationship does not convey in itself these more elaborated levels of relationships. We checked with Georgian speaking people - friendship does not have a different meaning in the Georgian language than in English or German.

4 Discussion

4.1 Personal Reflection

At this point, it is interesting to reflect on the reaction of our team of researchers during the interviews and even afterwards, in listening or reflecting on the emancipation process. As Professor Langer mentioned in his work “The Research Vignette: Reflexive Writing as Interpretative Representation of Qualitative Inquiry”, it is important to keep in mind that in qualitative research, the researchers are interpretive filters themselves when conducting the interviews and when analyzing the outcomes.

“The research vignette provides the opportunity to conduct a psychoanalytically informed interpretation in which the presentation of findings is woven into a critical reflection of the interaction dynamic in the research encounter and substantiating theoretical considerations.” (Langer, 2016, p.1)

Frédérique strongly felt the tension these women are in, as she felt that she was in the same situation years ago in France. The wish to live an emancipated life, be professionally successful and free of the need to be the perfect mother, always being there for her kids but still being able to do things on her own were daily conflicts in everyday life. This model was also accepted and broadened by the neighborhood and the social structure she was living in. She was already unconventional and doing her best professionally, but the limits were there, the inability to really get out. She had to decide on an everyday basis that she will allow herself moments of freedom which the model, she felt, did not encompass. During the interviews, Frédérique felt empathy for these women, for example for the participant in interview 7 who said that they managed as couple very well to build a common world, being permanently aware that the model of marriage was not their model and could be stopped at any time. Frédérique, in her counter-transference felt much arrogance and confronted the interviewee with her absence of emotions when she described moments of interaction with her husband, as if everything during the interaction would be “calculated”. And this made the interviewer sometimes even feel some aggressiveness as this relationship was only a result of a rationality which lay behind the place of emotions in her life with her husband. So beyond the statement of this woman, Frédérique had the feeling that being “emancipated” meant having an attitude of control, having to cut off all emotions and becoming a kind of efficient machine where the everyday discussion enables the woman to perform a balanced relationship. The interviewer could feel this in interviewee 8 too. Love does not seem to have so much space any more when discussion entails only argumentations and compromise building. Sex did not seem to

be part of the intimate bond with their husband. The participant in interview 1 explained how she got her husband to accept the emancipation of women and get out of the traditional model. She describes a high political engagement with this subject which may lead to a kind of toughness in her interactions with her husband. As if all these women were proud to have won the battle over their husband.

Frédérique had a kind of nervous breakdown one day, at the end of the process, as it became clear for her that she had to acknowledge that, despite her wish to live an emancipated life in France, she had not managed to and felt not very far sometimes from these Georgian women with this everyday battle to be out of the model without escaping it. These strong emotions mirrored the feeling of failure to build something new in the relationship, not designed by of the institution of marriage. It reflected Frédérique's inner tension coming from the pressure of the ideal of emancipation and how "normal", as modern society demands it, it should be that there are no gender roles in the family life and the reality of much more ambiguous relationship to it. Frédérique experienced the limits she felt in herself as well in relation to the society. Being "strong" is indeed like being at a war and forgetting about emotions to concentrate on managing the best out of this contradiction. As Freud also mentions "Intellectualisierung" ist ein Abwehrmechanismus. Frédérique wondered where women then let go their femininity.

David experienced Frédérique's frustration of not being able to be totally emancipated, which reflects what the sample of the Georgian women we interviewed also experienced. Frederique, as mentioned in the introduction already, married her husband at the age of 24 and now separated 2 years ago. Her interpretive filter, so to say was, that she was very emotionally connected to the topic of emancipation, as her separation with her husband was a process of emancipation. She always described herself as an emancipated woman, but reflected throughout the work process, that the "social gender" did play a part in her marriage and that she was not as free as she always wanted to be. With Frédérique realising this in reflective talks with David about the material, David was able to be kind of a counterpart to Frédérique's emotionality and together, they were able to regulate Frédérique's emotion. That was important for analyzing the interviews and in separating one's own issues from those of the interviewees. David is 25 and has not been in such a serious or long relationship. He does have a very good role model in his parents, which have a very equal relationship. Reflecting and understanding his interpretative filter also helped to get a clearer picture of, to what degree the interpretations depended on the researchers experiences with the topic. David's emotions were not so closely attached to the interviewees, but rather directed towards the

system these women live in. He noticed that he was more angry with the church's influence on the traditional model, as he is very agnostic and always has been very sceptical when it comes to conventions and moral values from traditional bodies such as the church. In contrast to Frédérique, he thought more about the systemic burdens these women have to face and how those stand in the way of a more emancipated life. Frédérique more saw the difficulty within the family and the marriage itself.

These subjective experiences enabled us to feel and not only coldly analyze the tension entailed in the emancipation process such as the one these high-educated women experience.

4.2 Frontiers of Emancipation

Georgia is a very small country with four million inhabitants but it is a good example of a country at the frontier of different influences. Situated between Asia and Europe, Orthodox-, Christian- and Muslim religious values and different ethnicities. Georgia faces an openness to more liberal “western” values and on the other hand the revival of traditional values as well as the maintenance of the Georgian economic structure and the effects of modern globalization. We studied the effects of such tensions on a group of people - in this case high-educated women who through their English proficiency are more able to turn to outside influences and reflect on the state of their own country. Interview 5 describes very well how one woman comes to the limit of the Georgian society. Even if she had much international experience, she decided to go back to Georgia to build her life there and try to participate to the change process. She needed security, she needed to stay “the” perfect woman and therefore stay in the model. She now experiences her own limits to emancipation in not going over what society accepts.

Our qualitative approach dealing with very intimate topics enabled us to go beyond the general discourse on these tensions and explore the personal effect on the lives of our interviewees and how they deal with it. It's not easy. The political or sociological engagement to change the values or the system they evolve in seems to be their way of keeping hope. As we interviewed these women, we felt that this was not only a personal non-conformist attitude which allowed them to emancipate themselves from the traditional model.

Throughout this work we noticed that the forces working against women and the boundaries to what they can achieve are very strong in Georgia. These forces, be it the orthodox church or the traditional model represented by older generations also fight for their existence. The struggle is real. Women are not the only victims in this equation. The

normative traditional model tells men and women how to behave when it comes to marriage. Partner relationships are being defined by those forces. But if we speak of a gender war, the discussion happens on an argumentation level full of emotions, aggressiveness, feeling of submission or frustration or overplaying strong positions. Our qualitative approach to couple relationships enabled us to go over this level of social emotion. Surprisingly, we had the feeling that at this personal intimate level, the switching off of emotions was prevailing in order to install equal relationships.

The definitions of emancipation we've seen in Chapter 4 helped to get an understanding of emancipation which could also be described as an ideal, that probably no country in the world has achieved yet and one could wonder if it will ever be achieved. In Georgia the word emancipation, or an emancipated woman does seem to have a very different meaning, as we can see in our interviews. If one would compare it to Germany, it could be said, that in Germany a woman is considered emancipated when she is emancipated on all levels - such as for example social-, work-, relationship-, or private life. In Georgia, many would describe a woman as emancipated when she has a very good career, but is not emancipated in the sense of equally accepted in her relationship or marriage. In western countries like Germany, France or Sweden, the society seems to have a "higher" standard regarding emancipation.

4.3 Outlook

We had the sense of a very deep inner fight difficult to handle but with which only the "strongest", high-educated women, even with a psychological education for some of them, were able to manage it. We could imagine other women still staying in the other model; some of them give up, consciously or not, because it is too hard. This is where education can help and deep society changes can occur when led by political movements. Bigger groups like the new young generation, who, in number, can help to develop a collective movement encouraging a group, here women, to change also at their personal level.

After the downfall of the USSR, with Georgia being more open towards western influences, the actual people learned a different model - an alternative. This alternative is very free from regulations and has its focus on the individual and its rights. We feel that the "gender war" is far from its peak and that there will have to be other steps before it comes to a real change. How the "gender war" is going on now is a signal that the Georgian society is not yet ready to integrate this freedom - this vague definition with a lot of space for self-exploration - into their identity and their tradition. Having both a free-from-tradition-society

and a very religious- tradition-oriented society side by side in a small country like Georgia doesn't seem possible to us. It would split up the country. Georgia will have to form a new integrative society in the years to come that makes the impossible possible.

The younger generation is ready for this. They are travelling a lot, they look at western countries and feel that it is their time. But the actual power when it comes to decision making lies in systemic bodies, such as the government and the church. Those institutions have their own rules and morals and are only slowly accepting the change. In the end, it will take some more time for Georgian society cope with these demands.

As we already mentioned, within these tensions, we studied only one group amidst these tensions. There are other groups which also live in these tensions, with a different background, less educated women, women knowing only Georgia, living in Tbilisi or even in rural regions and of course also men. We noticed, while talking to other people about the topic of our research, that the change - that we labeled gender war - is going on all over the world. It can be seen in many western countries where it is a real political debate or in Eastern Europe, or African countries where the people look at the freedom that women do have in Western countries and try to get a piece for themselves.

Partner relationships, to stay in the metaphor, would then be the main battlefield of the gender war. One could argue that maybe politics, the society, the traditions or the question on how to adapt to globalization as a society are the main battlefields. From what we learned from our interviewees we have the strong feeling that it is shifting to couple relationships. They can encounter traditions and norms very differently. The new generation is courageous. In the past, societal change was more debated on a societal level. Philosopher and sociologists write about how they imagine a freer society and how they interpret the world. The 21st century is a more psychology one with a stronger focus on individual rights. Therefore, partnerships are the new field of emancipation debates.

As we understand it, emancipation is one of many changes that strives to create more freedom in this world and tries to end the suppression of minorities. It is not explicitly saying no to traditional values and to cultural principles that do have a good reason for existence. Emancipation just questions social conditions concerning relationships; that they cannot be unequal.

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Appendices

Appendice 1 - Interview guide

Interview guide of married Georgian women

60 minutes

Interview conducted in English

Tape-recorded

The aim of the interview is to interview Georgian married women on how you they perceive gender issues in your their past or present couple relationship. How do you they perceive the current transition from a traditional society model to having more equal rights. How do they perceive and representations of gender roles within a marriage?

Biography

Age, married since... (first or second or third marriage), academic degree, social and professional background and actual situation of both partners, kids, living place, relationship to family

Partner relationship – intimacy

How would you describe your relationship to with your husband?

What does means intimacy mean for you in your relationship to with your husband?

More precisely, how far deeply can you talk about your feelings and worries with your husband? About your personal interests and opinions?

Does he share his feelings and worries with you? His personal interests and opinions?

How far deeply can you express your desires? Your fears?

Does your husband take them into account?

Would you say that the relationship is balanced in this regard?

How much validation do you feel receive in your relationship of regarding your own personality, opinions, etc?

How would you describe in general the decision-making process in your couple between you and your husband?

How does your husband concretely impact the structure of your private, professional or friendship life? For example, would you say that your husband has a say in your contact with external persons (family, friends)? If yes, how does it express itself?

Let's talk about conflict situations. Give two concrete examples of a conflict situation (one simple, from the everyday life for example, and one complicated) illustrating your relationship to with your husband.

How would you explain/interpret where these conflicts come from or the way they happen?

Within intimate relationships is also sexual intercourse also a part of it?. Do you mind telling me more about it?

Is there still sexual attraction? Can you express your desires? Does your husband consider your desires?

Focus on gender equality (FL: to analyze the interpretive filter)

How would you see your relationship compared to others regarding gender equality?

How do you see gender equality in Georgia? In general? In your relationship with your husband?

Are they there commitments (legal, moral, cultural, history, family values) which arise from the cultural understanding of gender roles?

How free do you feel regarding these commitments?

Do you notice changes in the society?

How do these changes impact your view on your couple relationship now? In the future?

Give a concrete example of a change in your relationship illustrating this.

Conclusion

What will you keep in mind of from our interview?

Thank you very much...

Appendice 2 - Information Sheet for participants

International Psychoanalytic University (IPU)
Stromstrasse 1
10551 Berlin
Germany

Contact: Frédérique Legrain
Bachelor Student
E Mail: frederique.legrain@ipu-berlin.de

**Information sheet on the project “women image”
conducted in Georgia in March 2018**

This interview is designed to gather information on gender equality in intimate relationships of married couples in Georgia. It is done for the purpose of research and undertaken within the framework of the Bachelor thesis of IPU Psychology Bachelor students Frédérique Legrain and David Jansen in March 2018.

The interview will take approximately 1 hour 15 minutes. Most interviewees will find the discussion interesting and thought-provoking. If, however, you feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, you have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Ethical procedures for academic research undertaken from German institutions require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

Would you therefore read the following information sheet and then sign the participant consent form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced

- the transcript of the interview will be analyzed by Frédérique Legrain and David Jansen as research investigators
- access to the interview transcript will be limited to academic colleagues and researchers with whom they might collaborate as part of the research process
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed
- the actual recording will be kept safely for a period of 3 years and then destroyed
- your words may be quoted directly. The researchers may publish documents that contain quotations of yourself.
- All or part of the content of your interview may be used in academic papers, policy papers or news articles or other feedback events.

Appendice 3 - Participant consent form

International Psychoanalytic University
Stromstrasse 1
10551 Berlin
Germany

Contact: Frédérique Legrain
Bachelor Student
Email: frederique.legrain@ipu-berlin.de

Research Project “women image”
conducted in Georgia in March 2018

Participant consent form

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Frédérique Legrain and David Jansen, Bachelor students from the International Psychoanalytic University, Berlin.

I understand that the project is designed to gather information on gender equality in intimate relationships of married couples in Georgia. It is done for the purpose of research and undertaken within the framework of the Bachelor thesis of IPU Psychology Bachelor students Frédérique Legrain and David Jansen in March 2018.

I'm aware that the language used for the study is English and that I master well enough the English language to be able to understand the instructions and express myself freely to answer the questions of the interviewer. I don't suffer from a mental disorder and was not diagnosed as such in the last 5 years.

By signing this form I agree that:

- I have read the Information sheet.
- I have been able to ask any questions I might have.
- My participation in this project is voluntary.

- I understand that I will not be paid for my participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
- I understand that the interview will last approximately 1 hour 15 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview and subsequent dialogue will be made.
- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
- I agree that data gathered in this study may be stored securely, and may be used for future research. I understand that all written material will be kept separately from the tape recording in order to avoid possible further identification. The tape recording of the interview will be kept securely for a period of 3 years after the interview and then destroyed.
- I understand that this research study is currently being reviewed by the Ethical Committee of the International Psychoanalytic University, Berlin. There is no further review from Georgian Institutions.

I confirm that I have read and understand the Participant Consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions and had them answered.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

I understand my rights and agree to participate in the study. I will be handed a copy of this participant consent form.

Date, location

Name, Surname

Date of birth

Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that the bachelor thesis submitted is our own unaided work. All direct or indirect sources used are acknowledged as references.

I am aware that the thesis in digital form can be examined for the use of unauthorized aid and in order to determine whether the thesis as a whole or parts incorporated in it may be deemed as plagiarism.

This paper was not previously presented to another examination board and has not been published.

Berlin, the _____

Frédérique Legrain

David Jansen