International PhD Program in Gender Studies

Women's Political Participation During Democratic Transformation: The Case Of Georgia

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Abstract

Drawing on the case of Georgia, the present research is devoted to better understanding of women's political participation in developing democracies. While facing women's underrepresentation in politics in Georgia, and at the same time witnessing the increased opportunities for civic and political activism, the primary question that this dissertation aims to explore is why this is the case. More, concretely, what causes women's rather limited participation the national Parliament of Georgia? What are the internal party level characteristics as well as external factors that shape women's participation during the process of democratic transition? What is women's experience of membership of the Parliament? And how is women's representation implicated in the democratic transformation of the last decade in Georgia.

To answer these questions I have conducted in-depth interviews with women politicians (15) members of the last three Georgian Parliaments of 2004, 2008 and 2012. I have also interviewed experts (14) working with political parties on gender equality issues. In addition, I have worked on the secondary data sources that concern the transition period of Georgia and women's political participation. I applied grounded theory approach to draw empirical and theoretical discussion and conclusions and explore the aforementioned research questions.

My research, I believe, makes two critical contributions to the exciting body of research. First, the research argues that party level characteristics are main factors shaping women's representation in the Parliament as well as to less extend traditional perceptions and electoral system.

Secondly, by exploring women's experiences of being a member of the Parliament, I argue that despite new democratic practices, the spaces within political parties and the Parliament are gendered. Women Members of Parliament (MP) have to meet demands of

women's multiple roles, both as public figures and as caretakers of their families, as they are shaped by a strong influence of the cultural values and expectation towards women in the Georgian society. Considering the increased democratic rhetoric, I examine women in politics in Georgia in the context of democracy and state-citizenship debates in particular that the focus of my study is period since the Rose Revolution which in itself has been a non-violent and democratic event resulted into change of power after which concrete steps towards democratic development stared to emerge. While hopes for democracy had been high, I argue that in a developing democracy like Georgia links between women's participation and democracy aren't that strong and democracy is not translated into increased political representation of women. Women's potential and their right to participate in formal politics are not yet acknowledged in case of Georgia's democratic transition. Despite a development of framework gender equality policies, women's potential as full citizens has been largely ignored and seldom became an issue of wider public and political debates in Georgia.

Based on the findings, I argue that coordination regarding female political engagement is insufficient and the role of women's groups and political parties has to be pivotal in the relevant debates and discussions. In addition, the research also tries to propose ways forward for eliminating a gap in women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia and explores possible measures for addressing the issue in Georgia's socio-economic and political context.

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Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent move from socialism towards democracy brought considerable freedoms and opportunities as well as challenges to women in Georgia and in the entire Central and East Europe (CEE). While both women and men were affected by the upheavals of this transition, women were marginalized under the influence of new political and economic realities. Although, women found ways to adjust to these new realities, engaging with different roles and identities, there are many fields where women have been and continue to be particularly underrepresented. For example, women's representation and participation in formal politics, in political parties and in national parliament, women were remaining on the margins despite new political system and democratic developments. Georgia is not unique, unfortunately; similarly, in almost all CEE countries, the proportion of women in national parliaments has changed since the 1990s; in Georgia, in 2004 Parliament women's representation was 9,4%, in 2008 this figure fell to 6% and after 2012 women in Georgia's Parliament occupy 11% of the seats. Despite the hopes for gender sensitive multiparty inclusive political systems, women have been excluded from political party membership, decision-making, and lawmaking, while men held both power and leadership positions in political parties and as a result became in charge of the Georgian parliament.

This research aims to explore women's political participation in the Parliament during a decade of democratic transition of Georgia, from the Rose Revolution till 2012. In particular, this study aims to address the following questions: what are the factors that shape women's political representation in the Georgian Parliament? How do women experience being members of the Parliament? How is women's representation in the Parliament affected

by the democratic development of the country? And finally, what are the issues that should be address in order to overcome women's underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia?

While there is a substantial amount of literature written about women's participation in formal politics, most of the scholarship is focused on developed democracies; countries such as Georgia that are undergoing regime changes have not been subject to such analysis. In order to fill this gap, it was critical to conduct a study that specifically focuses on Georgia as it is transitioning toward democracy. Therefore, this study is unique as it provides analysis of factors that shape women's representation in the national legislative body, and explores experiences of women members of Parliament. Such an approach allows us to better understand women's political representation and participation. Moreover, such analysis also contribute to the discussion on democratic processes, citizenship, and women's formal political engagement, as links between these concepts and practices have not been thoroughly explored under the conditions of political transformation. The research draws attention to women's political participation as a social-political process in which many participants and factors interact. It also develops an understanding of the ways in which women experience politics.

Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with women MPs and experts in the fields of gender and politics, which were conducted for the purposes of this study, as well as on additional data sources, I argue that while women create new spaces for political activism by joining civil society groups, women are largely underrepresented in political parties and the Parliament. There is a complex variety of factors that determine women's participation in formal politics and contribute to the current the underrepresentation of women in the Parliament of Georgia: I discuss these in greater details in my empirical chapters. I argue that among a large variety of factors, party-level characteristics are of critical importance for women's representation in the Parliament and in political parties. In addition, the interplay

between political culture, traditional gender roles, and lack of intraparty democracy determines and limits women's participation in formal politics in Georgia.

Finally, my research show that woman MPs face challenges that are perpetuated by the lack of gender equality policies and great reluctance on the part of political parties to address this concern. While political parties have witnessed limited visibility of elected women in the national Parliament, there was a marked increase in the number of women engaged in civil society and political activism. Political parties have been showing little interest in promoting women candidates to be placed on the party or Parliament lists. This had only served to enforce the disparity between formal and informal participation of women in politics. This trend is a clear indication of the level of democratic development of the parties and the country and of the maturity of political parties. While democratic practices are becoming more deeply rooted in the Georgian society, nevertheless the new spaces of democracy remain gendered and continue to exclude women.

Therefore, this research presents the experiences of women members of political parties in the Georgian parliament. It analyzes the complex environment of political parties and the Parliament and shows how women's political identities contribute to the emergence of new political conversations. Becoming and being a member of the Parliament is a gendered experience. What's more, the democratic transition could not bring more women in formal politics and women are ignored as useful resources by political leadership and parties. While parties options for women to enter the Parliament, they face a number of challenges. I conclude that in order to address women's low representation in the Parliament, country's democratic development, readiness of political parties and of political leadership are pivotal to achieve progress.

The present study is divided into seven chapters.

In the first chapter, I review scholarship on women's political representation, state, citizenship, agency, and democracy. I unpack factors that shape women's representation in formal politics and I discuss the role of the state, its institutions and practices, as well as how these factors shape women's citizenship. Participation in public and political life challenges a passive understanding of citizenship and I explore the idea that engaging ones agency is a critical step in claiming active citizenship. Finally, since the focus of this research is on a democratic transition of Georgia, I unpack the notion of democracy. I am interested in understanding how democracy can be experienced in the countries, which are undergoing a fundamental political and economic regime change.

The second chapter of the study is devoted to the explanations of methodology and methods used. In this chapter I describe in detail the ground theory, a method that I have chosen for gathering data and answering my main research questions. I explain how I have designed my research, how I have chosen my sample, and how I use the grounded theory as a basis for developing my analysis.

The third chapter provides a background on the democratic transition in Georgia. It relies primarily on secondary data sources and presents how Georgia has been gendered since gaining independence. While it displays the gendered character of the transition, the third chapter also provides contextual information about female political engagement during the last two decades in Georgia, as well as provides further gender analysis of political parties and elections that is helpful for building background and context for analysis.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters are the primary empirical chapters. In these chapters, I discuss the findings from the conducted research (face-to face interviews with women MPs and experts). The fourth chapter includes analysis of the factors shaping women's political representation in the Parliament, including party level characteristics as

major factors shaping women's representation in the Parliament as well as electoral system and cultural-psychological factors.

The fifth chapter analyzes what it means to be a woman MP and how gendered is membership in the Parliament. This chapter also identifies roles and duties women perform and attitudes women experience in a male-dominated environment such as a national legislative body, the Parliament.

The sixth chapter focuses on democracy and citizenship interpretation of women's political participation. It reveals how female political participation is implicated in the democratic context and what are the links between women's political participation and democracy in case o Georgia's democratic transformation.

In the seventh chapter, I analyze the opinions of my respondents in regard to addressing low female political representation in the Parliament. I also identify main players and mechanisms for effective coordination for increased female political representation. The analysis draws ways for moving forward and for overcoming women's low representation in the Parliament of Georgia.

In the final chapter, I provide summary and deliver main conclusions of the research. Therefore, I bring together questions, findings, and analysis of the research in which I largely show how women are underrepresented in the Parliament of Georgia through influence of a number of interrelated factors, like party level, electoral systems, and subjugation of women based on traditional gender roles.

Chapter 1: Literature Review

The focus of the present study is to explore the factors that shape women's political participation, and to analyze the experiences of female politicians during the democratic state building process. In this chapter, I will examine scholarly contributions and writing regarding women's political participation. While there are three main bodies of literature on women's political representation - one focusing on electoral behavior and women as voters, the second on social construction of gender in political theory, and the third which takes women as political subjects - I position my research in the third body of literature, which takes women and women's experiences as a subject of analysis. With this approach I contribute to the literature on women's political representation in young democracies of Central Eastern Europe and Caucasus.

In this chapter, I analyze the major literature frameworks that examine women's political participation and representation. I start by reviewing democracy and move on how women's political representation is shaped, and then identify any factors that hinder or facilitate women's participation in formal politics. Understanding the role of various contributing characteristics is critical for unpacking factors that shaped women's participation in Georgian Parliament. I then review related concepts of power and agency. These approaches help me to understand the nation-state building process in post-communist countries, in this case in Georgia, which is moving towards building a democratic state. Examining different nation-state building processes is critical for our understanding of how such processes are gendered. I am particularly interested in examining these processes at the national level, namely at the level of the national parliament. Therefore, in this chapter I also examine women's political participation and its meaning for the practice of citizenship and democracy and as grounds for gender equality within formal politics. Adopting the

framework of state and democracy is helpful when exploring the links between women's political representation and citizenship in a democratic transition. It also enables us to analyze how these concepts and practices are interlinked in the case of Georgia's nation-sate building process.

1.1. Democratic transition

Considering the focus of the present study, it is appropriate to explore what political representation means in democratic societies and how women's engagement in formal politics is shaped in the democratic transition. The meaning of political representation may take two dimensions in democratic societies: presence of certain group members at a decision-making level and consideration of needs and interests of the group members represented (Lovenduski, 2010)

Democratization is the most valued political form and an accomplishment of the past century. Democracy implies a move from authoritarian regimes to capitalist, free, elective politics and liberal values respecting the dignity of human beings and human rights, rule of people and ensuring government is accountable for its citizens. At the same time, democratization may not necessarily increase women's access to power and resources; such has been the case in 20th century Central and East European women's representation in formal politics, which was significantly reduced (Hawkesworth, 2001: 222-224). Such redistribution of resources and responsibilities are visible in politics, but also in economic and labor fields, along with increased responsibilities within families, indicating that democratic processes may bring along growing political and economic inequalities (Hawkesworth, 2001: 225). A key principle of every democracy is equal human rights, which becomes ground for equal participation in politics and the enjoyment of citizenship rights by women and men (Ballington, 2005: 23-25). Nevertheless, while women comprise half of the population,

politics remains predominantly male dominated and political decision-making gendered (Hawkesworth, 2001). Indeed, not only state, but also democracy is frequently seen as male-dominated politics, where democratic institutions and practices bring hostility to women and do not necessarily result in advancement for women, spreading further male-biased gender norms and regimes in public as well as household realm (Hawkesworth, 2001).

Feminists claim that even if we assume neutrality, inclusivity and objectivity of practices and laws in the democracy, it still may be all gendered, and practices that may seem neutral or blind, may be based on male experience if their accomplishment doesn't result unequal impact for women and men (Hawkesworth, 2001: 225). Following this line argument, I claim that democracy is gendered and even liberal, advanced democracies may have gender-biased practices of democracy. Progress has been greater in establishing gender equity and democracy is certain countries, like Scandinavian countries. Still, more widely, democracy may be a challenge to certain groups who may be oppressed and disadvantaged. In this case the participatory character of democracy is disputed (Phillips, 1994). "Democracy implies equality but when it is superimposed on an unequal society, it allows some people to count for more than others" (Phillips, 1994: 91). In analyzing political transformation towards democracy, Waylen claims that politics in transition to democracy becomes a male-dominated public sphere involving only the upper echelons of the society to which women do not belong (Waylen, 1993: 327-354). This development omits women from political representation. There are a number of countries where despite democratic developments, the representation of women is low or almost no representation of women in the national parliaments exists (Waylen, 1993).

Developing similar arguments, Walshe (2011) claims that although democracy should ensure women's access to the political sphere, in reality women encounter quite contradictory practices when they can't exercise their political rights. Therefore, Walshe develops the

argument that democracy may not equally target all parts of society, for instance, by not bringing the advancement of women's rights. According to Walshe, advancement of women's rights largely depends on the quality of democracy and existence of a just debate in the society (Walshe, 2011: 13-33). Just debate allows openness and inclusiveness; women can attain the chance to be heard and women's advancement becomes a concern, rather a part of the public discussion agenda. However, debate alone does not guarantee that actual transformation of practices will occur. For instance, in South Africa a just debate was followed with shaping the political agenda that brought women's issues into discussion (Walshe, 2011).

Civil society plays an important and supportive role in democracy, both by advancing democracy, and as an interest grouping or volunteering of organized actions (Hawkeswoth, 2001: 222-236). In the foremost case, civil society is advantageous to society as it promotes society's organization and expression of their interests. Civil society organizations may create separate power and influence political outcomes. Women in Central and Eastern Europe have a rather wide experience of organizing and mobilizing that not always managed to influence the political agenda, but the activism helped women and women's groups comprehend their political role and act based on broader social change goals rather than private interest groups (Lukic Regulska & Zavirsek, 2006).

In post-socialist Central and East Europe, when countries experienced transitions to a market economy, change of political regime, instability and conflicts, or economic uncertainties, it is interesting to study where women's/feminist movements have been placed and in what struggles they have engaged. Some feminist movements emerged wanting to put an end to socialism, others to retain the rights that socialism granted to women (Ivekovic, 1993 : 112-115). There were cases of mobilization in conflict areas; even though war was predominantly a masculine practice, as warriors, men developed a strong identification to

their brotherhood perceiving the enemy and women as other (Ivekovic, 1993). Women's participation in social movements may have different forms, roots and causes and may vary with the structure and participation. They may also be aimed at shifting the system of patriarchy away from oppression of women, or rather bring freedom to women, enabling them to participate as equally as men. Women's activism and their involvement in the social movements may be determined by the collective welfare of a community or defined by the will for the common good (Gelb, 1989).

Women's activism and mobilization during Europeanization has taken various forms in post-Communist Europe (Regulska & Grabowska, 2012). Women who appeared largely excluded from formal politics and decision-making in the post-Communist transformation, found new sites of mobilization against hegemonies of state, patriarchal culture, Western feminism and neo-liberal paradigm of economic development. However, gender inequality issues were not fully acknowledged and addressed by NGOs during the last two decades and advocacy on certain issues has emerged only lately. Although mobilization has become diverse, women's mobilization stays a complex issue, which still faces many challenges (Regulska & Grabowska, 2012).

Women's mobilization has taken various forms, including collective actions. A collective action can be framed as a 'set of action-oriented beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate social movement activities and campaign" (Gamson in Klandermans, 1997 : 17). Such actions can have the following three components that can be claimed as factors by its members: a sense of injustice; identity and agency; utilized strategies as well as the existence of opponents and allies are all equally important for the success of the movement. External factors, such as political environment, public discourse, cultural values and global developments that define the context of mobilization also need to be taken into account (Klandermans, 1997: 9-17). In the case of this present study, I am in particularly interested in

identifying contrast between increased civic activism; what the factors leading to women's engagement in formal politics are and what constitute grounds for initiating action.

History has seen women taking collective actions at a grassroots level, both in developing democracies and in developed democratic countries. By grassroots movement I mean 'community based initiatives, actions, and/or organizations that address issues of practical concern to their constituents and are generally committed to making the lives of local people' better (Bystydzienski & Sekhon, 1999). Through community activism women have the opportunity to determine their own lives and engage in political and social actions that influence state processes or democratizations taking place at local and national levels. Participatory democracy is not only based on the belief of participation but it employs democracy as a process of recreation through active participation, giving individuals the choice to act and increase citizens' involvement. Feminists acknowledge the difficulty of implementing to its full extent participatory democracy and that women and men do not equally benefit from democratic developments (Bystydzienski & Sekhon, 1999).

Even the developed democratic countries show difficulties in sustaining participation. Support to civil society is a necessary factor for sustaining democracy and participation has been on the agenda of international organizations in the post-Soviet transition, although, funding to local groups, after an initial influx, became considerably scarce (Funk, 2006 : 265-280). In Central and Eastern Europe some of the national governments have supported and founded women NGOs. In few cases, political parties have supported gender equality agendas, in a limited and reluctant manner though. As to the feminist character of civil society organizations, most of the women's organizations and groups were in fact anti-feminist, however women's NGOs were active in pursuing a broader gender and non-gender issues (Funk, 2006). In the Central and Eastern Europe, we can distinguish, women's NGOs that were relatively 'strong': they were certain in their agenda and vision, less dependent on

donor directions and those that were 'weak' or mostly donor-driven with less grounds for claiming their goals. Moreover, NGOs whether they were feminist or non-feminist, have had mixed motives for activism and public activism through civil society was a space in which women became politically active (Funk, 2006). Thus, women are not passive citizens; rather, by participating, forming movements and feminist NGOs they try to be agents of change and transformation. Claiming agency is an integral part of this process. In addition, claiming agency through social interaction is seen as a political process of subject formation and thus, becoming a full active citizen (Lukic et al, 2006). Passive notion of citizenship is more meaningful than simply bearing the status of citizenship, on the contrary, civil society is a space where political subject formation takes place though active exercise of responsibilities. 'Different kinds of experience and participation create different meanings of political or more precisely, how collective groups resist authority by insisting on new meanings of old practices' (Kaplan, 1997 : 179).

Therefore, it is quite obvious that democracy may not be inclusive of all groups and, in our case, regard women's interests. In the new democracies women may have difficulties claiming their interests and rights or representing women in political decision-making. While democracy may limit women's entry into the public arena and cannot facilitate their full participation as citizens, women's participation through NGOs can be seen as an 'alternative space' for women to exercise citizenship despite whether these groups focused on the immediate needs of communities or adopted feminist agendas (Graham & Regulska, 2006).

1.2. Women's political representation

The nature of political participation is diverse; there is no universal scholarly consensus as to which practices this term indicates. Concepts and practices of political participation attracted scrutiny by scholars to distinguish various forms of political

participation. Formal political participation means a membership of a certain political party, union, activity within a party, or being elected in local or national levels (Ekman &Amna, 2009: 22). Feminist scholars offer critical examination of conceptual frameworks by proposing to distinguish between formal political participation and so-called latent or informal forms of participation, the latter indicating civic engagement or civic involvement defined as "action by ordinary citizens directed towards influencing various political outcomes" (Ekman & Amna, 2009: 22).

Examination of latent forms of participation is essential to comprehending and analyzing political behavior and revealing different forms of political participation and activism by women. While there are a variety of definitions and conceptualizations of what political participation means, one cannot deny that political activism does not simply imply a citizen's voting behavior, but also must include any voluntary acts which influence politics and people in politics, and those individuals' participation in the political decision-making process. These voluntary acts may not ultimately influence a political decision, yet citizens still become socially and politically engaged merely by acting. These types of engagement may include such activities as writing blogs, donating time and money, becoming organized or motivated to help the poor, or debating current political issues (Ekman &Amna, 2009: 9-16).

Scholars analyzing political engagement have identified new forms of political participation: participation in demonstrations and engagement in extra-parliamentary political activities that feed political participation and are aimed at specific actors or processes. Citizens may also distance themselves from political processes while they engage in civic activism; for example, recycling is a civic participation, not political, without affiliation to any political processes or groups. New forms of political participation do not necessarily require membership or affiliation with any collective or political party. Furthermore, formal

political participation may be based on participation in formally established and defined structures and power hierarchy or belonging to an institution, political organization or unions (Ekman & Amna, 2009). Drawing on the aforementioned, while civic activism and informal political participation may create many opportunities for women and offer no barriers to female engagement, formal political participation may not benefit women; in fact, it is one of the fields where women are largely underrepresented worldwide.

Literature in the fields of gender and politics identifies that in every country, national political parties and national parliaments may vary both in their representation of women and in their strategies to promote women in formal politics. Because parties are pivotal for the formation of parliaments, it is crucial to understand how parties and party characteristics influence women's engagement and participation in politics, and how these characteristics might influence strategies for encouraging women's involvement in politics (Caul, 2010; Lovenduski, 2010).

Scholars have identified several factors that affect women's political representation. These include: socio-structural factors, which imply socio-economic conditions; political factors, meaning electoral systems, party level characteristics, and cultural factors such as assumptions and attitudes towards women and men largely taken for granted and rooted in a history of a particular society (Lovenduski, 2010; Caul, 2010; Norris & Inglehart 2001).

Lovenduski and Norris argue that understanding party characteristics is particularly important to the exploration of women's political representation, and for the analysis of their engagement and participation in politics (Norris & Lovenduski, 1995). Furthermore, they claim that parties are "gatekeepers" for women to enter parties and parliaments (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). For this reason, it is crucial to analyze and understand party-level characteristics -- organization, ideology, party rules, level of centralization--in the context of female representation in a parliament (Caul, 2010; Norris & Lovenduski, 1995;).

Caul (2010) has identified similar four party characteristics that are crucial in influencing the number of women represented in a national parliament: 1) party organization and structure; 2) party ideology; 3) proportion of women's rights activists in a party, and 4) party rules (Caul, 2010: 159-176). I will discuss each of these factors in greater detail below. Caul's delineation of these four characteristics has been particularly relevant to the findings of the present research, as these issues have been merged from the data sources and they set a framework for analysis and discussion of party characteristics that shape women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia.

Caul begins the discussion of party organization by identifying three major elements of party structure and organization that affect the proportion of female members of parliament. These include: centralization, institutionalization, and candidate nomination (Caul, 2010 : 159-167). Centralization refers to the control and power distribution within a party; the leaders of the party often determine women's participation in a party. Once a leader desires to have women as party members, this becomes a formal guarantee of women's inclusion in a centralized party structure (Caul, 2010). Party may be more women-friendly depending on that party's policies and level of centralization, which may give women greater opportunity to increase their representation within a party. Institutionalization, the second structural element Caul identifies, is another aspect of party organizational structure that influences women's representation. It refers to well-developed and practiced rules and policies, including regulation on recruitment of party members. These rules and policies ensure women and men equal opportunities for engagement in a party (Caul, 2010). According to Caul, recruitment of party members is largely defined by the degree of institutionalization: the higher the degree of institutionalization, the less space is left for discrimination against women. The third factor, Caul identifies as an important dimension of party organization is nomination process: the research conducted in twelve advanced

democracies indicates that a centralized nomination pattern provides more avenues for women's political advancement in a party and inclusion in the national parliament than a local nomination pattern (Caul, 2010).

Ideology is the second party characteristic Caul identifies as a major contributing factor to women's representation in politics. She argues that newly created parties and/or left-wing parties are more open to the inclusion of female candidates and groups without power. In fact, if one looks at the links between women's movements and parties, it is evident that women's movements have been cooperating more with left wing parties (Caul, 2010). While Caul claims that party ideology is one of the common party characteristics to affect women's representation, other scholars, like Lovenduski and Norris, claim that ideology may not always have a strong influence on women's representation and may change over time (Lovenduski & Norris, 2010). Similar to left-leaning parties, the newer party may be more open towards female candidate, as well as offer more support to women's inclusion in the party system (Caul, 2010).

For explaining the low number of women in the legislative body, understanding how recruitment in a party takes place is in particular significant, whether party policies and regulation or outside sources, like feminist groups, have influence in engaging women in political parties (Caul, 2010). Research shows that there are cases in the US and British political party history, when feminists groups have had an influence on the recruitment of women and have provided training and campaign support (Gelb, 1989). While the influence of feminist groups came slightly later to Britain, earlier, similar trends have been observed in the Scandinavian countries where feminist groups influenced party preferences and their activism resulted in largely increased representation of women, in particular in local government bodies (Lovenduski, 2010). Drawing on the experience in CEE countries, progress is to a lesser extent possible without the involvement of women's and feminists

groups. Changes in laws are necessary, but not alone effective unless pressure and demand comes from feminist groups (Lukic et al, 2006).

The proportion of female party activists is the third factor, identified by Caul, as impacting women's representation in the parties and on the shortlists. Party activism implies that party members at different levels are targeting women's inclusion and are promoting women's advancement in party structures as well as openly supporting equality, and are involved in various activities inside and outside a party. Caul argues that parties with a high proportion of female activists have a higher number of women MPs (Caul, 2010). Finally, the fourth element is the party rules. Caul argues that in fact party ideology directly influences rules and policies for its members and if a party rules to have equal representation of both sexes, then it stands to reason that the party will take measures to promote women, perhaps adopting gender rules or increasing the number of nominated women (Caul, 2010).

Scholars identify three major factors for explaining women's representation in politics: socio-economic factors, institutions, and political culture (Fuchs, 2003; Montgomery, 2003). Fuchs (2003) argues that the more resources (education, qualifications, and high income—all things associated with higher socio-economic status) one has, the more likely it is that he or she will have the opportunity to engage in political decision-making. However, there may be socio-economic factors hindering women's political engagement (Fuchs, 2003). Moreover, not only socio-cultural factors, but also institutions are determinant of women's political representation. Institutions are the entities that elaborate and practice rules and regulations and, therefore, they have significant influence on women's recruitment in parties, developing lists, proportional vs. pluralist lists, etc. (Krook & Childs, 2010).

Political culture also plays an important role in the explanation of why there are so few women in the Central and East European parliaments. Political parties have been rather elitist and paternalist considering that gender roles have changed only slightly since the

Soviet period. Therefore, 'untouched' gender roles, beliefs, and values compromising political culture have not left much space for women's engagement in politics in CEE (Fuchs, 2003).

The availability of women to run for office also matters in explaining women's low representation. The availability of women may be undermined due to various reasons, such as traditional gender roles, the absence of social care institutions, attitudes of women regarding politics, or by the fact that women might not be ready to run for the office (Paxton & Kunovich, 2003: 87-113). Paradoxically, while women's low representation in politics and in political decision-making and parties might be low, change of the regime and efforts of adapting to new realities may result in new opportunities for women, which would in turn create a dramatic increase in the number of women engaged in civic and political activism. A decrease of women's representation in a national parliament, coupled with a simultaneous increase in women's participation in civic engagement, has been observed in a number of developing countries; political parties were not showing much interest in promoting women on the party or parliament lists, which only facilitated an increase in the gap between formal and informal participation of women in politics (Chiva, 2005). While parties may play an encouraging or discouraging role for women's representation in parliaments, nevertheless, in different countries, they have adopted a wide range of strategies for increasing the number of women engaged in formal politics.

According to Lovenduski (2010), there are three strategies for increasing women's representation in parties and decision-making positions: 1) rhetorical strategies: claims on women's inclusion in parties and political decision-making is frequently declared by party spokespersons and the importance of women's representation is stated; 2) strategies of affirmative or positive action (this strategy implies that some kind of positive or affirmative measures may be applied to include women in decision-making and party lists, such as

providing training to female leaders, or financial assistance to the party), and 3) strategies of positive discrimination: target reservation of places for women on party lists or indecision-making positions (this also implies the establishment of so-called women's committees) (Lovenduski, 2010). While positive discrimination is rare, most of the parties apply the first two strategies to increase and promote women in politics. Mostly, these strategies follow each other and once a positive discrimination strategy is applied, women become better represented and better integrated (Lovenduski, 2010).

A number of developing and developed countries have applied special measures for increasing women's political representation. Quotas are one type of mechanism that facilitates an increase in women's political participation over a rather short period of time."Quotas for women entail that women must constitute a certain number or percentage of the members of a body, whether it is a candidate list a parliamentary assembly, a committee or a government. Quotas aim at increasing women's representation in policy elected or appointed institutions such as governments, parliaments and local councils (Dahlerup, 2005) Quotas are applied when women are considered underrepresented or excluded from certain processes and institutions; by obligating those in charge of recruitment and participation to include women, women have a better opportunity to be selected and elected (Dahlerup, 2005). In the case of Georgia, quotas have not been introduced and therefore it is important to explore the relevance of this subject, the attitude of female MPs and experts over this issue.

Scholars identify various types of quotas. However, there are two types of quotas that are considered most common in practice: candidate quotas, and reserved seats. The first type of quotas set the minimum number/percentage of women to be included on the lists of candidates while reserved seats aim to allocate a certain number of seats for women in the parliament guaranteed by legislature, even sometimes by constitution. In general, quotas may be guaranteed and ensured either by constitutions or by electoral codes or political party laws.

Political parties themselves may also introduce quotas that are voluntary, and this has been the case in many left-wing parties. In addition, there are also gender-neutral quotas that do not speak in favor of one sex only. Such quotas set limits and give a strong indication that none of the genders are allowed to occupy a certain percentage in a party or political body (Dahlerup, 2005)

Adoption of quotas in the form of constitutional amendment or electoral laws represents an increasing trend worldwide. Experiences of countries differentiate between gradual improvement in women's representation and fast track solution by adoption of quotas. In any case, analyzing barriers for women in politics and the role of political parties as of main "gatekeepers" is pivotal. In cases when barriers are acknowledged, quotas as "compensatory" measures may be introduced (Dahlerup & Freidencall, 2010 : 175-178).

For example, Latin America, a region with developing democracy, has successfully implemented quota regulations along with significant country-level developments in various fields. As scholars also claim, the implementation of quotas does not guarantee an increase in women's representation in politics; rather, implementation of quotas is a step toward improvement in women's representation in formal politics (Dahlerup & Freidencall, 2010 : 175-178).

Therefore, the literature discussed above identifies factors that shape women's political representation, in particular in parties and parliaments. Evidently, barriers to women's participation may be diverse and largely depend on party level factors, socio-cultural circumstances, and political culture as discussed. Drawing on the proposed literature, this study will examine the factors that shape women's engagement in formal politics in Georgia, explore what are the factors that shape women's access to power in the Georgian Parliament and which party characteristics are important for unpacking women's political representation in the given case.

1.3. Power and agency

When we seek to unpack women's political participation, it is significant to acknowledge that women have access to power. Power is essentially focused on relational concepts of domination and subordination. In the discourse of patriarchy, power is a very masculine concept and practice (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). In its traditional understanding of power, it entails possession of control, authority, physical capacity, political influence or the ability to exercise control. What concerns feminists most, in regard to power, is that there is a power difference between women and men and that the system itself too adopts the masculinized model of understanding power (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003).

While mentioning the deployment of gender relations, there are differences between women and men in terms of their access to power, resources, and opportunities; these differences produce inequalities in favor of one sex. What is more, this process is often discriminatory for women and results in the exclusion of women from certain fields, among them political decision-making (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2006). By power, Mac anGhail and Haywood mean access to control of rules and resources within arenas of interaction; possessing power enables capacity of one sex to control the behavior of the other (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2006). This gives women and men a different positioning in relation to a state.

Darlington offers another model in contradiction to the traditional understanding of power – reciprocal empowerment – a model of interaction grounded on reciprocity initiated by people who feel a sense of personal authority. This is ground for self-confidence leading to action emerging from the private to the public sphere (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). It involves: self-determination, independence, knowledge, choice and action as well as compassion, consensus, collectivity to enhance others, mutual empathy, responsiveness (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003) Thus, this resembles a process of gaining power and

achieving results by having power, strengthening and improving individual positions taking into account strengthening of both self and the other. What is important in this understanding is personal authority or power to be self-determinant. In such a case, social and cultural constructs discourage women to be seen as self-determined and nature and biology does not play much of a role in this regard (Darlington & Mulvaney, 2003). Therefore, neither traditional understandings of power, nor authority meet the needs of women.

Self-determination is important, but what is critical is that a subject initiates an action. Agents are the focus from which the action is initiated due to the inter-linkage of subject and position. Therefore, the one who initiates an action, we can say, has agency. The latter is much like a person who is not simply an actor following or reading a given script, but rather the one positioning herself in a script (Dissanayake, 1996). For some scholars human agency is seen in an institutional context, in which agency gains power. Diverse institutional mechanisms interplay in this process (Dissanayake, 1996). Parliament and political parties are one of the institutional mechanisms that allow exercise of agency by women. In the context of this research the question then is how women become agents of change within the Georgian Parliament? How women's political identities are shaped in the Georgian Parliament and to what extent women are able to exercise their agency and power?

Women participating in the political institutions or collective actions, and advancing political agenda can be considered as not only bearing the status of a citizen and becoming political subjects but also as claiming active citizenship and exercising human agency (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Lister, 1997). This line of reasoning, takes this discussion towards women's agency as key to women's active citizenship. Agency implies "women's ability to determine their own daily life as well as their collective ability to make a difference on the public arena" (Siim, 2000: 4). Indeed, the concept of active citizenship cannot be understood without human agency (Voet, 1998; Lukic et al 2006). Agency can however take on a

number of forms with both its positive and negative meaning, and engage various resources (Kabeer, 2005). Agency, according to Kabeer is: "The ability to define one's goals and act upon them. Agency is about more than observable action; it also encompasses the meaning, motivation and purpose, which individuals bring to their activity, their sense of agency, or `the power within'. While agency tends to be operationalized as `decision-making' in the social science literature, it can take a number of other forms. It can take the form of bargaining and negotiation, deception and manipulation, subversion and resistance as well as more intangible, cognitive processes of reflection and analysis. It can be exercised by individuals as well as by collectivities" (Kabeer, 1999: 3). In relation to power, agency does have a positive connotation meaning one's own capacity to be self-determinant about one's own choices and the ability to pursue one's own goals. However, agency at times may also have a negative meaning as a power over, as in the case of violence or coercion (Kabeer, 1999: 3-50). Asserting human agency means asserting citizenship. According to Lister: "To act as a citizen requires a sense of agency, the belief that one can act; acting as a citizen, especially collectively, in turn fosters that sense of agency. Thus, agency is not simply about the capacity to choose and act, but it is about conscious capacity, which is important to the individual's self-identity" (Lukic et al, 2006).

Actions initiated by individuals take place within a particular context, which gives agency power and definition and through this process an active citizen, claiming agency and engaging in political processes emerges, engages in political subject formation (Lukic et al, 2006). In contrast to the passive notion of citizenship, civil society or political subject formation is linked with the active exercise of the responsibilities and actions. Indeed, during times of political transformation, we can see political space, like civil society, where human agency and subject formation became practice. Building formal and informal groups of women and communities were instances where active citizenship could be practiced. The

opening of borders and increased access to resources contributed to the formation of networks, enhanced skills, as well as allowed for mobilization. However, these changes did not necessarily imply that the access to political processes has changed much; in fact it remained limited for many women (Lukic et al, 2006).

To sum up, women and men differ in their access to power. In certain fields, like political decision-making, this had an especially significant impact on how women engage as active citizens, as political subjects and what role they can play as participants and representatives in the political process. In politics, women's access to power and state processes is still very limited; nevertheless, it is through exercise of their agency that women gain access to a number of state processes and political developments. On one hand, agency as a ground for initiatives and actions in formal or informal politics is becoming the basis for activism and participation; it is particularly important in analyzing women politicians experience in the context of the Georgian Parliament as this study aims to do.

1.4. Theorizing state

This section will focus on the links between a state and women's participation in formal politics. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1989) define the state as "a body of institutions which are centrally organized around intentionality of control with a given apparatus of enforcement (juridical and repressive) at its command and basis... Different forms of state will involve different relationships between the control/coercion twin which is the residing characteristic of the state" (Anhias & Yuval Davis, 1989 : 5). According to Yuval-Davis, the state is homogeneous and coherent, operating in complexity (Yuval-Davis, 1997); however, others would argue that the concept of the state involves many different institutions, competing goals and agendas; it is a complex composition of processes and practices, which are expressed through both social and cultural avenues. By this logic, states can be considered

both a social and a cultural container (Trouillout, 2001). However, the issue is further complicated by the influence of government and its institutions, which are not only instructing citizens where to be or not be, but also are present in their everyday lives (Trouillout 2001). Scholars point out that a state is a body of institutions that operate based on coercion and repression, and the methods of coercion and repression may vary according to the different forms of a state (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Therefore, states imply not only ideological processes, but other processes and mechanisms that create practices in everyday life and implicate what citizens can and cannot do.

From a feminist perspective, it is important to underscore that state processes and policies do shape gender relations. Orloff (1996) argues that the modern welfare state has undergone a transition from private to public patriarchy. This understanding only reinforces women's subordinated position and status, especially that the welfare state reiterates traditional roles and gender relations. Thus, feminist criticism of the welfare state shows that it reinforces gender differences and inequalities and supports maintaining hierarchical gender relations (Orloff, 1996). Indeed, feminist analysis of a welfare state--among them, democratic and social welfare state--reveals that despite some of the improvements in the position of women, important gender differences are persistent in welfare states (O'Conor, 1993).

In any state regime, treatment of citizens by state may differ. A number of feminist scholars pointed to the structured gender inequalities, which may produce different implications for citizenship rights given to an individual by state and may result in an unequal treatment of the citizens and, therefore, members of the community may be positioned differently in relation to the state (Yuval-Davis, 1997). This relationship implies ideological and, at the same time, material constructions including norms and structural stratification that are constructed in the process of social development, struggles or negotiations between citizens and the nation-state (Yuval-Davis, 1997). What's more, state imposes law and order

through a number of mechanisms like media, economy, welfare, culture, religion and other dimensions of everyday life (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989).

Referring to state-gender concepts and relations, it is crucial to look from the perspective of women's practice and experience. As Yuval-Davis points out, women's relationship to a state is complex; women are not only members of collectives, institutions and groupings as they participate within specific social and historical context, but Yuval-Davis views women as a social category with a particular role – human reproduction and, thus, women are of special focus in a state (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Similarly, feminist criticism is directed towards state theorists for being gender neutral, while claiming that state constructs women and men differently. Moreover, feminist criticism has moved on the concern that different forms of state have constituted "State subject" or citizen in a gendered way and by doing so the focus of state processes and policies is focused on men only. As Yuval-Davis defines, citizenship implies the way the state acts upon the individual and does not address the problem (Yuval-Davis, 1997). From this perspective, exploring what women's political citizenship implies and how it fits into the political project imposed by the state in a democratic transition is a relevant discussion in the analysis of women's political participation in Georgia.

Feminists' theorizations of states follow several different arguments. By adopting a definition of a neutral state, liberal feminists give the most importance to state institutions and consider that the state reflects the interests of men as men control the state and its institutions (Kantola, 2006). This approach considers inclusion of women in institutions or legislation a solution to women's exclusion or unequal treatment. However, it also adopts a notion of the state, as a set of institutions that focuses less on other barriers apart from legislation as well as it does not challenge structural relations of different roles of women and male dominance (Kantola, 2006).

Unlike liberal feminists, radical feminists speak of a patriarchal nature of a state; in this case, patriarchy is equated with male dominance and male supremacy. They look at the relation of state and society and see various layers of oppression of women in a nation-state as state is considered as essentially patriarchal and thus oppressive to women (Kantola, 2006). Marxist state theory sees states as capitalist and places women in a subordinate role in supporting capitalism through its productive work in a household or just as a category of workers. What's more, feminist approaches to the capitalist theory of a state adopts concepts of both patriarchy and capitalism as state is considered an entity limiting the lives of women and protecting the interests of capital (Kantola, 2006).

Female friendly welfare state theory, developed by feminists signifies yet another approach. Because of its geographic roots it is frequently referred to as Scandinavian or Nordic feminist theory of state which assumes that women's political and social empowerment may happen through states and envisions the state as a tool for change and the advancement of women. And, finally, the differentiated state approach developed by post-structural feminist theory on state argues that the state has been historically constructed as patriarchal practice and it is differentiated with practices, agencies, institutions and discourses and power in which patriarchy is constructed (Kantola, 2006). Therefore, state can be seen as an opportunity and promotion to women as well as a negative resource for them.

According to Yuval-Davis, women participate in state and national processes and state practices through many areas such as: 1) biological producers and members of ethnic collectives. State applies various strategies to control the reproduction of the state by controlling women; 2) reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups – women are controlled not only when encouraging/discouraging them to have children, but also for doing it for the reproduction of boundaries of identity; 3) participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and the transmitters of its culture – women as "cultural

carriers"; 4) signifiers of ethnic/national boundaries – women teach and transmit culture, ideology, traditions of ethnic and national groups; 5) participants in national, economic political and military struggles – women have had various roles in these processes, but mostly they have had supportive and nurturing (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1989).

Feminist analysis of the welfare state, among them, democratic and social welfare state, reveal that despite some of the advantaged positions of women, important gender differences are persistent in welfare states when citizens experience the state and exercise citizenship rights (O'Conor, 1993). Although there are equal rights applied to women and men, historical proceedings, socio-economic conditions, or other factors frequently qualify status and may produce constraints for citizens when fully exercising their citizenship rights. The same notion can be applied to political participation when a number of factors are constraints for women to fully exercise their citizenship. Similarly, a number of feminist scholars see a huge problem in the structured gender inequalities that may cause different implications for citizenship rights given to an individual by the state and the unequal treatment of the citizens.

While we examined different feminist perspectives regarding state, it is also crucial to discuss different forms that the women-state relationship can take as states frequently, reinforce the customary and religious norms giving women particular roles via rules and policies. Women are affected by the state processes but when referring to women, we have to remember that there is no unified category of women as such, but rather women are divided along class, ethnic, religious and other dimensions (Yuval-Davis, 1997), From this perspective, in the women-state relationship when state establishes certain regulations and legal frameworks for women, and shapes their experiences and subjecthood, it is also meaningful to draw on women-state implications in the sphere of formal politics as a focus of this study.

Scholarly feminist work on the relationship between state and women draws attention to public-private distinctions. Women are located within the private domain and are therefore less politically relevant, while national politics is a public sphere in which women's exclusion is evident (Yuval-Davis, 1997). However, for some scholars, public-private dichotomy is regarded as imaginary concept (e.g. Suad, 1997). As such, perhaps, we should rethink this binary and avoid discussing the public/private domain in radical approaches. Below I will investigate how women cope with combining the public-private realms.

A number of global factors do have an impact on nation-state processes through interventions by different actors, such as donors, governments and its institutions, NGOs, associations, and unions. This diversity of players indicates the interconnectivity of the system and structure, and produces a new geography of power. How these connections and power relationships transform gender orders is an important element of feminist research agenda (Young, 2001 : 44-45). As Nira Yuval-Davis points out, a state defines women's role and activism; for instance they are classified as mothers or as citizens involved in paying taxes. The impact is uneven as there are groups that are more marginalized than others and therefore excluded from state processes. Thus, she argues, the members of a community may be positioned differently in relation to the state (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

This overall discussion on state demonstrates that women are very much constituted by state processes and practices. Conversely they still retain the ability to make individual choices, as women are participating in national, economic and political struggles. Therefore, women are participants in opposing and contradicting state processes and agendas that state and its institutions have. Women are not only limited by the roles imposed on them, they themselves may be actively supporting other women and changing their roles, and thus exercising their agency (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

When we seek to unpack women's political participation, it is significant to note that some women have access to the power. To hold power means to have access and a seat in the institution of power legislative, executive, or judiciary. Some groups may stay underrepresented and unequally positioned in relation to state. While women are assigned multiple roles in relation to state, they may receive unequal treatment by state and not be included in certain processes and institutions. Therefore, by fostering the literature on state, it is crucial to analyze what are the state processes that have an impact on women's access to power and decision-making in the case of Georgia.

1.5. Citizenship

Citizenship is a contested term and there are different notions and approaches to understanding citizenship. By citizenship I mean a dynamic process, namely, a status, carrying out different rights (social, economic, political) as well as a practice, which involves obligations, duties and political participation (Lister, 1997: 13-41). The concept of citizenship has been a focus of feminist scholars considering that individuals are not equally positioned in a state, on the one hand, and on the other hand, a state imposes rights and obligations differently to its citizens. Frequently, state-citizenship relationship is a process of constructing a gendered model of citizenship (Heinen, 2006).

Among a number of approaches to the concept of citizenship, Voet identifies the communitarian understanding of citizenship which implies social participation, or participation and service for the common good and acting based on shared beliefs and values that become a tradition in a given community (Voet, 1998). A different approach to citizenship is adopted by the civic republican approach. According to this perspective, political participation is most crucial for understanding the concept of citizenship. Neo-liberal approaches, on the other hand, entail citizenship as a legal status and, in this regard, self-

interest is considered a main ground for citizen's activism (Voet, 1998). Feminists largely criticize this understanding of citizenship as it leaves little space for women to exercise citizenship and views women as second-class citizens. Voet further develops a social liberal approach to understanding citizenship which focuses on legal citizenship seen as central to the understanding of citizenship as citizens are given various legal rights by state (e.g. to vote, pay taxes, etc.). In this approach, citizenship is universal and equal, and it should guarantee equal civil, political and social rights and individuals should have equal liberties and freedom (Voet, 1998). Yuval-Davis adopts another definition of citizenship meaning status granted to the members of a community and all who possessing the status are equal in terms of their rights and duties (Yuval-Davis, 1997. Here the term "rights" includes civil, political, and social rights, and this definition focuses more on an individual within a community or a citizen as a member of a community. Rights are important to have when one belongs to a community or a state, but duties without obligations make citizenship a passive notion and practice.

First, a duty has to refer to exercising individuals' political rights and participating in determining directions and boundaries of the community and the state (Yuval-Davis, 1997). This perspective is particularly relevant for the aim of the present study in exploring women's political rights and participation in case of Georgia; more concretely, examining women's political rights in Georgia in the national legislative body of the country is ground for exploring to what extent women exercise their duties, rights and obligations, what is their experience of participating in the decision-making processes and how it impacts their citizenship status.

Furthermore, the concern of feminists has been focused on gendered dimensions of citizenship that is often equated with masculinity. As feminist scholars point out, the nation-state where citizenship is practiced is a masculine institution with male domination in

decision-making; hierarchy in the system and male/female subordination, division of labor, sexuality, rules and regulations set by men, persistently favoring men (Nagel, 1998). Alison Jaggar points out the masculine character of citizenship mostly in relation to citizenship as a practice, in particular for such spheres of activism as battlefield, state and labor/market. These have been spaces in the public sphere where usually males performed and practiced citizenship (Jaggar, 2005 : 4-15).

Associations of equating women to the home or private sphere and equating men to work or public sphere do emerge when focusing on citizenship. While an understanding of public/private is central for the concept of citizenship, we need to question and rethink such a binary and I believe, we must look at these spaces as complex webs of practices where boundaries of public and private are fluid, dynamic and ever changing. Indeed, a number of feminist scholars not only challenge the public/private dichotomy and undermine the traditional association of citizenship with the public sphere but even name such a traditional understanding as a "false dichotomy" and claim that in reality these terms are not reflecting a binary and are not that distanced from each other, but rather are interlinked through the gender relations between male and female (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2006 72-73). As relevant for the present study, unfolding women's politicians' public-private divide is largely meaningful and contributes to the feminist debates on citizenship and helps to understand how practices in these spheres are dynamic and not necessarily exclusionary.

Feminists have also claimed equal citizenship for women asserting that women had to have equal rights and responsibilities as men in a state. However, at the same time, Jaggar distinguishes the challenges to women's citizenship depending on activities and expressions of citizenship and where the citizenship is performed (Jaggar, 2005). Gender relations are changing and the conventional perceptions and understanding of women and men have been changing, deployed as "genderquake" through historical development. Women in political

and public spheres give evidence of deployment and deconstruction of traditional understandings of gender roles and relations (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2006); however women's participation and experience of citizenship through participation and representation in political decision-making is still limited in a number of developing democracies, including Georgia,and in this context it is meaningful to interpret women's political representation in the Parliament as a question of citizenship and women's ability to exercise citizenship rights.

The notion of participation challenges the traditional approach to citizenship and public/private distinction that women are passive citizens (just bearers of the status of a citizen); instead it focuses our attention on the fact that women exercise their agency through different expressions such as participation in governance, political decision-making, collective action and/or social movements. As Voet mentioned, this enables us to see women as "active" citizens (Voet, 1998: 16). Other scholars consider active citizenship to be participation in public affairs (Jochum, Pratten & Wilding, 2005). From that perspective active citizenship has several dimensions. The political dimension focuses on the relationship between an individual and a state through participation in political processes and governance, holding authority and power accountable to citizens, and experiencing citizenship as a set of rights and responsibilities. The social dimension of active citizenship implies the relationship of an individual and others within a community and a society, which creates a sense of belonging and identity. Finally, the individual dimension refers to a bottom-up approach to citizen-state relationship and focuses on exercising agency and power for choice. (Jochum, Pratten & Wilding, 2005:25-38).

While building independent, sovereign and democratic states in CEE and Caucasus, in the nineties, women's interests and rights had been largely ignored, making women invisible and restricting their rights and opportunities for participation. At the same time, by being active, uniting, mobilizing, and advocating for gender equality women have become active

agents of change, responding to their marginalization and ignorance (Lukic et al, 2006, Regulska & Grabowska, 2012). What's more, local and regional gender discourses are not separate from the state processes, especially when moving from state socialism to liberal democracy. Therefore, women's mobilization and activism is shaped by a number of local and transnational factors and is a reaction to women's diverse experiences. Through diverse forms of mobilization, women actively challenge such hegemonies as nation-state, patriarchal culture, neo-liberal paradigm and predominance of western feminism (Lukic et al, 2006; Regulska & Grabowska, 2012).

Therefore, citizenship with its complex meanings and practices, in the context of political participation (both formal and informal) leads to a discussion of political and active citizenship, which excludes any notion of passivity. Considering a complex development of a state and state-citizen relation in the case of Georgia, it should draw an interesting analysis through which to unpack women's political participation and citizenship.

1.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed major bodies of literature that are central to exploring women's political participation. These included discussions on women's participation in formal politics; the role of state and the notion of citizenship; understanding power and claiming agency, and the meaning of democracy and democratic transition for women's political engagement.

First of all, situating women's political participation within the literature on women in politics allows me to identify factors that constitute women's political participation and reveal those factors that shape women's engagement and experiences. This is critical for the analysis of the situation of women in the Georgian Parliament and the need to capture the shifts that have taken place over the past decade. This literature is in particular helpful for

exploring the party characteristics and their influence on women as well as for analyzing possible approaches to address women's low representation in the Georgian Parliament.

Women's political participation does not take place in a vacuum; it operates through political institutions such as parliament. It is controlled and shaped through state legislations, state institutional practices and ideologies. Moreover, it involves contested term of citizenship that frames women's abilities to exercise their rights. In that context it is linked to notions of agency and power that shapes political identities and the experiences of women. What's more, the discussions on agency is in particular important for understanding motives behind women's political engagement and allow us to unfold the experience of being a female politician and a party member as well as to understand what are the processes, institutions and individual choices in the given context. In addition, by engaging with the literature on democracy and, thus, adopting democratic lenses, this study will show what democracy means for women's political representation and vice versa how women are positioned in relation to a state in a developing democracy.

Keeping in mind that the focus of the present study is analyzing the factor shaping women's political representation and experience in the decade of democratic transition of Georgia, I will be adopting the theoretical framework that will examine the concept of political representation in the Parliament, exercise of citizenship and location of women's political experience in the democratic transition of the country. By relying on the framework discussed in this chapter and analysis drawn from the data, the study contributes to the debates on women and citizenship in the context of development and democratization, and how women contribute and yet are invisible in the democratic processes. With this, my research will analyze how gender is a factor for development, democratization and exercise of full citizenship, in formation of political participation in the national legislature as well as in examining women's identities and analyzing the implication of factors for women's

participation in the Parliament in the process of Georgia's democratization.

In the following chapter, I will discuss methodology and methods used to gather data. In subsequent chapters I will provide context o democratic transition and its gendered dimension on the example of Georgia. I further move on to the analysis of the major findings and will discuss how women's political participation in the democratic transition in Georgia has changed.

Chapter 2: Research Design and Methodology

In this chapter I will provide a description of the methods and methodology I have utilized and will discuss the specific steps and processes in the research design applied for exploring women's political participation in Georgia. I will begin by describing the methods used and will then provide a detailed account of data sources, selection of the research participants, the actual process of data collection as well as offer a justification behind applying such a research framework. I will also discuss my position as a researcher.

I have chosen a grounded theory approach to learn what factors shape women's political participation. This method allows us to rely on the data and therefore develop explanations from the data. I believe that in the case of analyzing women's political participation in the Georgian Parliament, the grounded theory is in particular relevant and applicable as it takes into account so far unexplored and untapped processes and practices. Little has been written about what factors deter women's participation is Georgian Parliaments since the Rose Revolution up to 2013; during a decade of the democratic transition. My study is the first one that explores factors that shape women's representation in the national legislative body, how women experience being a member of the Parliament and how women exercise their citizenship thorough participation in the democratic transition of Georgia. Therefore, I believe my research will produce the first examination of discourses on and practices of women's political participation and how these are interconnected with the notion of citizenship and democracy in Georgia. I argue that existing paradigms to study citizenship and women's activism and democratization in Georgia fall short of capturing the interaction and importance of cultural norms, historical patterns, and political influences and often they are ignoring gender dimension of these processes and practices.

In order to induce from data my findings, I have used various data sources described below. First of all, to answer the main questions of the study, I have interviewed 15 female politicians. In order to gain a broader sense and more complete picture of what women's participation in the Parliament looks like and how women experience it, I have selected representatives of the organizations working in the area of women and politics and have conducted with them expert interviews (14 interviews). In addition, I have also attended a few meetings dedicated to the women's political empowerment in Georgia during which female politicians, current and former, leaders of political parties and female leaders participated; the participation in such meetings has given me an important insight into the processes and practices of women's political subjecthood. I have also reviewed a bulk of secondary sources on gender and development, and have examined the gender dimension of various elections that took place in Georgia over the last decade of transition.

The key part of the present study is however empirical data collection. The more detailed account regarding sampling and participants of my research are given in this chapter below. Here I want to stress that the findings developed from the data gathered allow me to develop concepts and categories by which I as a researcher can analyze the data, provide analysis and interpretation to the events and experiences, and, thus, in-depth explore women's political participation and representation. For the purpose of the present study, I mainly rely on the narratives from the interviews conducted. Through interviews with women MPs and experts' interviews I aim to reveal and analyze the inequalities women face in formal political engagement and participation, and explore women's experiences as political subjects.

2.1. Grounded theory method

For the purpose of exploring women's political participation in the Georgian Parliaments of 2004, 2008 and 2012, I applied the grounded theory approach. Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss have introduced the grounded theory, which means discovering theory from data (Glazer & Strauss, 1967: 1-77). The grounded theory allows us to develop a theory based on data and not fit the findings into existing hypothesis and theories. From this perspective, the grounded theory offers us the ability to generate theory rather than only verification of a theory (Glazer & Strauss, 1967: 2-20). In other words, grounded theory implies focusing on data and developing theories based on perspectives and experiences revealed by the subjects of a study (Wuest, 1995).Grounded theory is applicable for studying relationships between individuals and larger social processes. As grounded theory implies, it is important to have a simultaneous engagement both with data collection and analysis while doing research (Charmaz, 2004). This is achieved by developing analytical categories derived not from hypothesis but from the data that is checked and used to develop concepts. As Heath and Cowly argue discovery is the basis for every piece of research, but "the aim is not to discover the theory, but a theory that aids understanding and action in the area under investigation' (Heath & Cowly, 2004: 149). Developing grounded theory is a process; it involves discovering concepts, learning relationships among them and moving from data to theory through induction. Therefore, induction is a core process bringing to generalization and theory development the entire process is all driven by data rather than scholarly literature or hypothesis (Heath & Cowly, 2004: 143-147)

Wuest claims acertain congruency between the grounded theory and feminism: the grounded theory allows the interpretation of the perspectives of the research participants; it enables us to ensure people's voices are heard. Participants are the knowledge producers and 'experts' of the produced knowledge and the experience of the respondents is considered as

valid data for developing theories (Wuest, 1995: 123-127). In particular, taking into account that through grounded theory phenomenon multiple interpretations and analysis may be given, this in particular corresponds to the postmodern feminist epistemology which implies questioning the "truth" and challenging already accepted concepts (Wuest, 1994). We should note that reflexivity is also common for the grounded theory method and for feminism, meaning that each is critically and analytically exploring the research process at every stage (Wuest, 1994: 125-135).

It is important to underscore that grounded theory has empirical grounds; data sources are comprised of interviews, autobiographies, published material/accounts/records, personal journals, field-notes and other resources (Charmaz, 2004: 496-498).Grounded theory is a process in which a researcher applies a theoretical sampling, making decision about which data to collect (choosing data sources and selecting respondents') and analyze the existing data. (Glazer & Strauss, 1967 : 30-61).

In present study, I do apply this approach when I select women MPs and groups of experts working with political parties and women politicians. My aim hasn't been to draw comparison between the two groups; rather in the process of data collection from my initial group of female MPs, I decided that the people outside the Parliament working closely with political parties would give me the opportunity to analyze the situation in a more complex and complete way. Therefore, I selected another group to be included in my research. According to Glazer and Strauss, it is important to keep in mind the purpose and main questions of the research as this may lead to selecting not only one but several participants' groups as sources of data (Glazer & Strauss, 1967: 30-61).

2.2. Qualitative research approach - interviews

For the purpose of exploring my research questions and interviewing women in the Georgia Parliament who served in the last decade, I have applied a qualitative research approach. This approach allows exploring and understanding the meaning individuals' or groups' ascribe to a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014:4). The research process using qualitative data enables us to address questions and issues as they emerge while it also allows a researcher to interpret the meaning of data during the process of data collection. The inductive style, i.e. building from particular to general themes, allows us to focus on individual meaning and consider the complexity of a context and a situation (Creswell, 2014 : 3-25).

As the focus of the current study is on women's lives as political subjects and gender inequalities observed in women's political participation. I utilized qualitative methods in order to discuss what has been largely, ignored and insufficiently explored, research questions (DeVault, 1999: 21-30). Equally significant is the focus, of this study, on Georgia. In the current political and economic context, there is a great complexity of factors that shape women's underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia. Experiences of women MPs and links between democratic transition and women's participation in formal politics have not been explored sufficiently.

Feminist methodology is key to exploring my research questions; it is an important tool since it uses gender as a category of analysis. Feminist methodology allows one to interrogate notions of "normality" by examining existing norms of women's and men's behavior and permits broader knowledge production for better understanding of women's lives. In my case, keeping in mind the purpose of the present research, feminist methodology is appropriate and helpful in using women as a category of analysis, in order to explore lives and experiences of women politicians. I am in particular interested in unpacking factors

contributing to women's representation in formal politics and in learning about the experiences of female members of Parliament in the democratic transition of Georgia. Finally, the feminist methodology adopts the acceptance of women's experience and identity construction as the "truth" and acknowledges the value of women's lives (Geiger, 1990). Therefore, qualitative methods, as feminists scholars suggest, can "give voice" to women and coincide with feminist goals (DeVault, 1999: 30-31). Feminist research is not only research on women but also research for women (Kirsch, 200 : 163-172).

Keeping in mind the intersection of the aims of the study and the specific method, my research hinges on two major paradigms: constructivist and transformative paradigms/worldviews. Let me elaborate the reason why I see a linkage with the constructivist paradigm first. I believe that this approach allows reliance on participants' meaning and views of the situation; participants can construct the content and its meaning. As this approach involves broad questions and open-ended questions, the researcher can listen to the life experiences of individuals and comprehend how subjective meanings are negotiated. Besides, in this approach, individuals not only give meaning and make sense of their experiences in the given context of a given social setting, but this approach also allows a researcher to interpret it in order to understand that context. In this regard, the research process is inductive as the researcher generates meaning largely from the collected data (Creswell, 2014: 3-25).

I consider that my research approach closely holds on to the transformative knowledge claims as well since this position implies politics and political change agenda and voice of participants. What's more, this approach assigns crucial significance to the experiences of various groups, among them marginalized groups. This paradigm is relevant for learning how the lives of individuals are marginalized and individuals discriminated and oppressed and what are the strategies research participants have used to resist or challenge

these constraints. Under this paradigm falls research that aims to study inequalities based on gender, ethnicity, race, class and sexual orientation as well as analysis of emerging power relation dynamics. Finally, the transformative research utilizes an approach about how and why the problems of power relation and dominations exist, and why social and political actions are intertwined with these inequalities (Creswell, 2014: 5-10). These dimensions of constructivist and transformative paradigms make them applicable to my research.

Adopting the qualitative research approach and in order to explore and analyze women's political participation, namely participation of women in the parliament of Georgia, I have selected to conduct overall 29 face-to-face interviews including female members of the Parliament and experts. By utilizing the qualitative method and interviewing, we can learn about individuals' thoughts, perceptions and motivation (directly from the participants), using the language and concepts of women as they apply them in their daily lives (Geiger 1990). Moreover, as Sediman puts it:

> "Telling stories is essentially a meaning-making process. When people tell stories, they select details of their experience from their stream of consciousness…. It is this process of selective constitutive details of experience, reflecting on them, giving them order, and thereby making sense of them that makes telling stories a meaning making experience" (Seidman, 2013: 7).

With this approach, as a researcher, I am able to define the meanings of the beliefs and desires of our researched subjects, and reveal choices and identities in their actions respectively. Theface-to-face interviews enable one to define the meaning of the events and experiences as well as to learn about individuals' thoughts, motivation and attitudes towards a specific issue. Furthermore, through interviews we learn a lot about a respondent's experience, as the tone of voice and the emotional content, available through interviews,

enable us to learn more about the meanings, self-perception and the social content (Della Porta & Diani, 1999; Geiger, 1990). Thus, through interviews we develop narratives in which participants not only tell stories, but they retell their life experience and it is only through language that we have "access" to them (Seidman, 2013: 17-18).

2.3. Sampling

Sampling means the process of selecting certain units from the given group of population studying of which allows to generalize our results back to the population. This complex process may involve several steps and sampling methods (Berg, 2012; De Vaus, 2002). As a strategy for selecting the participants of my research, I have combined sampling methods and, thus, applied multi-stage sampling. As a first step, I applied purposive sampling, or the same as judgmental sampling, which means using special knowledge about some groups to be selected as subjects and which represents this population or where cases are judged as "typical" (Berg, 2012; De Vaus, 2002).

In my case, to represent women politicians in this study and in order to learn about women's political representation and participation, I am exploring a purposive group of women members of the Parliament of 2004, 2008 and 2012. As a sample frame, I used a list of MPs from each of these three cohorts. After I identified all women MPs, I have chosen every second female MP from the three lists developed (for 2004, 2008 and 2012 Parliaments). I took into account the heterogeneity of the sample that allowed me to maintain diversity of party representation and including women from both, plurality and proportional lists. Some scholars conducting qualitative research design argue that the number of respondents/participants does not have to be established ahead of time; they claim that new respondents add new information to the research and thus there should be flexibility in adding new respondents (Seidman, 2013: 58-59). Indeed, defining when is "enough" is not an easy task in the qualitative research method and different sampling can be applied depending on

the study needs/requirements (DeVault, 1999). In the case of my research, given the context and the setting, I have applied non-proportional quota sampling by defining the minimum number of 15 interviews as enough for my research.

In 2004 Parliament, there were twenty-two women (9,4%) and representation of women in each of the political parties was as follows: United National Movement-Democrats- thirteen women; one woman was elected as a majoritarian nominated by Burjanadze-Democrats party; one woman was elected as majoritarian nominated by the United National Movement-Democrats; one woman nominated as a majoritarian from an initiative group; political opposition- Right-Wing Opposition, Industrialist, New Rights Party – had two women.[1] From the 2004 Parliament, I interviewed seven women: National Movement - four women; Right-Wing Opposition/Industrialists- two women and one woman elected as majoritarian.

In the subsequent, 2008 Parliament, women's representation was only 6% or 9 women MPs out of 150. Considering that 9 seats were translated into an even lower representation of women as some of them refused to accept their mandates (www.parliament.ge), real representation was even low. Therefore, from 2008 Parliament I interviewed one woman from the leading party list (UNM), one woman majoritarian (also nominated by UNM) and one from the oppositional party, the Christian-Democratic Party, for the total of three women.

The 2012 elections brought changes in the share of political power and the leading political party UNM has been replaced by a Coalition - Georgian Dream. Coalition Georgian dream unites seven political parties. Initially, there were 18 women Mps as a result of 2012 elections, but due to appointments at other positions, now there are 17 women MPs. Seven women have been elected through majoritarian system (www.parliament.ge). Overall, I

[1] The data has been obtained from an official website of the Parliament of Georgia www.parliament.ge

interviewed seven women: two women from UNM, three women from party list from the Coalition Georgian Dream and two women majoritarians (Coalition Georgian Dream).

The female MPs interviewed for my research come from various backgrounds and political parties, however, all of them have been part of the legislature at some point starting after the political and economic changes of 2003. Some are new as politicians, while others have long experience in being in formal politics and Parliament in democratic transition (for about 10 years). Therefore, considering that some women have served in the Parliament of Georgia a few times and have been reelected in these three Parliaments during 2004-2012, the total number of interviewees is 15 female MPs from 2004, 2008 and 2012 Parliaments.

When, after many interviews, I realized that no new additional data was generated among the selected group of female MPs, I selected a group of experts engaged in the area of political parties, gender and democracy. Scholars call this the saturation point when no new data is produced for the selected category and they consider moving on to other groups for more diversity of evidence and data (Glazer & Strauss 1967:.60-62). In my case, I conducted interviews with the main stakeholders - experts, working on women's political participation issues. In order to select them, I applied the so-called snowball sampling method. This is a non-probability sampling technique through which one can reach and recruit respondents based on inquiry and recommendations, so as soon as one or several are identified as qualified respondents and are interviewed, they may lead you to others (Trochim, 2006). Applying snowball sampling was effective in reaching participants. Overall, 14 interviews with experts have been conducted using a snowball method. The respondents selected in this sample represent local and international NGOs, donor agencies, NGOs working on gender equality issues, NGOs working with political parties, individual experts of gender and politics and a representative from academia. The diversity of this group has indeed enabled me to analyze the context and factors "from outside", focusing on issues that may have not been

observed by female MPs but have been critical for explaining women's low representation in the legislature in the democratic transformation of Georgia.

2.4. Data collection

As pointed out earlier, I have conducted 29 face-to-face interviews, which constituted my primary source of data; these included 15 female members elected to the Parliament during 2004-2012 and 14 experts working on politics, political parties, gender equality and democracy. The respondents from women MPs list that postponed interviews several times and/or finally refused to be interviewed because of the time shortage and thus, were inaccessible for interview in the given timeframe of my fieldwork was replaced with the next respondent on the list. Interviews had been selected as the most suitable tool to conduct this research, because interviews: 1) generate important knowledge and data for analysis; 2) listening to responses and to the language of the participants, create opportunity for good comprehension of the meaning and facts, and 3) allow discussion and analysis of data from different angles and perspectives.

My interviews were semi-structured. An interview/topic guide was elaborated prior to the fieldwork. The narrative interview guide involves a flexible topic outline or a questionnaire that is organized around thematic fields and, crucially, it deploys open-ended questions (Newman, 2003). Thematic fields, for the group of women politicians of the national Parliament, started with exploring their background and focused on their personal experience of becoming a politician: how they became active and what determined their engagement in politics; what were the reasons, behind becoming a party member and MP, and what the obstacles were. The interviews focused on: linking women's political participation and representation with the democratic development agenda of the country; inclusion of women's concerns in the process of democratic development; meaning of

democracy and women's own efforts to promote democratic nation-state building; attitude towards increasing women's political participation; women's advancement in building democratic state and factors that respondents consider important in shaping women's political activism as well as experience of membership in Parliament, including existing roles and division of tasks, and views on addressing women's underrepresentation in politics (see Appendix 3).

A pilot questionnaire was developed based on the review of the relevant literature and knowledge of the Georgian context. After the questionnaire was tested, amendments were made in the interview guide in order to better adapt it to the research questions of the study. Altogether the questionnaire consisted of open-ended and closed questions. Each questionnaire took about 45 minutes to complete.

During the interviews, especially in the case of broader, open-ended questions, I as a researcher have had a chance to explore some of the issues in depth where necessary or clarify some of the attitudes, experiences and feelings of the respondents. In order to analyze wider political issues as well as personal experience and reflections, I used the approach of "funnel interviewing" – starting from broad questions and narrowing down to specific questions (Richtie, 1995). Considering this perspective, the interviews started with generic questions concerning the background of a respondent, moving to broader issues of women' political participation and were then narrowed down to their political experience.

A different interview guide has been developed for interviewing the main stakeholders, experts, working on women's political participation issue. Unlike the interview guide for sessions with female MPs, the questions with the stakeholders concerned not experience of the experts but rather focused on the broader issues of women's political participation, opinions of experts regarding women's representation in the Parliament in the context of Georgia democratic development as well as factors that in their opinion have an

impact on women's participation and representation. (see Appendix 4). In addition, the last part of the interview entailed questions related to strategies that would address a low number of women engaged in the formal politics of Georgia. The interviews were conducted in Georgian, except for one interview, which was in English.

Ethical issues connected to interviewing have been considered during the fieldwork. In order to adhere to ethical standards, all research participants were informed in advance, prior to the interview, about the purpose of the research, stressing that anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents will be assured. The names of the female MPs are not revealed in the study and all interviews have assigned numbers. To keep their confidentiality, interview dates with women MPs are only indicated in the annex where a list of interviewees is provided (see Annex 2). The names of the experts are not anonymous and are openly used when discussing the results. The experts have given their permission to be quoted and for their names to be revealed. Participants were also told that the interview process would take about one hour. In practice, the length of the interviews has been determined by the respondent's accessibility and their knowledge of the issues to be covered and had been different with various respondents.

With the permission of participants, the interviews have been tape-recorded and transcribed. Transcripts are, securely kept (separately from the list of MPs respondents) and can be made available to participants upon their request. In addition, the participants were made aware that the generated data would be used for further analysis and incorporated into the discussion of the findings of this study. Besides, in order to keep the anonymity of the respondents, the names of the interviewed female members of the Parliament are not displayed in the study.

2.5. Transcribing and analyzing data

All the interviews conducted have been transcribed. Despite a rather intensive and time-consuming process of transcription, making transcripts has been very useful as it allowed for additional analysis of the context within which the interviews were carried out and the emotional responses of the interviewee. More importantly, during the transcription process, before starting the actual coding, I noticed topics that I had not noticed during the interviews.

My next stage of research entailed the analysis of empirical data. Analysis of data may take various forms but predominantly it is based on the research questions, theoretical framework and their combination (Kawulich, 2004). The analysis of the narratives allowed identification of common and contradictory themes, which were then coded into conceptual categories for the purpose of developing a theoretical framework. All the interviews conducted, after being transcribed, have been coded to identify major concepts, which then served as the basis for the analysis.

Because I use a grounded theory approach, I expected the voices of the research subjects to guide my research analysis. With the information from the narrative interviews I was able to analyze numerous dimensions, like: the female MP's beliefs and actions; the ways in which decisions about political engagement have been made; experiences of being a female MP and how such experiences are shaped by diverse factors; and, how female MP view democratic processes, its relation to women's political participation, and how they locate themselves as contributors to these processes.

In general, data analysis in qualitative research implies that data is categorized and summarized as well as organized, and that themes are revealed in the data (Kawulich, 2004). I see data analysis as an interactive process in which the following steps and strategies are applied:

Step 1: organize and prepare data for analysis - this stage involves transcribing interviews, field notes and arranging data depending on the source of information;

Step 2: read the data or look at the data broadly to identify what are some of the general ideas and themes emerging;

Step 3: code data i.e. this is a process of organizing data by segmenting the narratives and paragraphs of the narratives into categories and labeling them with appropriate words or terms. I used open coding as the basis for my research, i.e. generating categories of information, identifying codes and discussing them in relation to the literature on women's political participation; such an approach reveals interconnections and explicates a story through interconnection of the codes and categories. The themes that emerge from the interviews that are unusual or surprising and were not anticipated at the beginning of the study will also be revealed. Rather than using predetermined codes, I used a traditional approach, applied in the social sciences that allow codes to emerge during the data analysis.

Step 4: identify themes and categories emerging from the codes; I used these for analysis and as a base for the major findings of this research; the data displayed multiple perspectives and was backed up with relevant quotations as evidence. Identification of themes facilitated the emergence of a theoretical framing and made it possible to achieve an additional level of analysis that goes beyond simple description and which shaped more complex analysis.

Step 5: analyze and interpret the findings of the research – whether findings confirm some of the existing knowledge or suggest new theories and questions (Creswell, 2014). In the final stage of the analysis, I elaborated on how the findings relate to each other and to the existing literature.

2.6. Additional data sources

In order to deeply explore the factors shaping women's political representation and experience of female members of the Parliament during the last decade of democratic transition, I have utilized additional data sources for my research. Namely, I attended a few meetings dedicated to the women's political empowerment in Georgia organized by local and international organizations. In these meetings female politicians, current and former, leaders of political parties and female leaders participated. In December 2013 I attended Win with Women Conference organized by NDI which brought together representative of leading political parties, as well as women from local government and from political parties not present in the Parliament. On another occasion, in February 2014 I attended a meeting organized by Women's Information Center which raised discussion on increasing female political representation in politics by participation of representatives from government and a few experts. Importantly, participation in such meetings on my side has given me a better understanding of the context and showed the gaps and need for consideration while during my research on female political representation. It also gave me an important insight into the processes and practices of women's political subjecthood.

I have also reviewed a bulk of secondary sources on gender and development, and have examined the gender dimension of various elections that took place in Georgia over the last decade of transition. These sources include gender analysis of elections and political parties since the 90ies with particular focus on the studies carried out since 2004. Among these are: "Gender and Democratic Transition: The Case of Georgia 1991-2006" by Tamar Sabedashvili (2007), "The Results of Transition Period on Georgian Women's Political Participation from 'Rose Revolution' till Today", Master's thesis by Ekaterina Gejadze, a study "Development of Intra-party Democracy from Gender Perspective" by Medea Badashvili and Tamar Bagratia (2011) and "Gender Analysis of 2012 Parliamentary

Elections" by Tamar Bagratia (2013). I review these studies in the third chapter of this research and at the same time refer to them in the discussion of my findings in consequent chapters.

In addition, I conducted a desk research during which I was able to access and review a number of reports and legislative documents significant for the context of the study and relevant for situating my initial research questions and findings..

I believe, this approach of utilization additional data makes my study stronger and findings and analysis better positioned in the current reality and theoretical and practical discussions.

2.7. Positionality of a researcher

The qualitative methods chosen by me as a researcher, for the present study, aim to produce knowledge largely based on perspectives and experiences of the participants and based on that to produce new knowledge in the field of gender and politics. In this process, and especially during in the interviews, we cannot ignore the power relationships between researcher and interviewee (Kirsch, 2005: 163-172). In this regard, it is important to trace how we as researchers communicate and interact with the participants of the research and the role a researcher plays, while not comprising confidentiality and trust (Kirsch, 2005: 163-166). However, I, like others, from the position of a researcher can decide what method to apply for my research, which theory to rely on that might be the result of intersecting – social, psychological, political and epistemological factors (Grosz, 1993: 194). Some scholars obviously indicate that gaining trust and feeling as an insider among the group interviewed as well as leaving a profound impression are crucial factors during the interview process and that they impact the positioning of a researcher (Fontana & Frey, 2003; Richtie, 1995)..

The fact that this study is a part of an international, English language PhD program and that my research is of interest not only inside the country, but also more widely to an external community due to the international links of the Program, was accepted with great interest and positive feedback from female MPs interviewed for this research. This positioning of myself and of the program within a larger context, probably, contributed to respondents' greater openness and willingness to participate and to share their views. Such a context also allowed me to establish trust in the relationship between an interviewer and a respondent and might be grounds for avoiding rehearsed story telling by a respondent; this is important to obtain responses that really reflect the attitudes and experiences of those interviewed (Richtie, 1995). What also helped me to gain trust was my knowledge of gender equality issues in Georgia and problems women face result of seven year experience of working in the field of gender equality and women's empowerment.

Language that researcher and a respondent use are significant for shaping the conversation. In addition, power relations between the two and its effects on the knowledge produced through interviews also have to be acknowledged. In short, a researcher has to be careful in challenging the dominant language frames used during the interviews (DeVAult, 1999). Therefore, I have been careful to unpack MP's women experiences, in stages, by getting back to interviews several times, comparing opinions expressed overtly and covertly by respondents and by doing so interpreting their experience.

Considering the age difference between me as a researcher and female politicians, it indeed took effort on my part to engage the respondent in conversation: I had to prepare for the interview prior the actual meeting as well as gather additional information about my respondent in order to be well informed. I used my knowledge to gain more trust and appreciation, which made them more encouraged and open.

The issue of power and trust was not as critical while conducting experts' interviews, as I had been perceived as an outsider like they perceive themselves in regard to the topic of women's political participation. Therefore, some of the challenges in power relationships between a researcher and a respondent hadn't been taking place while analyzing the political landscape with the experts – "the outsiders".

2.8. Conclusion

As the above chapter described, in order to explore women's representation in the Parliament and analyze women's participation in formal politics, during the democratic transition of Georgia, I have applied the grounded theory approach. Such an approach enabled me to develop theories from data and not fit my findings into particular theories and hypothesis; rather it allowed me to be flexible and to consider the particularity of the specific context. For this purpose, the study relies on 29 in-depth interviews with a sample of women MPs of 2004, 2008and 2012 Parliaments and experts working on gender issues and political parties. The analysis and the findings are also informed by information from the secondary data sources and my participation in the meetings focused on women and politics.

The chapter below provides a description of the context of Georgia's transition and democratic development. I further offer a brief review and analysis of women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia during the last decade of democratic transition and review relevant secondary sources for this purpose. In subsequent chapters I discuss experiences of female members of parliament and I analyze and interpret such experiences in the context of democracy building process. I conclude by outlining possible approaches to overcoming women's low representation in the national legislative body, the Georgian Parliament.

Chapter 3: Gendered Transition Democracy

3.1. Factors shaping women's political representation during the time of transition

Transition in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) hasn't been gender neutral. Often the gender aspects of transition haven't been explored as the focus was more on political and economic agendas. Communism and transition period have affected women and men differently and, in fact, gender relations are a means through which political and economic changes can be understood (Kligman & Gal, 1998).

Indeed, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, gender appeared to become one of the problematic areas as gender disparities in fact significantly increased as a result of political and economic reforms; women were left out of politics and their employment also dramatically fell. In many post-socialist countries, women represented majority of unemployed and they were visibly underrepresented in political decision-making Ishkaian 2003).

While transitions in CEE have been accompanied by transformation of economic and political processes where women were found marginalized under the influence of new political and economic realities. Proportion of women in the national parliaments has been changed from 25-30% of Soviet time to 5% max 20% after 1989 as well as women were underrepresented in the government institutions in the region, and move to democracy through transitions has gone through marginalization of women on politics (Heinen, 1997 : 577). Despite hopes for multiparty inclusive political systems, women were found excluded while men were sharing the leadership power in political parties. Women's representation in national parliaments was below the world average (12%) in transition in the CEE region and this figure was twice lower that women's representation in parliaments in Western European countries (Matland & Montgomery, 2003).

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union a lot of research has been undertaken in the field of gender and political participation. Some of the early research focused on cultural ideologies of soviet legacy while focus on political systems and institutions for analyzing women's political representation came later and building of nation-states were addressed and discussed (Matland & Montgomery, 2003; Galligan & Clavero, 2008).

The analysis of women's political representation in CEE largely reveals interplay of the three major factors explaining such a dramatic decline of women in political decision-making. These are: 1) cultural legacy of soviet times and state socialism, prevailing gender roles and attitudes and women's engagement in civil society (Galligan and Clavero, 2008). The second factor, prevalence of gender norms and attitudes is largely linked also to the soviet legacy implying that during state socialism traditional gender roles hadn't been transformed and women's major roles was still to take care of family and children as well as nothing changed for men at all Therefore, men continued to largely represent the public sphere while from women it was more expected to be caretakers and nurturers. Women's representation in civil society is the third factor that research identifies. Women in early transition found spaces for activism by joining civil society groups, however, the lack of feminist movement and clear feminist agenda had been lacking. Scholars claim that presence of a feminist movement is of particular importance for women's political representation.

Solely focusing on these three factors hasn't been sufficient for explaining women's low representation in the developing democracies. In addition to these, factors, some of the party level characteristics, political and elector systems, patterns of women's recruitment have been proved to be affecting women's representation and participation in the political decision-making (Matland & Montgomery, 2003; Galligan & Clavero, 2008).

While analyzing women's political participation in the post-Communist Europe, needs to be considered that the influence of a post-communist political culture supported with

deeply rooted patriarchal culture and illusionary emancipation of Soviet times (Montgomery & Matland, 2003; Regulska and Grabowska, 2012). Women's poor positioning in the political parties during Socialism affected their low representation after independence while men were the one determining rules, taking on leadership and power. The authors argue that there are more opportunities for women's political representation in the democratic that authoritarian regime, although women's access to power and the level or quality of democracy hasn't been largely noticed during transition. Analyzing democracy, legislature, and women's recruitment in the party and gender equality politics appear to be significant in understanding women's political representation (Montgomery, 2003). Therefore, Montgomery argues that political, socio-economic and cultural factors are strong determinant of women's representation in national parliaments (Montgomery, 2003).

When exploring factors that influence women's political representation in CEE, party systems play important role as well. According to Fuchs, in transitions in parties in CEE practice the high positions occupied by women and shared by women has been almost zero; quota almost doesn't exist and there is no transparent or institutionalized system of developing party lists and nominations in elections (Fuchs, 2003). Party systems, recruitment of women, party ideology, political culture and institutions, political leaders, etc. are some of the important factors that contribute to explaining women's political participation. Low representation of women has various explanations and addition to some mentioned above, mostly scholars consider that socio-economic factors, past experience of Soviet legacy, untransformed gender roles, political culture and civil society are important for women's political representation.

Party ideology and electoral systems have been proved to be the two crucial factors for women's representation in national parliaments in Central Eastern European countries. For instance, in the countries of CEE regions like Hungary and Romania party ideology

proved to be a significant factor for women recruitment what definitely influenced representation for women in the national parliaments and in this case as well, party ideology has been identified as important aspect for women's political participation along with the other issues, like socialist past and ethnicity (Chiva, 2005). In addition, communist legacies, increasing role of women in civil society, socio--cultural factors are identified as sub-factors forming the context for women's representation in the parliaments (Chiva, 2005; Galligan & Clavero, 2005).

If we examine women in the politics of some of the developing democracies, we will recon that women are reluctant to participate in politics to certain extend, bearing in mind the double burden and untouched gender roles brought by communism along with "emancipation" rhetoric (Rueschemeyer, 1998). Reluctance of women to join political decision-making might be explained with scarce social security as well as with the fact that women saw that engagement in politics didn't make much difference (Rueschemeyer, 1998). Conservative gender roles along with political culture have played much bigger roles than institutions on women's representation in parliaments in CEE countries in 90ies (Fuchs, 2003).

It is an interesting observation that during communism parliaments were weak and the so called civil society meant anti-government activities and was dominated by men. However, after the parliament became the powerful institution in the transition, the gender segregation changed and while men started dominating the legislative institutions, women compromised majority of the civil society groups, thus were granted with a reality of maleness of the parliaments and not that strong weak civil society, in fact, dominated by women (Kligman & Gal, 1998).

Transition witnessed simultaneous decrease of women in formal political decision making, while spaces for women's activism had been opening rapidly. On the example of

Poland and this has been the case applicable to a number of Central and Eastern European countries, Fuszara argues that women's low representation in political decision making and national parliaments which was the major law-making and policy making body after break-up of the Soviet union, is due male dominance in parties and party politics and it had nothing to do with the notion that men are better in politics or women's duty is to take care of families (Fuszara, 1998). However, there is a contrary experience in other forms of political activism.

Politics in transition to democracy frequently becomes male dominated public sphere where women do not belong (Waylen, 1994). Still, women's decreased representation in politics in CEE can be explained by a few circumstances: first of all, women's interests and women's issues had been ignored by parties and those sharing political power or willing to share, didn't consider interests of various groups (Sabedashvili, 2007; Brunnbauer, 2000). It is also true that women were not prepared for political leadership; besides, networking and informal bargains was uniting men and limited to men so, here was little space for women to engage. What's more, due to cuts in social security, there was no support to the traditional women's role within private realm and lack of time simply hindered women's engagement in politics (Brunnbauer, 2000). In addition, gender equality policies didn't get enough attention by the states in transition (Regulska & Grabowska, 2012; Sabedashvili, 2007). Beijing Conference back in 1995 has been a pivotal for establishing gender and development agenda in the post-Soviet countries and for adoption of gender equality policies, development of women's movements and mobilizations across the region.

To conclude, as mentioned above, one o he aspects of the gendered transition in CEE is women's low representation in formal politics since the 90ies. There is a complexity of factors shaping women's representation in CEE out of which cultural legacy of soviet times and state socialism, prevailing gender roles and attitudes and women's engagement in civil society as well as party systems and ideology, political culture and institutions dominate.

Understanding the factors influencing female political representation in CEE gives ground for better understanding women's low representation in the Parliament in Georgia's democratic transition.

3.2. Gendered transition from socialism to democracy in Georgia: an overview

After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Georgia started moving toward a market economy and democracy, accompanied by strong national struggles and heavy transformative processes. The transition period was quite a challenge for the citizens of Georgia, experiencing a civil war and two ethnic conflicts. Women had been actively participating in national movements, and were the ones suffering most from ethnic conflicts as well (Sabedashvili, 2007). Prolonging the process of becoming an independent country, political turbulence has made an impact as well. The ethnic conflicts with heavy civic and political consequences, resulting in 300,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 55% of them women (UNHCR, 2002). The resulting wartime crime has not been fully researched; it is well known that women suffered from humiliation, psychological, and sexual violence and rape (Sabedashvili, 2007). Women also suffered physically when crossing snowy mountainous areas, as well as economically, in subsequent years, as they had to leave all their belongings and employment opportunities behind. Jobs in new locations were scarce, and they had to rebuild their emotional and material lives. What is more, for those displaced, identification as an IPD has been highly problematic, with fears of marginalization and exclusion (Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2003).

Women's involvement in national movements has been visible during the transition in Georgia. Women have been active as citizens, claiming political space through political activism and participation in demonstrations and protests; they equally have undergone the heaviest moments of Georgian nation building, with both the positive and negative impacts

(Chkheidze, 2010). Despite women's lack of access to formal politics, their demands for bringing change as well as resistance to discriminatory realities have been evident characteristics of the Georgian transition period.

The profound transition dramatically influenced economic conditions and the status of Georgian citizens. As in other areas affected by the post-Soviet transition, employment and poverty have risen. In fact, all former Soviet countries have experienced a decrease in employment availability, a decline in economic production, and major cultural shifts (Heyns, 2005).

Women's economic status also declined, as women started to accept lower-paying jobs or increasingly engaged in informal economy (Sabedashvili, 2007). Many women started to run small-scale businesses and sell goods at markets and in the streets; this activity was often described as "suitcase" merchandizing (Ishkanian, 2003). Employment in this informal economy opened up survival opportunities, but it also put women in unprotected, vulnerable positions. Moreover, the persistent crisis led women and men to self-employment and trade. Despite women's greater economic independence, they became economically and politically marginalized. Women's claims on the public sphere remained weak, and employment did not mean involvement in political decision-making (Sabedashvili, 2007).

The effects of communist ideologies and practices on gender relations were significant, considering that the transition, in many respects, was a continuation of the past—not simply a break from the past. Indeed, scholars argue that in understanding gender relations during the transition period, it is important to consider the past (Gal & Kligman, 1998). Socialism established new roles for women and men in Central and East Europe, including Georgia. For women, socialism meant a double or triple burden of housework, motherhood, and wage labor, while concurrently promoting feminization of family care (Verdery, 1996). It is not a surprise that during Soviet times, the level of women's education

was high because of easy access to education for all, and women could enjoy good social benefits, cheap health care, and food; these were the direct benefits of socialist equality. Women in the Soviet times have had accomplishments and had achieved emancipation; however, they continued to bear the double burden of simultaneously working in factories and being family caretakers (Ishkanian, 2003). Communism tried to maintain women's role as workers and mothers, emphasizing the natural differences between women and men, thus prescribing different roles to each gender. In fact, during communism, the relationships between the private and the public sphere were blurred, creating even more gender inequality after the fall of the system: Despite the political and economic change, gender division of labor remained, and taking care of children was still a woman's responsibility (Brunnbauer, 2000).

It is important to note that during communism, Parliament was weak, and the so-called civil society meant antigovernment activities, dominated by men. However, after Parliament became a more powerful institution during the transition, gender segregation changed; while men started to dominate legislative institutions, women comprised the majority of civil society groups. The reality of male domination in the Parliament and greater visibility of women in civil society became a new norm (Gal & Kligman, 1998; Sabedashvili, 2007). In addition, society's beliefs about family and gender roles—as well as community and leadership roles—did influence the transition to democracy in the Caucasus, where women continued to be an ideological target of political, economic, and religious endeavors (Ishkanian, 2003).

The 1995 Beijing Conference was pivotal for stimulating development of NGOs and developing women's and gender-focused agenda in Georgia (Aladashvili & Chkheidze, 2009). The worldwide gathering of women's and feminist NGOs has been critical in shaping women's movements and mobilizations across the world but especially significant for the

region of Central and East Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asia (Sabedashvili, 2007). For women from the former Soviet Union zone of influence, this was the first time they could freely participate in such a global meeting. Some scholars saw the rapid rise in local mobilization and movements as a part of globalization, and Beijing's meeting was part of this process (Moghadam, 2003).

The international call for gender equality and women's empowerment—by NGOs, formal and informal women's and feminist groups, as well as by some governments—led to greater women's solidarity and resulted in development of a common identity; in that sense, globalization became a uniting factor for women across nations (Moghadam, 2003). Moghadam believed that globalization provided women with information, networking opportunities, strategies, and approaches, as well as sense of solidarity. Because of these global connections, local women's movements and mobilizations do make a difference and help shape global politics (Moghadam, 2003).

These local mobilizations were undoubtedly significant in shaping the transition's gender context; women found the ability and capacity to cope with the heavy toll of transition. A number of women-focused NGOs started to emerge in the late 1990s. Although they could not be formed directly as a movement, NGOs were targeting women's advancement and women's rights issues (Sabedashvili, 2007); to a lesser extent, they have influenced policies and urged governments to adopt gender-equality strategies.

Despite the widespread challenges of political and economic exclusion and marginalization, woman undergoing the upheavals of transition were not acting as "victims" of change and transition but rather as "agents of change" by resisting new realities and developing new approaches and opportunities for advancement (Buckly, 1997). Indeed, some women became breadwinners and entrepreneurs; they became engaged citizens by creating spaces for active citizenship through civil activism and the work of NGOs. They were

flexible to the dramatic changes in the social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. For other women, transition meant cuts in social security, in childcare and maternal benefits, in withdrawal from political participation, the burdens of poverty and unemployment, and deteriorating living conditions—this can hardly be called development or progress.

While state socialism introduced so-called "protective" laws for women, women have performed two primary roles: productive and reproductive (Einhorn, 2000). Interestingly, when examining changes during the transition, it is evident that women continued to handle and perform these two roles, which is also true for Georgia. The new conservative discourses that have emerged in Central and Eastern Europe considered women as mothers and, as such, responsible for the private realm—the family. This identity has no doubt hindered women's engagement in formal politics.

In 2003, Georgia experienced the peaceful change of political power, the Rose Revolution, which was truly a democratic event, aimed at establishment of democratic values and processes in the country. Yet, women's status and conditions have not dramatically changed since the Rose Revolution: Women still comprise the majority of unemployed, are mostly self-employed or employed in low-paying jobs, make up only 11% of the parliament and 10.5% of elected officials in the local government. Domestic violence, while largely unexplored after the transition, appears to be an increasingly widespread phenomenon throughout the country (USAID, 2010).

3.3. Women's political representation in the post-Soviet Georgia

As discussed, the transitions in CEE as well as in Georgia have been accompanied by economic and political processes through which women were found marginalized in the new reality. While women found ways to develop strategies for adjustment and acted as agents of change, they were still testing their new roles, with mixed results. In addition, as discussed,

women were also left out of the political sphere, and Soviet legacies promising equality were not translated into equal rights and opportunities for women (Nechemias & Kuhenast, 2004).

In CEE, the proportion of women in the national Parliaments has changed from 25–30% during the Soviet time to 5–20% after 1989. Women's representation in national Parliaments in the CEE region after the 1990s was below the world average (12%), and this figure was two times lower than women's representation in the Parliaments in West European countries (Matland and Montgomery, 2003). Immediately after the post-Soviet era, women were also visibly underrepresented in governmental institutions. As Heinen argued, the move to democracy did result in marginalization of women in politics (Heinen, 1997; 2006, 81–100). Despite creation of multiparty political systems, women found themselves excluded while men were sharing the leadership positions in political parties.

In Georgia, women's political participation has been rather low during the last two decades. Female underrepresentation in formal politics is characteristic of the post-Soviet space, but considering high literacy and educational levels, women's high employment and economic participation—as well as women's activism and participation in national movements—their low formal political representation is surprising (Ishkanian, 2003). Since independence in 1995, women's representation in the national Parliament fell to 6.3% and, as the table shows (see Annex 1), in the subsequent Parliaments it has not increased significantly.

After gaining independence, the Parliament in Georgia holds the highest legislative power. Initially it had 235 members; however, since the amendments in the Constitution in 2008, the number of elected MPs has decreased to 150, each serving a four-year term. Seventy-seven MPs were elected through proportional lists and seventy-three through single member district plurality/majority system or single constituencies. The number of women's

representation in the Parliament, dropped to 6% in 2008, as only nine women were holding seats.

In the 2012 Parliament, seventeen women were elected; ten through proportional lists and seven as plurality/majority candidates. Eleven women belong to the leading party coalition 'Georgia Dream," and six women to UNM (Parliament of Georgia official website, www.parliament.ge). This number is almost twice as high as in 2008, when women's representation was 6%.

Earlier studies on political parties, conducted in the late 1990s, indicated that by 1997, women were leaders of 6% of political parties (total number 158) and among the 124 political parties registered in 1999, women managed only 5% of them. In general, women's representation in leadership positions in political parties was 9–11% during the 1998–2001 period (Khomeriki & Chubinidze, 1998; Khomeriki & Murusidze, 2002). In addition, political parties did not develop and adopt consistent, clear ideologies; the organizational structure of political parties lacked democratic values. All of these challenges hindered the adoption of gender-sensitive lenses and practices (Khomeriki & Murusidze, 2002) Similarly, women received little support when party lists have been constructed before Parliamentary elections in the last two decades: Even when women are included on party lists, they seldom appear among the first ten candidates and are usually located at the end of such lists.

As a recent research revealed, in 2010, there were more than 200 registered parties; however, only a few were politically active, and general public awareness of their agenda has been rather low (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011:7–10). Furthermore, the parties are fragmented. Nonetheless, political parties remain the main arenas for women's political participation; therefore, while not all of them acknowledge the importance of women's inclusion, establishing gender parity within parties can be an indicator of a party's level of democracy

and, therefore, an important factor for women's political advancement (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011:7–10).

Research by Bagratia and Badashvili (2011) included seven political parties and indicated that, despite declarations in support of gender equality and stated importance of women's inclusion, the parties lacked clear-cut gender equality or women's advancement strategy. Their initiatives are ad hoc and not systematic. The study identified two main categories of political parties: those with no gender equality mechanism and those that have mechanisms in place (such as a women's branch or organization) and thus are securing gender equality and women's advancement—although institutionalization of gender equality is not a part of the statute of any party (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011: 8–3). In addition, women's groups within the parties remain weak, despite progress and an increase in visibility and functions. Not surprisingly, none of the political parties carried out a gender audit and lack a strategic plan for gender equality or women's advancement (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011: 33–34).

Gender analysis of 2012 Parliamentary elections indicated that women represented 28.7% of the registered candidates; however, the former and current leading political parties—United National Movement and coalition Georgian Dream—put forth the least number of women candidates. At the same time, none of the political parties participating in the 2012 elections have shown explicit steps to advance gender equality as part of their program. From the registered 16 political subjects/parties, only six had considered a voluntary gender balance proposed by the Georgia Law of Political Unions of Citizens (introduced in 2011) in propositional lists. However, the leading political parties that had overcome the minimum threshold and gained seats in the Parliament—Coalition Georgian Dream and the United Georgian Movement—have not considered this voluntary measure for gender-balanced proportional lists (Bagratia, 2013).

The analysis of the 2012 Parliament also shows that the number of seats won by women form plurality system/majoritarian has been dramatically increased; however, we cannot claim it is due to their gender or whether it is political affiliation with the leading oppositional party Coalition Georgian Dream. Still, it is a fact that women have won more seats through proportional lists rather than majoritarian/plurality system as a result of the 2012 elections. Importantly, only six women in the Parliament represent the United National Movement, which became a minority party in the current Parliament. This number is the same as in the 2008 Parliament, while the total representation of MPs on behalf of UNM decreased from 119 to 65 after the 2012 elections. This leads us to consider the links between the electoral system and women's representation.

Despite the increase in women's representation through majoritarian system, overall, women won 15% of proportional mandates and 9% of majoritarian mandates in the 2012 Parliamentary elections. Due to these shifts, the 2012 elections are considered a step forward in women's political representation, as their share of seats nearly doubled from 6% to almost 12% in the new Parliament (Bagratia, 2013).

Despite these positive changes, women continue to be underrepresented in formal politics in the Parliament of Georgia. While political parties lack gender equality strategies, they still offer the major option for women to enter formal politics. Given the still-limited women's representation and participation in the Georgian Parliament, research that focuses on the role of different political actors and factors limiting women's entrance seems relevant and timely. This is the goal of the current dissertation.

3.4. Gender equality policy and institutional mechanisms since independence

Transition to democracy and political opening of Georgia after the independence, did introduce gender equality agenda into national discourse. This has been, to certain extent,

reflected in the adoption of gender equality policy in the country. In this regard, the World Conference on Women in 1995 and adoption of Beijing Platform of actions has been pivotal in pursuing the gender equality policy in Georgia (Chkheidze, 2010). Georgia's commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, has been reflected in the establishment of national commission and in adoption of concrete documents aimed at advancing gender equality. Specifically, in 1998, in order to develop the state policy and to adopt the Platform for Action, the State Commission on Elaboration of the State Policy for Women's Advancement was established at the Security Council of Georgia. The Commission adopted the following documents:

- Presidential Decree No.511 On the Measures for Strengthening Measures for Protection of the Women's Rights in Georgia (1999);
- The National Action Plan on the Measures for Protection of Women's Rights (1998-2000, Presidential Decree No.308);
- Three-year Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women (2000-2002);
- The Plan of Action for Improving Women's Conditions (2001-1004);

In the given environment of heavy upheavals of transition it was indeed a step forward; however, the plans were not fulfilled. The monitoring of the National Action Plan for 2001-2004 conducted by NGOs in 2004 showed that despite the commitment of the state, women's advancement was not achieved and 95% of the activities envisaged by the plan haven't been implemented (Sakhli, 2004)

More important reforms in gender equality policy have been undertaken since the Rose Revolution. First of all, needs to be mentioned that while State Commission on Elaboration of the State Policy for Women's Advancement has ceased functioning, in 2004, Gender Advisory Council was created in the Parliament; it was comprised of the

parliamentary and NGOs representatives. A similar institutional mechanism, the Gender Equality Governmental Commission (GEGC) was created in 2005 with a one-year mandate to ensure coordination among various stakeholders and to develop the State Concept on Gender Equality and the National Action Plan. Despite the state action to initiate these commissions, and thus to show political will, contributions of international organizations were crucial in functioning and in sustaining work of these two entities. In 2006, as a result of a joint working group and GEGC, a gender equality strategy has been developed which consisted of the State Concept on Gender Equality, National Action Plan on Gender Equality and a package of Recommendations for executive and legislative branches for adopting gender equality policies (Sabedashvili, 2007).

The Concept is based on the Constitution of Georgia as well as it largely reflects the Convention on Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), a major international instrument for combating gender inequality. In this regard, the Concept envisages equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of public and political life. It also considers measures for eliminating various discriminations based on sex and aims at equal fulfillment of rights and opportunities of women and men. In addition, the concept also urges the development of the relevant legal framework for ensuring gender equality (The State Concept on Gender Equality, 2006).

When the work of the GEGC was terminated in 2006, and an Interdisciplinary Commission on Elaboration of State Policy on Gender Equality was established at the Ministry for Reforms Coordination and was compromised of high-level governmental officials (Aladashvili & Chkheidze 2009). Its aim was to coordinate the work on the implementation of the gender equality policy.[2] However, effectiveness and sustainability of the national institutional mechanism on gender equality has been problematic because it was

[2] More on this can be found in Irma Aladashvili and Ketevan Chkheidze, Monitoring of Gender Equality Strategy and 2007-2009 National Action Plan, UNFPA, Tbilisi, 2009

not a permanent institution and lacked state support. The further assessments of the gender equality strategy urged creation of a permanent body on women's and gender equality issues as it happened later (Aladashvili & Chkheidze, 2009).

It is also important to mention that in spring 2006 the Parliament of Georgia adopted two important legislative documents: 1) the Law on Combating Domestic Violence and Protection and Support of its Victims, and 2) the Law against Human Trafficking. In addition, relevant national action plans have been regularly developed and approved since then. A coordination body, State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking has been also been established and in case of domestic violence, an Interagency Council stared coordinating the work of the state. In fact, domestic violence and trafficking are the two areas where cooperation between state agencies and non-governmental organizations has become efficient and it is an excellent example of how a strong alliance and collaboration can be developed and implemented. Such mechanisms allow space for engagement of all stakeholders in combating trafficking and domestic violence and ensure further elaboration and implementation of the appropriate policies.

The period since adoption of the State Concept of Gender Equality has been supported by the adoption of relevant national action plans on gender equality while the Gender Equality Council continues to lead the work on the advancement of gender equality agenda.

- National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2007-2009
- National Action Plan on Combating Domestic Violence and Protection and Assistance to the Victims of Domestic Violence – regularly updated since 2008

Yet, despite this impressive list and high level of political offices involved, these initiatives were mostly of declaratory character as they failed to address a number of issues

facing women and were not followed by tangible steps; they did not advance women's political position and their socio-economic status (Aladashvili & Chkheidze, 2009); in addition, it tasked NGOs and international organizations while the contribution of the state was minimal; what's more, coordination among responsible government agencies was rather weak (Georgia Beijing +20 National Review 2014). Monitoring of the implementation of these national action plans since 2006 demonstrates that engagement of civil society groups and of international donor organizations has been critical in the implementation of the activities of the plans. At the same time state and its institutions, still did not show much commitment in reaching the objectives (Georgia Beijing +20 National Review, 2014).

The role of Gender Equality Advisory Council has been crucial in developing and adopting the important legal documents since 2006. While the council was a temporary, advisory body, it had been tasked to coordinate work of state agencies, NGOs, introduce legislative amendments, etc. The Council united 17 members, representatives of NGOs, women's NGOs, and members of the Parliament (Aladashvili & Chkheidze, 2009). However, considering lack of funds for sustaining the Council from the state budget, the role of international organizations had been pivotal. Adoption of the Law on Gender Equality, also resolved the question of national institutional mechanism. According to the law, the Gender Equality Advisory Council of the Parliament of Georgia became a permanent institutional mechanism on women's rights and gender equality issues. Nowadays, the format of the Council has changed; it is mainly compromised of MPs and is headed by the Vice-speakers of the Parliament. The Council takes a key role in developing gender equality policy, e.g. with their leadership the National Action Plan for 2014-2016 has been developed and adopted.

Despite the fact that Georgia lacks gender mainstreamed legislation, adoption of the gender equality law has been a step forward as it aims to eliminate discrimination in various

areas. The Law covers such field as: maintaining statistics in the sphere of gender equality, gender equality in labor relations, ensuring gender equality in education and science, equal access to informational resources, gender equality in healthcare and social protection, gender equality in family relations, equal voting rights (Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, 2010).

The gender equality law is more a framework document as it includes only general statements and there are no monitoring mechanisms that would allow assessing the implementation process what makes it harder to assess utilization and effectiveness of the new law.

Since adoption of the gender equality, law, the following national action plans have been developed and adopted:

- National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2011-2013
- National Action Plan on Domestic Violence for 2011-2012
- National Action Plan on Trafficking in Human Beings for 2011-2012
- National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012-2015

Some of the key challenges in the process of implementation of the abovementioned national action plan are similar for all the National Action Plans:

- Lack of state funding for the implementation of the concrete activities of the NAPs, with the implementation being driven by donors and international organizations – except for the Trafficking NAP where the situation is vice-versa;
- Lack of clear monitoring and reporting process of the NAPs' implementation that would be owned by the government;

- Lack of paid support staff (secretariat) working for the national coordinating structures overseeing the implementation of the NAPs;[3]

In Spring 2014, the Parliament of Georgia approved the National Action Plan on Gender Equality for 2014-2016 which on its hand envisages promotion of women in political decision-making. Namely, Goal 6 states the following: promotion of increased women's participation at a decision-making level. It includes three objectives: i) Promotion of equal participation of men and women in the political life, ii) increase of women participation at the elected bodies and iii) promotion of women participation in decision-making process at the ministries and other agencies. Respectively, the activities planned to meet the objectives include cooperation with political parties, awareness raising among representatives of political parties on gender equality issues, consideration of gender aspects in the party programs, promotion of quotas, identifying impediments factors for women's advancement in decision-making, sex-disaggregated voters list and similar (2014-2016 National Action Plan on Gender Equality).

In addition, in 2011 Amendment so the Organic Law on Political Parties of Citizens have been introduced bringing voluntary measures to increase female participation in political life. The amendment implies the following: Parties will receive 10% funding supplement in case they present 20% different gender in every 10 candidates (Organic Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens). After more negotiations with political parties, the 20% target had been replace by 30% in December 2013. Such measures were aimed at raising the interest of political parties in including more women in proportional lists; however, this process is slow and in 2014 municipal elections there hasn't been much interest from political parties to consider such a voluntary measure.

[3] More on this can be obtained from the Gender Theme Group Meeting Report, November 2013

Georgia is signatory to Convention on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women since 1994 and, thus, has agreed to adopt and implement the obligations under the Convention. CEDAW recommendations as of 2014 among urge the government to undertake measures for addressing low female representation.

To sum up, since independence, the efforts to improve conditions of women have to be analyzed against a larger picture and the context within which the nation-state building process was taking place. Although the government of Georgia has adopted significant gender equality policy, still implementation by the state is lacking. Women are underrepresented in political parties as the election processes since independence have been deeply gendered. Introducing the gender analysis and gender features into the domestic legislation is not taking place what would have made gender an integral part of every field and be ground for women's participation in every field.

Chapter 4: Women's Political Representation in the Parliament

This chapter provides analysis of women's representation in formal politics with a focus on the Parliament of Georgia. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews, in this chapter I explore the notion of women's representation in the Parliament and analyze both the factors that facilitate and hinder women's political representation. I focus on the decade of dramatic changes in Georgia since the peaceful Rose Revolution of 2003 when the country openly declared its aim to adopt democratic values and build a democratic state, until the most recent parliamentary elections of 2012. The number of women in the Parliament of Georgia has not altered significantly since independence of the country and at present women make up only 11% of MPs.

In this chapter, I will analyze MPs' and experts' responses as to which factors shape women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia. Since I aim to study women in formal politics, especially the national Parliament, I explore women's formal political participation and examine the circumstances, causes, and factors affecting women's representation in the Georgia Parliament.

The factors affecting women's representation in the Parliament that were revealed in my data can be grouped into three major sets: 1) party level characteristics, 2) the role of the electoral system and 3) cultural and psychological factors affecting women's participation. Life experiences of women politicians, members of political parties and the parliament, as well as views of experts working closely with political parties and women politicians serve as grounds for discussion and analysis.

In this chapter, I will be discussing party-level characteristics as crucial factors shaping women's representation in the national Parliament. The data and findings of the present research indicate some interesting trends, notably, party level characteristics as well as external

factors, such as the type of electoral system and cultural barriers that all impact women's engagement in formal politics in Georgia.

The Georgian electoral system explored in this chapter is only one factor shaping the political culture and affecting women's representation in the Parliament. While the study reveals some of the characteristics that are commonly discussed by scholars in the field of politics and gender, such as ideology, party organization, gender sensitivity, and gender equality strategies, it is also significant to analyze the electoral system and whether it is relevant to the discussion of female political representation in the Georgian Parliament. In the transition, the Georgian electoral system has been among the factors that has shaped women's representation in the Parliament.

In addition to political parties and the electoral system, I will also explore cultural and psychological factors in this chapter. Cultural-psychological factors, including attitudes towards women, the expectations and roles that are assigned to women and the position of women are crucial in the Georgian context in terms of defining women's political representation. As interviews indicate, attitudes towards women as well as perception and confidence of women do play significant roles in women's choices.

4.1. The political party as a factor shaping women's representation

The present sub-chapter is devoted to a discussion of the role played by political parties in women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia as revealed from the collected data. The analysis and discussion above provided more detailed account of these issues. Scholars identify various factors regarding party characteristics that determine women's representation and political participation. Lovenduski and Norris underscore the significance of party characteristics in understanding women's political representation (Norris & Lovenduski, 2010). While no doubt political parties are a way for women to enter formal

politics, scholars claim that parties are also "gatekeepers" for women wishing to enter parliament. The extent to which women are able to join parties and become MPs largely depends on party characteristics (Norris & Lovenduski, 2010). Therefore, any discussion of the factors affecting women's representation in formal politics implies a discussion of party characteristics.

In order to understand the factors shaping women's representation and participation in the Parliament of Georgia, I asked the women MPs whom I interviewed for this study to describe their decisions for engaging in formal politics and to identify the factors that influenced their decision to become a member of the Parliament. In addition, I asked experts for their opinions about which features and processes in political parties have an influence on women's representation.

The interviews have revealed that some clear factors that impact women can be attributed to political party characteristics; however there is diversity in the answers as described below.

To begin with, the majority of women MPs, of the three Parliaments of Georgia, indicated that the major determinant for their engagement was the party leader or leaders, friendship with the leaders or long-term acquaintance with them. Personal positive dispositions towards party leaders have triggered women's decisions to join a party in a number of cases. This is how one respondent described her road to politics:

> *"I used to work in state structures and 12 years ago I became unemployed… and I was facing a dilemma of where to go and what to do considering the heavy situation in the country. It was 1999, the economic situation was bad, and there were no perspectives. And exactly then a friend of mine told me that a leader of one of the political parties was looking for a staff person in a*

personnel manager position. My friend told him (the leader) about me as a possible candidate and the head of that party expressed willingness to talk to me… I met the head of the party. He learned about my experience and told me that I deserved much more than the proposed position. So he said he would further inquire among friends and would offer me much more… Indeed, in a couple of days I met other leaders of the party and they offered me a position as an executive secretary of the party… Of course, I was interested because I had work experience in state structures and I knew political parties and I even had some sympathy towards this party, although I didn't know their political ideas in depth. So, I gladly accepted their offer. Frankly speaking, it was vital for me at that time and I really didn't think of making a political career…" (Woman MP#7, personal communication)

And another echoed these sentiments:

"In 2009, the leader of the party returned to Tbilisi and started to form a team. To be open, I personally hadn't thought that I would be in the team. Somehow, I wasn't even willing to engage in politics. But he simply met with me and asked me to be part of the team, and I gave this rather intensive thought… I thought a lot and realized that given the situation in the country if I wanted to be active, politics would give me more space for this struggle. For this purpose I had to make this step."(Woman MP#5, personal communication)

As my respondents mention, a leader's decision to invite women to run for office and/or to join a party has been critical. This is in fact a quite common practice in the Georgian context. The party leader (or leaders) has the power to determine whether to include certain people, in this case women, in the party and to have them as a part of the team or not. The respondents' narratives support the argument that frequently the leaders' "say" has been the determinant for including women in the parties and on party parliamentary lists. This indicates a centralized pattern of party organization that has been observed in Georgia during last decade. In the current political reality of Georgia, parties are not well developed and power and decision-making are explicitly held by party leaders, therefore, the sole position and attitude of a leader is decisive in regard to a number of issues, including who will join the party and represent it during elections and in the Parliament.

The above discussion also leads us to think about the well-established social networks that women have vis à vis their friends and colleagues. On a similar note, maintaining these social networks or operating in their familiar social networks, among friends, has been a deciding factor for many of my respondents in agreeing to be included in the party lists--a decision that later guaranteed their seat in the Parliament. In this regard, it should be mentioned that some of the women MP respondents had also been politically active prior to joining political parties. They had experienced in organizing, protesting, proposing new initiatives and more generally engaging in diverse activities in the public sphere. For these women, the decision to become party members was not only an expression of their desire to change something for the better, but the idea of being part of a team, of a "good team," and an opportunity to be with friends was also significant for them. This sentiment emerged as an important factor in the cases of quite a number of interviewed women MPs, among old and new ones. As one of the respondents indicated:

> *"I considered that it would be more interesting to continue working with the team with whom I had been working earlier. Of course, each of my decisions for engaging in politics is my decision… For everyone, making the decision to become a member is a very important decision and it is made based on various reasons. In my case the reason was that I would be able to continue working with my very close friends and colleagues. Nobody engages with a stranger in politics."* (Woman MP#3, personal communication)

Another respondent resonates with such a belief:

> *"… If I wanted to be more active, politics would allow me more space for [struggle] [engagement?] and for this purpose I had to make this step. . . besides, for me the team that surrounded the leader was of crucial importance."* (Woman MP#7, personal communication)

Importance of a team is once again emphasized by one of the women MPs as stated below:

> *"For women, the decision to engage in politics is important - the team with whom she will be working; I would say it is more important than the party ideology and program… The same is true for making any decision: we judge a person and not ideologies. In particular, from the perspective of engaging in politics and participating, the group of individuals with whom you will be working is decisive. This had been the main factor and not whether I liked something or whether I've had any plans regarding this [plans for engaging in*

> *politics]. I never thought about that… The key for me were the individuals with whom I was fine and who decide to be members of a political party."* (Woman MP#3, personal communication)

Some women even indicated their strong commitment to collective teamwork:

> *"I realized that in political processes it is extremely hard to make any achievements without a team … I realized that a political life without team participation and responsibility is hard … What was important was my active position and the team that [gave me] comfort in my visions to join that team in a political party."* (Woman MP#6, personal communication)

Evidently, party dynamics in Georgia, as revealed through interviews, indicate the value of party leaders and the team composition in engaging women in parties. Both of these findings about the factors of a leader and a team indicate that there is not a very systemic approach to candidate nomination and recruitment in political parties in the current context of Georgia. My study shows explicitly that in case of Georgian political parties, the party leaders themselves, and not institutionalization of a party implying well developed rules, policies and regulations, is often a guarantee for women's inclusion on parliamentary or party lists. In particular, the party's centralized structure allows leaders to make personalized decisions about who is in and who is kept out. While scholars argue that party centralization and centralized decision-making within a party may promote women's representation, the accountability and responsibility is still solely on party leaders. While a centralized party organization puts the burden on its leaders, in some parties with this type of organization, a

leader's decision may also quickly lead to diversification of the party (Matland & Studlar, 1996).

In the discussion of party level characteristics, it should be mentioned that, in addition, the experts interviewed for the present study have been asked about possible obstacles for women to appear in Parliamentary lists and then Parliament. The experts identified a few factors, and in regard to the discussion of party characteristics, they named intraparty democracy. As the respondents point out:

> *"I thought that party ideologies have had influence as it has been a tendency in many countries… however, in Georgia, it [women getting into parties] depends more on intraparty democracy, or the absence of democracy within a party"* (Nargiza Arjevanidze, personal communication, 18.01.2014)

A few others also state in this regard:

> *"Political Parties do not offer voters female candidates and it is a result of absence democracy within political parties… The problem is in attitudes by political parties"* (Mkervalishvili, personal communication, 29.08.2013)

> *"The state is supporting political parties, so it should also oblige them and request more intraparty democracy"* (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

The leitmotif of intraparty democracy is evident in the quotes below as well:

> *"We need to look at the parties, what type of parties do we have? Parties with no ideologies, no clear vision of development.... Intraparty democracy equals zero and all suits the leader, [it is]a system designed for a leader"* (Lika Nadaraia, personal communication, 22.12.2013)

> "Political parties have a problem of intraparty democracy… They do not put effort to find good candidates,… (Ketevan Chachava, personal communication, 15.04.2014)

And one more:

> "*The absence of intraparty democracy has an influence on women's inclusion in the Parliamentary lists*" (Elene Rusetskaya, personal communication, 26.02.2014)

In relation to the discussion on impact of party characteristics on women, research participants, mostly experts interviewed for the purpose of the study, identify intraparty democracy as a factor for women's exclusion from formal politics. While parties have poorly adopted principles of democracy on party level, it creates challenges for equality and participation of women. It is quite evident that maintaining gender balance in political parties is one of the indicators of intraparty democracy. Although political parties are not well developed and lack intraparty democracy, in the given context they are still the main gatekeepers for women to enter politics. Gender balance and opportunities for women's advancement in a party directly indicates the extent to which a party is democratic. While the respondents name intraparty democracy as significant in the discussion of political parties

and analysis of women's political representation in the Georgian context, local studies also refer to the gender aspects of intraparty democracy as key for women's inclusion and advancement and for maintaining gender balance in parties, local governance and the Parliament (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011).

Another study speaks about the role of informal bargains, social contacts and patronage based selection in engaging women as well as men in formal politics (Gejadze, 2010). While claiming democracy, the practice of selecting women and men based on personal acquaintance and friendship was common and this process was not backed up with clearly defined institutional, legal and transparent processes what on its hand reduced chances for women's engagement in politics (Gejadze, 2010).

Women MPs also identify party ideology as one of the factors influencing women's decision to join formal politics. Under the term "ideology," women MP mean broader values, opinions, strategies, and approaches of political parties. The respondents mentioned the significance of the visions and ideologies of the parties they joined but mostly they meant the broader congruence between the party and their own perspectives, without a detailed understanding of the programs or party strategies. This is how one of the respondents approached such a decision:

> *"For me the team that I gathered around him (the leader) was very important ... By the way, I was the only woman in that team. They were my friends and what's important, my visions coincided with theirs, with absolute majority and that's how I entered the political party."* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

> *"I personally didn't know anyone, but I knew from TV and was following the foundation of that party as it was a bit scandal the way they entered politics and I remember very well how they were labeled as new faces… and of course I had sympathies towards the party."*(Woman MP#13, personal communication)

The responses revealed that before joining political parties, women do pay attention to the broader perspective and ideology of the party and whether a party's perspective is in harmony with their own standpoint. Women MPs have identified this factor as an important one in their decision to stay with the same party and to engage in parliamentary electoral politics. The ideology and values of a team and a party can be considered rather significant factors in explaining women's low representation in both political parties and in the Parliament of Georgia after the Rose Revolution. In the 2008 parliamentary election, women won nine seats while total number of MPs was 150. However, several women refused to take their seats. One of the reasons that respondents identified for this phenomenon was the fact that although the ruling party, the United Nation Movement, maintained a leading position and held the majority of seats in the Parliament, its vision and ideology was not of interest to many previous members and supporters, among them, women. Therefore, during this period, women preferred to refuse their seats and even joined oppositional parties.

On the other hand, drawing on the case of Georgia, we also encounter cases where the party ideology imposed by parties is not a factor to a large extent for a party to be more woman-friendly or not. Generally, political parties are not particularly distinct in their ideologies and policies, in particular on the topic of women's inclusion and advancement. Furthermore, the fact that a party is newly established does not necessarily mean openness to women's increased participation. Respondents believe that, political party ideologies have

largely shown blindness and ignorance to gender inequality in political representation and the views of political and party leaders carry more weight. One of the respondents argued:

> *"/Ideology/ has little importance,[it is important] only for a small circle of people, because program in Georgian politics and political orientation is not that important. Here, leaders, positions and the activities the party undertakes are more crucial."*(Woman MP#14, personal communication)

Experts develop similar arguments as well:

> *"I thought that ideology would have influence. For instance, it is more meaningful that left-wing parties have more women as this has been the tendency in other countries. However, because parties in Georgia do not have explicitly developed ideologies, it's very mixed- parties are not consistent in their ideologies as well as it is not visible for the electorate. Therefore I wouldn't ascribe it [women's representation] to ideology."*(Nargiza Arjevanidze, personal communication, 18.01.2014)

One more similar argument:

> *"I think ideology is not a factor at all considering how amorphous the ideological bases of the political parties are... Even the political parties do not have well established ideological foundations…"* (Natia Jikia, personal communication, 27.03.2014)

The analysis has not shown that ideology has not supported any tangible measures to promote women or party rules. Experts interviewed for this research recognize and criticize current political parties for their lack of a clear ideology. Adoption of an ideology, developing a vision and following that vision are all absent and problematic for the current political parties and political system in Georgia. Ideology is a strong tool that should allow parties to operate, work with their members and voters. Newly established parties have less clear visions and ideology and are more disorganized while more experienced parties have better developed visions, strategies and policies and thus more consistent in their approaches and actions.

Scholars in the field of gender and politics, who have explored the importance of ideologies for women's political participation, have observed that new parties and left parties do a better job in considering underrepresented groups and have better gender equality policies. Indeed, women's and feminist movements have better links with so-called leftist parties (Matland, 2005; Lovenduski and Norris, 2010). However, in the present case, party ideology is not be a factor for advancing women in their political career or for nominating women to become MPs.

The interviews reveal that the concrete steps on gender equality undertaken by political parties or by individuals within a party and the Parliament have been another crucial factor that directly shapes women's political participation. When a party ideology is developed and adopted by its members, it should also influence the rules of a party. The stronger the ideology is, the stronger the rules should be, including rules for equal participation as a guarantee for inclusion and intraparty democracy. In this regard, the respondents of this study make an important indication about the proper policies and rules of political parties and gender equality policy of the country. About 10 years ago, policy aimed at gender equality was rare. As one of the leaders of the oppositional party mentions:

> *"Of course, this party is outstanding with its women's engagement and why? - When the party was established it was 2001 and neither the term 'gender' existed, as such, nor gender equality … The word was introduced later… My friends were very young at that time and from the very beginning they were thinking of establishing a European type of party, and indeed one of its component was a decision to establish a youth wing and a women's organization separately… This was more developed with time along with integration of the word gender from Europe and so on. I was already an MP and a member of the Gender Equality Council when we had this idea: let's aim to increase women's political participation. Therefore, we immediately developed a program and members of the parties themselves [worked on various related topics. In this regard the party has considerable potential…"*
> (Woman MP#6, personal communication)

This has been a practice of one of the oppositional parties which has existed for more than 10 years and apparently, gender ideology has been established more as a result of activism of individual women than as party ideology or as the adoption of formal rules for gender equality. In general, two main categories of political parties can be distinguished: one that has no gender equality mechanism and the others with existing mechanism on gender equality, although without institutionalization of gender equality as an explicit part of the parties' agenda. Local studies and analysis of previous elections and political parties, as well as assessments of intraparty democracies, demonstrate this trend as well (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011). The discussion on party characteristics is crucial and impacts women's representation in the parliaments. It leads to consideration of a rather important factor of

party organization, namely institutionalization. The more institutionalized a party is, with formal rules and policies in place, among them gender equality policies, the more inclusion of women happens. For example, in the 2014 local governance elections, the United National movement applied the pre-existing quota a requirement of 30% women in every 10 members in the party list. By taking these actions, the party will receive additional funding for promoting gender balance. However, since 2003, other parties- and importantly, leading parties such as United National Movement and Coalition Georgian Dream, either had poorly developed or no rules or policies ensuring women's representation. New Rights Party is one of the parties, represented in both the 2004 and 2008 Parliaments, which has a clear approach for women's engagement and advancement and has undertaken various initiatives for women's advancement in politics. As Caul argues, the degree of institutionalization directly determines processes and policies for women's engagement: the higher the degree is, the more rule oriented processes become, and that leaves little space to discriminate against women (Caul 2010 : 159-160). Following this line of analysis, none of the current leading parties in the 2012 Parliament, neither UNM nor Coalition Georgian Dream, but also parties of the previous Parliaments, have had a clear mechanism, institutionalized within a party, for achieving gender equality or increasing women's representation.

In line with the aforementioned, gender ideology has been revealed as one of the factors strongly affecting women's political representation. Women MPs have clearly described the importance of working on women's inclusion issues:

> *"I have strived for the establishment of a women's organization since I've become MP. . . The main idea will be to promote women in party structures and the second aim is to increase women's participation in politics to run for political office and to be elected, to participate in voting for female*

> *candidates and awareness-raising. I totally agree with these aims, they are particularly important prior to local government elections… as women's representation in local governance is about 11%."* (Woman MP#10, personal communication)

Thus, parties may differ in their strategies, but what is important is the link between the parties and women's representation/rights, whether women's and gender equality issues are on the agenda for discussion and whether party policies target discrimination against women –all of which shape women's representation in the Parliament. For the most part, parties lack a gender equality approach in their statue and policies and, thus, parties largely ignore gender ideology. This hinders increases among the number of women in the party hierarchy, and the Parliament in Georgia. In addition, although there have been women in leadership positions in political parties and in the Parliament in Georgia, their efforts to influence their parties' gender ideologies has happened in very rare cases, and never in the parties that have been in ruling or leading positions in the country. The explanation for the lack of gender ideologies might be the fact that political party systems and ideologies aren't very mature, as mentioned above, and a lot depends on the opinion of the leader(s) opinion and the position of the parties. Therefore, in the Georgian context of a high level of centralization and lack of gender approach, any efforts on a lower level appear unsuccessful and as failures.

Local studies also report that only a few parties do have a structure on gender equality within party, but not necessarily foster a proper policy on gender equality. Mostly, parties that have gender equality norms and policies established, are not presented in the Parliament (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011). There are parties either with existing mechanism (weak though) on gender equality or parties that lack institutional support to equality (Bagratia &

Badashvili, 2011). During the past few years parties started to undertake some steps for establishing women's organizations, like the case of United National Movement which in March 2014 formed a woman's organization. However, such structures are not strong entities and have not yet shown the support to women's advancement in parties and politics.

In general, experts openly indicate that the lack of party support to women is one of the obstacles negatively shaping women's political participation, as is also revealed in this study. It is widely known, and the interviews conducted in this study further confirmed this idea, that while women perform various tasks as party members (starting from volunteering to program development) and take on various responsibilities, when it comes to inclusion of women on party lists, women are frequently ignored and are not supported by party members. Here are the opinions of the respondents:

> *"Women are representing the majority [of the population] in the country. Women are on lower levels of the party where the actual work is undertaken; women's work [focuses] intensively in the districts; women are party representatives, women are party activists, but when it comes to developing lists, nobody remembers women."* (Woman MP#8, personal communication)

> *"I think women face more obstacles in upper level because men are appointed to higher positions… However, if we look at the local level, women are very active, and their duties are expressed in organizing campaigns, outreach, mobilization, etc. but not in nomination as candidates. I don't think women would refuse to be nominated as candidates, but I think the party centrally-the leaders- selects men candidates"* (Nino Lomjaria, personal communication, 28.07.2013).

> *"In general, women have such a negative impression about politics, that they restrain themselves from making a decision about political engagement… There are women inside parties who are not advanced in the party. This is already a process of intraparty democracy. Intra-party advancement of women that would allow women to appear in the lists doesn't happen."* (Elene Rusetskaya, personal communication, 26.02.2014)

> *"Men are in the leadership… Women are fit to men's leadership and are not empowered enough to change the environment; they are easily satisfied with the given situation and do not have ambitions if not considering a few occasions."* (Lika Nadaraia, personal communication, 22.12.2013)

> *"Women are more visible in political activism and when it comes to composing party lists and appointing them on positions, then there are few women."* (Woman MP#14, personal communication)

The interviews claim that women are active in political parties, do have certain roles, in particular on the lower level of the political hierarchy, but they have almost no chance for advancement. We should seek the reasons for such a reality in the level of centralization and intraparty democracy of political parties, the extent to which parties have proper regulations and policies for candidate selection and the party level characteristics. In Georgia, during the last decade of democratic transition, the political parties keep their gates closed to women and they have not necessarily acknowledged the gender imbalance in politics while seemingly forgetting that women represent more than half of the population.

To conclude, the analysis drawn on the interviews with women MPs and experts working with political parties and gender issues offer a few dimensions in the discussion of party level characteristics: First of all, the factor of a party leader and the decision from leadership to include women in the team is a common practice in the country?; Secondly, the Composition of the team is a very important factor that influences women to engage in politics. Next, the level of democracy inside the party determines gender balance in a party. However, parties lack well-developed and adopted gender equality rules and policies. Moreover, existing party ideologies are not explicit enough to promote women's advancement and maintain gender equality; and finally, while women are active in parties at the lower level in the hierarchy, they explicitly lack party support. These conclusions reveal how fragile women's political representation and participation can be and indicate the complexity of the issue.

4.2. Electoral System

The fact that many respondents mentioned the increase in women elected not through party lists but as majoritarian candidates/plurality system, has led me to also analyze the electoral system in Georgia. Experts interviewed for the present study have pointed out the significance of the electoral system for women's political engagement. Some scholars argue that in developing countries links between the election system and women's representation are not established and women and political parties do not take advantage of the given systems (Matland, 1998).

According to Georgian election legislation, MPs gain seats in the Parliament either though proportional party lists or through a majority/plurality system.

The experts interviewed for the present research argued the following:

> *"Women's political representation is of course linked with the electoral system. The current system that we have doesn't facilitate an increase in women's participation because in such a mixed system our political parties as independent entities cannot be developed and stay rather weak as organizations…"* (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

> *"When we were studying electoral system and offering alternative systems to the government, one of the positive sides was that it would allow keeping a better? gender balance. In my opinion, which is also supported by scientific literature, majoritarian system [is more fit] [are more beneficial?] to men…So, the electoral system defines women's representation and it is a factor..."* (Nino Lomjaria, interview by author, 27.03.2014)

As the data demonstrates, experts consider the electoral system to be important in the discussion of women's political representation in the Parliament. However, experts do not consider the electoral system to be the only factor. The electoral system is just one factor among various party-level and other structural and cultural factors as discussed in this chapter. Most post-Soviet countries have adopted the so called "mixed" electoral system, which in fact allows getting the "best" out of the two systems: majoritarian and proportional (Norris, 1997:297-312). Georgia is among the countries that made larger changes to the election system through constitution amendments that enacted a mixed electoral system. Changes were introduced in the Georgian electoral system in 2003 based on a referendum where citizens of Georgia agreed to reduce the number of MPs and compromise the Parliament of 150 instead of 235 members. Therefore, a reduced number of 150 MPs has been enforced since the 2008 Parliamentary elections. It is crucial to consider that "changing

the electoral systems often represents a far more realistic goal to work towards than dramatically changing culture's view of women" (Matland, 2005: 93). This perspective suggests the need for regulations for a more effective electoral system.

A number of studies propose distinguishing different types of electoral systems and scholars in the field of politics and gender suggest that proportional party lists and the majoritarian system affect women's representation the most (Norris 1997, Paxton and Kunovich, 2003; Caul, 1997; Caul, 2010). In proportional systems, the votes translate into the proportion of seats in the parliament. For instance, if through a proportional system, the party gets a certain percent of votes--it gets the same percent of seats in the parliament. In a majority system, there is one winner per district and the winner is the one who receives the majority of votes (Matland, 2005). In countries with proportional election systems where through a strong feminist movement demands were made for women's advancement, among them, political inclusion and participation, increased women's representation was achieved, while same efforts, however, were unsuccessful in the countries with a majority/plurality system (Matland, 2005).

The respondents see the difference between proportional party lists and majoritarian systems and consider the former to have had a positive impact on women's representation in the parliament. In the 2008 Parliament, there were eight women elected through proportional lists and one woman as majoritarian; in 2012 seven women were majoritarians out of 18. There are various explanations for this outcome: proportional system has high district magnitude translated into high party magnitudes. In this process, parties are competing and have the possibility of moving up or down in the list of candidates. Unfortunately (and usually), women are listed at the end of the party lists. In a proportional system, women are then simply put on the list and parties have a chance to balance the lists (Matland, 1998: 112-113; 2005:100-103). Interviews also mention the lack of party support to women, as

discussed in the previous sub-chapter, which leads to women being put at the end of the proportional lists. However, politicians do not acknowledge the significance of electoral systems for women while experts find it very relevant in the discussion of women's representation in the Parliament.

The experts consider it more problematic for women to be nominated and elected through a majority/plurality system, as it requires nomination of a candidate. Experts see unfavorable conditions for women in this process:

> *"The majoritarian system is oriented toward men. Majoritarians are nominated candidates who have financial stability, local influence and authority, own businesses, can support campaigns, etc. As of now in Georgia, it's men who are involved in business, have power and influence. Secondly, the reason why mostly men are nominated as majoritrians is because, those who are mostly nominated are those who are trusted, to whom there is personal trust. Considering that men are the decision-makers, they trust their friends, men, who they know won't go against their principles. Therefore, they trust men more- this is my observation"* (Nino Lomjaria, personal communication, 27.03.2014)

> *"We have mixed electoral system. Through proportional system women have more chances to win than through majoritarian. In majoritarian system, key is the person to be voted… and women are not nominated, so proportional is more comfortable for women."* (Nino Dolidze, personal communication, 31.08.2013).

The experts participating in the present research admit that in Georgia, parties look to nominate candidates that are well positioned, have power and authority in the community, and in most of cases these are men and therefore they have more chances to be nominated. While men are perceived as stronger candidates, placing them on the majority lists probably increases their chances to be elected. Moreover, in this process, in majority systems, it is perceived that women are competing with men and parties are afraid to lose a seat. In the proportional party systems parties and leaders are more aware of putting various constituencies and in some cases even are balancing the lists by introducing gender balance into the list (Matland, 1998; Caul, 2010).

The type of mixed electoral system that Georgia has adopted, meaning equal number of seats are through majoritarian and proportional lists, allows balancing the unfriendliness of a majority/plurality election system on the one hand with the proportional system. . Considering the arguments mentioned above that women have better chances through proportional electoral systems, in a number of countries introduction of proportional systems was followed by increased women's representation (Matland, 1998). If that scenario applies to Georgia then the reduction of proportional seats may be one of the explanations of why women's representation in the Parliament is so low.

Prior to the changes in the electoral system before the 2008 elections, 75 to 75 mandates were spread equally between proportional and majoritarian representation, but in fact the increase was in favor of the majority election system. A majority system candidate may only be nominated by political parties and has to overcome a 30% threshold to be considered the winner. The representation of women in the 2008 Parliament was particularly low –women occupied only 6% of seats. So, the increase in the majoritarian seats didn't bring considerable improvements for women. It should also be noted that while there was only one woman elected though the majority system in 2008, in the 2012 Parliament there

were seven women elected through majoritarian system out of 18 women. Therefore, in 2012, the number of women in the Parliament elected through majoritarian lists increased, yet there were still more women elected through proportional lists. In fact, women majoritariansin the 2012 Parliament were all nominated by the leading coalition party, and since the coalition won elections with most of the seats in 2012 elections, the six women elected as majoritarians didn't depend much on whether those who were nominated were women or men.

Before looking at the proportional party lists and majority election systems, we need to also take into account that introducing election reform also included decreasing the number of MPs. Indeed, respondents of the present study named this as one of the hindering factors. While women are less likely to be placed at the beginning of the list, but rather are placed at the end of party lists, the reduced assembly size left them with fewer opportunities to be included. Amendments of the electoral system couldn't significantly challenge the low number of women. In addition, the reduced number of MPs also didn't help opposition parties to gain seats in the Parliament and therefore, oppositional parties may have had more women in their lists than the leading UNM party, but they were not able to enter parliament. What seems to have negatively affected women's representation in the Parliament is the decrease in the total number of MPs, the decrease in the number of candidates to be included on proportional party lists and an increase in single mandate majority districts. Besides,, as women are mostly included at the end of the lists, in the decreased lists they have less chances to be elected.

The local studies also identify links between the electoral system and women's representation. This opinions is based on the gender analysis of 2012 elections which allows to conclude that despite increase in women majoritarians as a result of the 2012 Parliamentary elections, women have gained more seat through proportional list (14,2% compared to the previous 2008 representation of 10,6% (Bagratia, 2013).

Keeping this line of argumentation, Gejadze (2010) also claims that in 2008 decrease n women's representation in the Parliament was an influence of reduction of the total number of MPs to 150 and adoption of "mixed", majoritarian/proportional, election system. However, analysis of the 2012 elections according to which women still got increased number of seats both through proportional and plurality systems, questions the negative influence of the new election system and leads us to argue more and consider other factors as well.

To sum up, there are links between the electoral system and women's representation and, in fact, electoral system is one of the factors in shaping women's political representation in Georgia. Developments from the 2004 Parliament to the 2012 Parliament show the following: changes have been made in the number of mandates through proportional and plurality systems and in fact electing women has been increased in both Scholars claim that a proportional election system allows more space for gender balance in party lists, and analyzing the case of Georgia has demonstrated that the reduced number of MPs has not increased women's representation but rather resulted in a decrease of a number of women MPs. Furthermore, political parties have not applied the benefits of a mixed election system that would allow for more gender balanced lists. Therefore, in a developing democracy such as Georgia links between female political representation and electoral systems are not that strong. Nevertheless, the election system does play a role; however, it is not the only determinant for women's inclusion on party lists, nor for seats occupied by women in the national parliaments. At the same time, political parties may blindly apply ideological or cultural barriers that hamper women's engagement and participation. These are unwritten rules that do not favor women and do not allow them to advance in their political career, through the political parties.

4.3. Cultural and psychological factors

Interviews with women MPs revealed that some of the factors hindering women's political participation, in particular membership in political parties and parliament, lies in the gender roles that are assigned to woman and men. While the influence is not as strong as to preclude women from participating in political life or run for office, gender roles and women's responsibilities for domestic chores represent a strong obstacle to such participation. Namely, men are less involved in childcare and family responsibilities and this role hinders women's engagement in parties and, thus their ability to be elected to the Parliament. My respondents, both MPs and experts have, underscored this fact on several occasions as shown in the quotes from interviews below:

> *"More likely, a woman has many hindrances based on culture, stereotypes, and also gender… and, what's important, domestic burden that women have in Georgian society. This is already an important hindering factor, because in the same situation when there is no limitation in men's and women's occupations, the domestic burden is still on women."*(Woman MP#9, personal communication

> *"All women are active. There is something in every woman. Every woman can do some good for society. We simply need to explain to women and explain as clearly as we can and help them break the stereotype that women's place is in a family. This is not so."*(Woman MP#5, personal communication)

> *"I think the main problem starts from the very beginning, from family and education. Empowerment of women should start from the family… Family*

> *may help you become a free individual, but it should also give you certain skills to get engaged in various fields… I think women need 10 times more work to compensate it later on"* (Natia Jikia, personal Communication, 27.03.2014)

> *"[What hinders women's political engagement] is our mentality, the idea that a man is head of the family and that woman should obey him. When a woman becomes successful, man has problems regarding this issue. He has a feeling of inferiority. Of course, these are very deep problems, but this might be hindering factor for women…Equality doesn't mean one's superiority over another. Equality means understanding, support, sharing and not in any case subordination or superiority"* (Woman MP#12, personal communication)

Among the key barriers named by women MPs are the double burden and family responsibilities, both reflecting the cultural and ideological values that are predominant in the society. Due to the traditional expectations towards women and deeply-rooted conservative gender roles, family responsibilities remain the women's primary responsibility. Interviewees largely identified the difficulty of combining family responsibilities and public life for women. All the women MPs interviewed who have been married acknowledge that without the support of their husbands and close family members, their engagement in politics would have been impossible. Interestingly, although women MPs talked about such obstacles for women in general during this research, none of them mentioned that cultural factors or gender stereotypes had hampered their own political participation or aspirations for joining political parties and run for a seat in parliamentary elections. By such statements they once again emphasize how difficult it can be for a woman without social support to make the

decision to engage in politics. Indeed, scholars have argued about the influence of cultural factors on women's political participation, in particular in traditional and religious societies and countries. In this regard, I agree with the argument of Paxton and Kunovich that ideologies, i.e. beliefs and perceptions widely spread in a society towards women and men, may have the strongest influence on women's decision to join formal politics (Shedova, 2005; Paxton & Kunovic, 2003).

Another interesting conclusion that can be drawn from the interviews is that respondents explicitly believe it is not gender discrimination that presents a major barrier. Rather, they believe that the barrier limiting women's representation is in women themselves, in their lack of self-confidence and passivity. Such attitudes put more burdens on women, blame women for not being active, and are largely undermining their success. Women MPs as well as experts, as stated below, have identified several issue:

> *"[It] is important, to teach people to be confident in [their] own strengths. Discovering what women are capable of doing, or when a woman discovers how much she can do, she can deal better and present her abilities better. I know that there is a tremendous potential of women in Georgia and I can bring many examples. You also are aware that whether in demonstrations or elections or when there is something important happening in the country, women's participation is high."*(Woman MP #12, personal communication*)*

> *"Women put higher standards on themselves and it is not good at all. I think it is bad… If an average man is self-confident, a woman is not… You never will be ready for doing anything, if you don't do it."* (Natia Jikia, personal communication, 27.03.2014)

This factor is also part of the cultural hindrances, or psychological obstacles that prevent women from making a decision to join a party, run for office, or occupy a political decision-making position (Shedova, 2005: 44-45). While self-confidence is an issue for women in formal politics, on the contrary, women's high activism in civil society and NGOs is also evident. Moreover, we cannot claim Georgian women are passive if we look at how women have been active as citizens in civil society, in civic activism, national movements and in every critical moment of the nation-state building process, this explanation without argument of gender discrimination would not be valid. This fact leads to questions about whether women do lack self-confidence and probably should lead us to a discussion of more structural and systemic factors as identified earlier in this chapter. We should look for reasons in the complexity of factors that shape women's political representation. In fact, women's high political activism, not high political participation, indicates the agency that women experience in Georgia, agency to act on their own and on the behalf of others. Having power of personal authority and making decisions based on self-confidence leads to action. This is also a process of self-determination; however, in the present reality, socio-cultural influences do not encourage or facilitate women to access power, self-determination, or public activism in this way.

One possible explanation, mentioned by respondents as they explored women's low representation and lack of courage to run for the office, may lie in the lack of social infrastructure and social care that would allow women to dedicate more time to education, employment or involvement in public life. As one respondent argued:

"Women need support. The state is obliged to afford a network of kindergarten, or through other means facilitate women's public life… These

are two interlinked problems that if you are appearing in subordination and acting against yourself, then making any achievements outside family will be far more difficult." (Woman MP# 11, personal communication)

Social factors have been largely indicative of one of the causes of women's low participation in formal politics. Socio-economic obstacles, such as the dual burden, feminization of poverty and lack of education/training, all have a negative influence on women's representation in the parliament and serve as obstacles (Shedova, 2005).

In general it has been and still is hard for women MPs to recognize the gender imbalance in politics and the obstacles for women willing to become engaged in politics or join a party. Those more experienced women politicians mentioned that until their involvement in gender issues they did not notice an explicit gender imbalance, but now their sensitivity has been increased, they are sure that women face discrimination that requires improvement. As one of the MPs who has been engaged in politics for more than 10 years mentions:

"I became gender sensitive rather recently; before, I somehow considered that if I can, why can't other women and I also believed that artificial barriers didn't exist. However, afterwards, I realized a lot of things, read a lot and my perspective in this regard changed. And I realized that there are indeed many problems and barriers for women in this regard." (Woman MP#6, personal communication)

"I have never thought what it means to be a woman…. I always thought that something was to be done and I was doing it and it all happened

unconsciously in public and private life, but after I appeared in the Parliament, I started thinking about gender equality."(Woman MP#4, personal communication)

To sum up the discussion above, the interviews demonstrate that both women MPs and experts consider cultural and psychological factors to be among the factors affecting women's engagement in formal politics. Expectations towards women, traditional gender roles, and self-confidence are among the issues identified by the participants of the study. Although cultural-psychological barriers may be experienced by women on a lower level than political parties, still it has been named as one of the most important in understanding women's low representation in the national legislature.

4.4. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed and analyzed some of the findings of my research, namely, the factors that shape women's political participation in the Georgian context. Based on the analysis of qualitative interviews conducted for the purpose of the study, I argue that women's political representation in formal politics, such as the Parliament, is largely shaped by three sets of factors: party characteristics, the electoral system, and cultural factors.

More concretely, my study revealed that major factors affecting women's underrepresentation in the Parliament can attributed to the party level characteristics; specifically, these are party leadership, the team and, level of centralization, democracy and party strategies, including gender ideologies as well as party support to women, intraparty democracy and to a lesser extent party ideologies. As women remained largely underrepresented in the two major leading parties of the last decade: United National

Movement and Coalition "Georgian Dream" and, thus, in the Georgian Parliament, the reasons largely reside in the party characteristics. The study contributes to the literature on woman's political participation that states that ideology is not decisive for women's engagement in formal politics. Rather, a key finding indicates the crucial role of party leaders and teams. The more centralized a party is, the stronger the role played by the leader, and the degree to which women are excluded or included depends on a will of leaders. What also shapes women's participation in politics is a team mentality of a political party. For women MPs, the team composition has been crucial to their political lives at different stages, in particular at the early stage when a decision about engagement is made.

The level of intra-party democracy also explains low representation of women in the Parliament and parties. The interviews demonstrate that while political parties haven't adopted the principles of democracy, achieving gender balance remains a serious challenge inside a party what on its hand results in low female representation in the national legislative body.

The gender ideologies of political parties and regulations for women's engagement and advancement are also a challenge. Women on lower levels in the party hierarchy lack party support for advancement in their political careers and links in the parties and its members and with other interest groups have been weak. In more general terms, women are represented as a small membership of political parties and rarely hold executive and decision-making positions. Parties have equally rarely focused on increasing women's leadership position in the party, although there have been a few cases, such as the Right-Wing Party. Political parties lack proper, well thought and developed party ideologies and do not have targets for addressing gender equality issues. If parties address women's advancement or gender parity, these questions are largely framed in the context of social issues and are not systematically addressed and institutionalized.

In addition to the party level characteristics, the study revealed the links between the electoral systems and women's political representation. Georgia has a mixed electoral system, allowing candidates to be nominated and elected either through the proportional party lists or by plurality system. It has been revealed that the latter system is not women-friendly in previous Parliament, but analyzing the case of 2012 Parliament shows increase in women gaining seats though the plurality system. Therefore, links between the electoral systems and women's representation are not strong as giving contradictory practices on the Example of Georgia. The current mixed electoral system in Georgia is not considered as very beneficial for women's engagement in politics. Probably, consideration of the other factors discussed in this study should be taken into account when analyzing female political representation. Still, the study claims that the chances for women to be nominated are low unless there is real power behind women.

In addition to party level characteristics and the electoral system, the interviews revealed the interaction of cultural and psychological barriers with women's engagement in formal politics. More concretely, the study demonstrates that conventional gender roles and attitudes and perceptions towards women as well as the lack of self-confidence of women are important obstacles to overcome for women's engagement in formal politics. In the society where the traditional gender roles are practices, women's active engagement in the public sphere and formal politics may be restricted as women have to prioritize between their family and public responsibilities. Besides, considering that politics is a male dominated sphere, women do not have much encouragement and support to enter it.

Therefore, as this chapter shows, women's political representation in the Parliament of Georgia remains a challenge on the party level, for women themselves and for the society as a whole. Existing factors and explanations for women's underrepresentation in political parties and parliaments probably are not universal and they vary from developed democracy

to developing democracies. The examination of the Georgian case as an emerging democracy may shed light on women's experiences and those factors that shape their experience. The next chapter examines women's experience in the Parliament of Georgia during the democratic transition, and it provides a discussion and analysis of what is means for women to be members of the Parliament.

Chapter 5: Being a Woman MP

In this chapter I examine several experiences of female MPs during the democratic transition of Georgia. I will analyze the experience of female MPs in the Parliament, especially focusing on what it means to be a female MP, the decision-making process for women to become MPs, and roles and tasks women perform as MPs. I will also explore the gender division of labor among MPs in the Parliament and how female MPs combine public and private responsibilities. I will look at to what extent networking and women's solidarity is experienced by female MPs, as well as how female MPs support other women and defend women's rights.

The discussion in this chapter is based on interviews I conducted with female MPs and experts who have been working with political parties or with the issues of gender and politics. The interviews used in this chapter reveal how women make decisions when becoming a member of the national legislature, how spaces in political parties and the Parliaments are gendered, and what role women's agency plays in this gendering process. Additionally, the interviews provide insight into the role that networking plays in the Parliament and how female MPs are in unison with one another and pro-women's interests.

5.1. Decision for becoming MP

The previous chapter identified factors affecting the process through which women became party members and members of the national legislative body. The discussion and analysis was around the party characteristics, electoral systems, and cultural and psychological factors. My interviews revealed which party characteristics played key roles in the process of women's political engagement. Here I would like to examine another side of

becoming a member of parliament - personal experience, which has emerged as an important issue from a number of interviews with female MPs.

When asked why they became interested in politics and what determined their decisions to join political organizations, female MPs generally identified their decision as well-planned, and primarily based on a recognized need for changes in the country. Women believed in the need for changes and could see their precise role in the country's development:

> *"I was thinking a lot and I realized that given the difficult situation in the country and if I wanted to be more active, politics could give me more space for battle and for this I had to take this step."* (Woman MP #15, personal communication)

> *"I worked for 8 years in the Parliament before becoming a politician and therefore I closely witnessed and worked on all the important reforms… All this created the basis for my desire and ambition to do more, for instance improving legislation. Therefore, this has been the main reason that I had taken this step and took it over to contribute in this format."* (Woman MP#11, personal communication)

> *"That time I hadn't thought that I would become a politician, I really didn't have this intention, but simply all my motivation was based on the idea of the independence of Georgia and active citizenship…"* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

The respondents revealed that as citizens and as political actors, they have had their responsibilities and duties in relation to their country and state. This affects the nature of active citizenship and the willingness to exercise power as well as to access participation through engagement in formal politics. Such an engagement would give women an opportunity to fully exercise their political rights and be participants in important political processes. On the other hand, interviews also reveal that some female MPs didn't have plans to become MPs but through their activism as citizens these women gradually came to the point when they chose to join formal politics. This is how they have described this process:

> *"I know, I never imagined that I would want active engagement in politics despite the fact that I studied political sciences… based on my education, international affairs is closer to me and I thought why not[to] agree considering that an important year was ahead of [us as we were] preparing for the EU association agreement… I thought working on this from Parliament would be good"* (Woman MP#9, personal communication)

> *"I participated in all demonstrations, as well as this I used to write articles and observed processes taking place in the education system; I always criticized it… besides, there were not any protests that I wasn't part of. When I was asked to participate, I thought a lot by the way, because freedom for me is so important…"* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

These responses clearly indicate that the decisions to join a party or become an MP depend not only on party characteristics, but also on personal choices and experience. Indeed, the statements from female MPs about becoming MPs are about

women's agency; they are about women being able to speak on their and other's behalf, and about being able to recognize and initiate changes. Drawing on the experiences of female MPs, it is clear that actions are always initiated within a specific context, in this case, within the context of political parties, thus allowing women to claim their agency and power as political subjects. Acting on the ground of agency means exercising active citizenship, and acting as a citizen also cultivates a sense of agency (Lister, 1997). Scholars believe that initiating actions and operations in relation to a certain context is the foundation for the formation of subject and exercise of citizenship (Lukic *et al*, 2006). Nevertheless, I would argue that the answers provided by female MPs are gender-blind, indicating that women have had incentives to exact changes through the political power they claim. However, none of them mentioned their role as a woman and the need for their political engagement as critical for the future of the country.

It is worth noting that the backgrounds of female MPs vary tremendously; they come from a wide range of occupations and experiences, and do not necessarily have experience of party membership or the political sphere. Female MPs did believe, however, that political parties provide better opportunities for demanding and supporting changes in Georgia. This is what one of the respondents recalled:

> *"It has been 12 years since I have been in politics and when I looked through my life, I haven't worked anywhere for such a long period of time… This was the decision that changed my life in a radical way and, what's most important, made me see much more, made me understand the purpose of an individual. Today I consider that I'm a rather well rounded person. I can do something*

for my country and do for my family much more than in any other job"

(Woman MP#7, personal communication)

Such statements point out that in the process of making decisions regarding party membership aspirations and ambitions, resources and opportunities mattered, allowing women more power of agency to act. Such connotation reveals that female MPs have been claiming their agency in a conscious way; they access their ability to act on one's behalf and became engaged in the given context and environment. Whether women have made decisions to run or were selected by a party, their willingness to share power is real and essential for understanding their engagement in formal politics. Self-confidence is also an overarching term for future female MPs to select themselves and act, and this is a process of moving from the private sphere to the public sphere. What's more, it entails self-determination, independence, knowledge, choice, and action as well as compassion, consensus, collectivity to enhance others, mutual empathy, responsiveness. This, in turn, leads to power, creating and strengthening individual position in relation to self and others (Darlington and Mulvaney, 2003: 2-15). Therefore, while self-determination is just one step it is equally important that an action is initiated. In this case, action is initiated in the institutional context, political parties, and diverse interplay of various aspects and mechanisms need to be considered.

The interviews with female MPs reveal contradictory practice to the experience when political parties themselves reached women and offered membership in a party or inclusion in proportional party lists. In this case, the leaders have often been a determinant for women joining a certain party. There have been a few women in party leadership from the very beginning of party establishment, and those women maintain their leadership positions; but in general, considering the centralized character of parties, women wouldn't have many chances to be selected without the will of the party leadership. However, whether personal aspirations,

personal advancement, team or leaders' influence shapes engagement, self-selection has been a process female MPs have undergone.

To sum up, women in the three Parliaments have come from various backgrounds and various factors have shaped their decisions for becoming a party member or a member of the national legislative body. Mostly, women could see a desire for changes and their contribution in this process; for others, their contribution was an opportunity for growth. In addition, undergoing these processes impacts women's agency to make decisions, acting on their own behalf, for the wider interests of the society and, thus, challenge the passive status of citizenship through political engagement and participation in the national Parliament.

5.2. Roles, tasks and assignments

In this section I will analyze the roles, tasks and responsibilities women have in the Parliament. The interviews conducted reveal that the roles performed by female MPs vary both in political parties and the Parliament. In the Parliament, distribution of tasks takes several patterns. Mostly, distribution of responsibilities is based on competency and interest, while random assignment of tasks or assignment of tasks based on gender is also taking place although to a lesser degree. Significantly, women are represented in various parliamentary committees, to a large extent as deputies or committee members, and less likely as heads of committees. Three Parliaments (2004. 2008 and 2012) over the last decade have witnessed the practice of female Speakers and Vice-speakers. Namely, 2004 Parliament had a woman Speaker, in 2008 and 2012 Parliament Vice-speakers have been women.

As mentioned earlier, the MPs respondents come from various educational backgrounds and work experiences. Some have education in totally different fields not necessarily related to politics, but their activism and work experience has led to formal political engagement. Others education is closer to politics and they had interests in politics,

which they believed could benefit the country's development. Not surprisingly, those having previous experience of working in the Parliament as staff or in political parties have a better understanding of the procedures and how the national legislative body works.

In general, political parties (whether they are present in the Parliament or not), are led by men, and thus men are the primary decision-makers. This quote from one of the experienced female MPs indicates that:

> "*In political parties it is so that the board and decision-makers are men and real implementers are women… All over the world men do not want to lose power and share it with women…"* (Woman MP#2, personal communication)

In such circumstances, female MPs largely claim that assignments are delegated to them based on their qualifications and competence. Roles and responsibilities are assigned upon gaining seats in the Parliament and formation of parliamentary Committees. As one of the current female MPs says:

> *"Because of my profession, I'm in charge of the issues linked to the democratic processes. I know this topic. Can you imagine that constituting the board, communication, legislature are the topics I've worked on before and have some experience. There are certain issues that I'm qualified in and I lead them, for instance, I don't know much about monetary politics and I do not intervene in this topic but not because someone asks me not to do so. I myself wouldn't intervene because there are people in my party who know the topic much better than me and if there is something I need to ask, I will inquire."* (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

Some other female MPs make similar statements:

> *"In our party a lot is being done… and roles are distributed based on competency and interest and we don't have this approach: "you should do this!"* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

> *"Based on my profession, of course, I lead everything related to democratic processes in my party… Of course, there are issues in which I'm not competent and I don't interfere not because someone asks me not to do so, but rather because there are people in my party who know it better…"* (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

> *"Initially, when the Parliament was composed, everyone had an opportunity to choose the fields and committees I've also had an offer to join the euro-integration committee and also other newly established committees which were considered a priority. However, I've had a very clear opinion that I wouldn't be able to do anything in those committees because I didn't have relevant experience. I envisioned myself in a legal and human rights committee. I should repeat that the specificity of both committees is different and covering all the fields is absolutely impossible. Therefore, I tried to find a proper niche."* (Woman MP#11, personal communication)

Mostly, those claiming that division of responsibilities occurs based on competency, to a lesser extent recognize gendered division of labor within parties and the Parliament. However, they really think about their skills, abilities, and interests,

and self-evaluate how well they can deal with the assigned issues. It also shows the high sense of responsibility of female MPs and respect towards other team members.

As these narratives imply, female MPs and participants of this study do not see much difference between the roles women and men perform in the Parliament. The respondents claim that roles and tasks are divided based on competence and interests and they are unable to notice from their perspective any significant difference between a female and a male politician in the way they are treated in regard to political assignments. Interestingly, former MPs acknowledge existing inequalities more strongly than the current MPs. Furthermore, more experienced MPs who have been active in politics for ten or more years have also adopted a clearer view of gender. These women indicate an interesting tension in their perspective, while on one hand they argue that everything depends on one's aspirations and abilities--if they could achieve their goal of becoming a politician, then why can't others? On the other hand, as time passes their "blaming the victim" approach softens and they are able to see women's restricted position within a larger social and cultural context that limits women's agency, and by doing so restricts their citizenship rights. Here is a quote from a female MP who has undergone such a shift in her position:

> *"I somehow considered that if I could, then why couldn't other women and I also thought that there were no artificial barriers towards women. Then I read a lot and I acknowledged it. My perspective changed and I indeed realized that actually there are a variety/mass of problems and barriers for women."* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

Although division of labor based on interest and competency is a dominating trend female MPs identify, there is also another trend in regard to division of labor in the

Parliament, wherein women are assigned tasks based on their gender and are told to address so-called "soft" issues, like health, social issues, or education. This is how one of the MPs perceives this process:

> *"I was the head of a Health Committee (at the Parliament) and at the same time, member of the Gender Equality Council. Choosing these sectors had been a decision purely based on stereotypes because I was the only woman in the party and when the moment came where should the woman go, of course in the social field; and when we also want representation in the Gender Equality Council, a woman should go there as well. However, from the other perspective, I can truly say that these fields themselves, in particular health and to a lesser extent gender equality, have been so important for the country and electorate that it did have add huge value to the party."* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

Similarly, analysis of women's political representation and their roles within national parliaments in the CEE reveal that indeed women are mostly busy with "soft" issues and men are in charge of economic or other non-social issues (Fuchs, 2003).

Some women in the Georgian Parliament have been visible and are rather active, proposing initiatives and participating--or even leading--significant legislative reforms and amendments of domestic legislature. An increasing number of women have been deputy heads of committees, as well as heads of committees and vice-speakers within the Georgian Parliament. In terms of initiating, leading or participating legislative processes, there is not much gender differentiation observed and experienced by female MPs. Although leaders control the assignment, the factors of interest and competency are still considered.

To sum up, despite the fact that women have been underrepresented in the Parliament of Georgia during the last decade, they participate in various decisions and processes and they are participating in important decisions in the Parliament. Of course, assignment of responsibilities may depend on certain circumstances and procedures, but despite the mainstream environment, female MPs do not recognize many gender differences between a female and male MP in terms of the work they carry out. As the data reveals, division of labor in the Parliament identifies several trends: when assignment of duties and responsibilities occurs based on interest and competency and when division of responsibilities takes place based on gender. Women do not find either of these ways offensive or inappropriate and do not express discontent with the tasks they perform in the Parliament. Nevertheless, party leadership is making the decisions, and party leadership is a largely male contingent. This is not surprising, as the Parliament is a largely male dominated space--rules and regulations introduced by men and largely practiced by men.

5.3. Attitudes towards women MPs

In their interviews, a few female MPs have mentioned attitudes towards women in the Parliament, which I will discuss further in this section. Female MPs have diverse experiences in this regard; some claim they don't see any difference between female and male MPs, but quite a contradictory experience has been identified when women gain more attention by the way they speak and behave. As one MP identifies:

> *"The only thing* female *and male politicians differ is that they are more demanding to women, this starts from appearance and ends with family problems, lack of time and so on."* (Woman MP#12, personal communication)

The fact that women and men are not on an equal footing is also expressed in this passage:

> *"There are many obstacles and it is reflected in inequality, the victim of which you as a woman become regardless of if you want it or do not want it as it is because you are a woman. I always feel it in Parliament"* (Woman MP#9, personal communication)

Indicating that Parliament is a male dominated space where women may even feel uncomfortable is revealed in the interview below as well:

> *"Before Parliament, I used to work in a society where there was a real equality and could never feel inequality. However, it is very well recognized in the Parliament.…It is expressed in basic communication. Everyone remembers how we passed the domestic violence law, everyone was making jokes about it; when the head of the Gender Equality Council presented a national action plan, everyone was so unserious about it and there was a rather superficial attitude towards the issue. Therefore, I feel uncomfortable in the Parliament. Of course, it doesn't concern all men, but the fact I can feel it in the parliament, it indicates how far we are from equality."* (Woman MP#13, personal communication)

> *"I not only have disagreement in political ideas with some of my colleagues but in addition to that I have to provide an explanation as to why he shouldn't be giving compliments to his* female *colleagues constantly. Even worse, I do not want him to perceive me as a woman, but I want him to see me as a colleague… This is the same if I start talking to men about ties and shirts. It is*

> *a pity…but there are few in our generation who understand the essence of equality…. Unfortunately, there is a heavy political culture in which someone is more interested in my personal life than in my opinions…."* (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

Even what women say and do may be questioned:

> *"There is a tendency to find distance from the comments a woman makes, but you have to give arguments and claim your position. That's why I'm saying that demands on women are much higher and you have to validate your opinions to be taken into account and prove that you have more experience that men do"* (Woman MP#12, personal communication)

Similar statements allow the discussion of the gendered environment inside the Parliament. The Georgian Parliament is a mainstream institution, where men set rules, and women frequently may feel uncomfortable in such an environment. The male-dominated space gives more power to males, which creates obstacles for women to stand on an equal footing with men. It is expressed through criticism and even lack of trust towards women in what they say and do. Therefore, women need to provide more effort to convince their male counterparts and prove their capabilities and competencies. Women receive attention but not necessarily because of their opinions; rather, this attention is often due to their gender and in such circumstances, what they say matters little to others, even if their ideas are great.

The attitudes towards women largely reflect the conservative and patriarchal society and culture in which men are claiming power for decision-making, setting rules while women's say may be disregarded. Perception of gender equality is limited in the Parliament

leading women to experience unequal treatment by their colleagues. Unless women are recognized as genetically different but as equal in stature to men, the gendered nature of relationships in the Parliament will not be altered and will remain an uncomfortable experience for women members.

5.4. Networking – is it happening?

In a masculine institution such as the Parliament, it is interesting to also analyze how networking is experienced by female MPs. Literature makes claims about the benefits of interaction among women and across parties for, particularly for raising awareness on women's issues and interests (Ballington & Karam, 2005).

Networking is part of the experience of becoming, as well as being an MP. This process and practice is taking place within parties, across parties and within areas of the Parliament. However, the other issue is how it is gendered. In the case of Georgia, networking and social bonding is very common among men. It happens in every setting and politics is not an exception. Very few women have emphasized the importance of networking. As one current MP says:

> *"In general men avoid communication with us due to our mentality…. For instance, when we talk about some business, they listen, I don't think they are very open and then when they themselves discuss the same issue, may not invite you. I don't know how it should be referred to but I think that it is a gender problem. Men do not think that it is unequal; rather they consider it a male matter… But in terms of review of some legislation, when you initiate a legislative draft, this is not so difficult and they listen to you. What is difficult is participation in the decision-making. They listen to you but then something*

> *else happens. It is not so in every case. There are women in our Parliament who are listened to and participate in decision-making."* (Woman MP#14, personal communication)

While listening and recognizing what women are saying is crucial and women do seem to have opportunities to foster initiatives and participate in decision-making when parliamentary procedures are followed, it is important to be active, to make new proposals and to raise new ideas, as well as provide arguments and be self-confident.

Despite close bonding among males, most female MPs interviewed do not consider women to be excluded from official parliamentary or decision-making processes. As one female MP puts it:

> *'I've never thought that someone was making a decision without me. We never had such a thing. May be, two men sitting together were discussing something, but it didn't mean that because I'm a woman, they wouldn't be speaking with me. I've never had such a case…"* (Woman MP#1, personal communication)

Another female MP echoes the statement above:

> *"Women are not in solidarity and this matters a lot… frequently,* female *MPs do not vote for* female *MPs… we would be much more [stronger] if women supported one another."* (Woman MP#9, personal communication)

And significance of activism of female MPs is expressed as well:

> *"I might be saying something really, bad, but a lot depends on the activism of women in the Parliament…* female *MPs need to be more active."* (Woman MP#15, personal communication)

Female MPs have also mentioned the importance of networking and more socialization with MPs. Some female MPs have at times found socialization useful in convincing, gaining trust or winning somebody over. However, when discussing networking it is important to consider that the presence of women and men sometimes creates boundaries--even in the presence of one woman, male behavior may change (Karam & Lovenduski, 2005:189-193). In a male-dominated environment networking and increased interaction among women would be beneficial to a number of issues and perspectives. Apparently, networking among women across political parties in the Georgian Parliament is not a common practice, while networking among women in the legislature is of particular importance for making a difference and in some developed democracies it is a tested and successful practice.

This analysis and discussion regarding networking among MPs from a gender perspective leads us to explore the impact of female MPs in a masculine institution, and on raising women's interests and issues. The male-dominated political culture could be altered if there was a critical mass of women, as well as if there was enough solidarity among these women to support women's interests.

It is true that women could overtly participate in the public sphere; for instance, under socialism there was a high level of women's social, political and economic participation in employment and education. Despite this fact, women frequently failed to become organized on any issue important to them and didn't connect their interests to their representation in politics, which meant they were not capable of influencing the political decision-making

process (Montgomery; Matland, 2003: 36-39). While there has been extensive literature analyzing women's political representation in socialist and post-Soviet CEE, there has been little focus has been made on exploring the role of female politicians in promoting and enhancing women's interests and in particular women's political representation (Galligan & Cavarro, 2008). Female politicians' support, for female party members and party activists and for their mobilization around the issues of women's political participation is critical for an increase in women's representation (Galligan & Claveri, 2008; Paxton & Kunovich, 2005; Lovenduski & Norris, 1995).

It is interesting that being busy with gender equality and women's advancement issues may not be attractive for MPs. Moreover, women who achieve high positions may not consider it "popular" to work on women's rights issues or combat various discrimination cases against women. The sentiment is expressed by one of the experts is rather specific regarding this way of thinking:

> *"There is a non-desire to recognize structural and systemic discrimination. This is self-defense in the best case to make life easier. This frequently comes from women or men as men wouldn't like to be labeled as a discriminator or a perpetrator… On the other hand, it is enough to appear on the feminist side, your values, professionalism and personal features are immediately questioned by the society… Working on any other issue is much more beneficial, like working on children, the elderly, refugees, internally displaced persons and ethnic minorities and if you care about women, you damage fundamental stereotypes and values"* (Lika Nadaraia, personal communication, 22.12.2013)

> *"Women are not in unison with one another, this is also important. If women were more in unison with one another, men wouldn't be able to claim their positions. Frequently* female *MPs themselves are not in unison with women and do not vote for women. If women were voting for one another, we (*female *MPs) would have been much better [represented] that we are now."* (Woman MP#9, personal communication)

> *"It is enough to appear on the feminist side, when your value in the given society is suspended, your professionalism and personal traits are questioned. It is not a beneficial position"* (Lika Nadaraia, persona communication, 22.12.2013)

Female MPs in the mainstream political environment often failed to recognize that they represent the interests of half of the population. The way they see it, the solution for addressing women's underrepresentation in politics (discussed later) is largely contingent upon reshaping the social and cultural environment, which represents the greatest barriers. This finding closely echoes the analysis of female MPs attitudes and roles in 10 CEE countries, which clearly shows that women are reluctant to see themselves as representing women's interests, and also fail to recognize the direct link between the level of democracy and women's representation (Gallilmand & Clavero 2008). Acing for women's interests may not be an easy task, but it is still important to first acknowledge gender inequalities. If they are not acknowledged, there will be no demand for change and no struggle for justice.

Still, despite some female MPs lack of recognition of gender inequalities, - the Gender Equality Council is in operation at the Parliament of Georgia. In fact, the Council has

initiated a number of legislative reforms on gender equality, in the last decade. Acting for women's interests may depend on certain circumstances, mainstream discourse, whether you have enough and important enough allies and whether others share your view and support you. When gender inequality in politics is not accepted seriously and is the subject of jokes, when feminism is not something well-accepted, when there is no political will for changes and when it might be hard to find allies, female MPs would distance themselves from raising awareness about women's interests. Therefore, recognition of the issue and translation of the issue into "the issue for all" may be helpful.

There was a case where female parliamentarians transformed women's issues into 'universal' issues, and this created a situation in which the women's issues were regarded as concerning society rather than one group of the society. While adopting the domestic violence law in Georgia, domestic violence had been presented as an issue of concern not only for women, but also as a problem for all members of the society -- for children and the elderly as well. This approach was a major factor in passing the bill on combating and preventing domestic violence in 2006. Similarly, female MPs may use various strategies, such as working not only with women's groups and networks, but also using male-dominated spaces within parties. This does not hinder women to stay committed to the party and its rules while seeking to change the power and gender relation from within (Lovenduski, 2010).

Evidently, as this section identifies, networking is one of the emerging issues in the discussion of the gendered nature of the experience of national legislature. Female MPs can overtly participate in a number of legislative processes. While networking has a strong practice among men, including making some decisions and entering into political discussions, women do not always participate in informal networking settings. However, since there is equal access to legislative processes women do not find themselves excluded in these

instances. At the same time, solidarity among women remains a problem, meaning uniting and also standing for women's interests in general.

5.5. Double burden

Female MPs interviewed are of various marital statuses and thus their life experiences are also diverse. Female MPs, who are not married, do not experience a burden in dividing their time between a family and a political life, while those who have families strongly recognize and experience the double "burden pressures" of sharing domestic responsibilities and work as a political figure. Sacrificing family responsibility and/or public life is difficult for women, but they say they are managing. The support of their family members is crucial, and respondents are very clear about this:

> *"There is only one difference between a male and female MP that as a woman you have a family burden. I do not see any other differences, neither in regard to mental abilities or courage between women and men"* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

> *"I have gone down this path when my kids were very little and now they're already students and don't need a mother as much as they did, but there were times when they and the whole family needed me. A lot depends on a personality […] a woman can handle this. Of course, we are all different and have different energy levels, but I can confirm that in my family everything is in order. I cook when I get home, even when I am tired and my family doesn't lack any attention because of my political engagement."* (Woman MP#7, personal communication)

Similarly, another respondent pointed out the fact that women are assigned these responsibilities; they are given as a result of accepted cultural practices. They restrict women's potential and even with family help, if it is given, women still have to perform many family oriented tasks as described below:

> *"As for women, apparently, there are many hindrances due to cultural and gender stereotypes. Even if not, there is a domestic burden that is assigned to women in the Georgian society and it already is a big obstacle for women's advancement. Women are not restricted from employment, but in the same situation domestic burden returns to women again. Therefore, either woman should have strong support in household matters or family members should be helping her. A woman might have support but still have a domestic burden, for instance be responsible for raising a child and nurturing family members, what society ascribes to women."* (Woman MP#6, personal communication)

Indeed, these responsibilities are unavoidable and do represent a significant barrier; what can partially free women is when their children grow-up:

> *"Of course, if a woman has to clean a house, cook etc. and men do not participate in this process, it means that it is a hindrance for women… therefore, women spend three times more energy and need three times more time to be equal to the husband. Of course it is hindering women that labor is not divided equally and if we don't acknowledge this, there is no equality. As for me, I'm lucky in a sense that my children are grown up already, of course I*

even cook and clean but more or less we have divided labor at home." (Woman MP#12, personal communication)

The other respondent implied the gendered division of labor, as she pointed out how tired she was and yet managed to complete all tasks. At the same time, the level of her feminist consciousness was rather limited. She felt like a man when working, which certainly serves to point out the tension surrounding women's identities therefore indicating women are pressured to behave as men in the public sphere:

"I mostly have a male type of thinking, I can do everything anyone other can do, and complete it… of course I get tired, yes I do, like everyone gets tired… but I manage to mobilize my strengths…." (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

Strong links between women's gender roles and political participation is not a new trend in post-Communist Easter Europe; in fact, or women traditional gender roles have been a real obstacle to their political participation (Galligan, Clavero & Calloni, 2007). Furthermore, the male-dominated political sphere does consider women's roles as mothers, wives or sisters: this only makes their burden heavier to balance work and family demands (Shedovs, 2005: 34-37). In many countries, the political field is dominated by men while their share of household work is absent; on the other hand, demands of the society towards women are large and women face double the burden, experiencing domestic burden along with a full time job (Shedova, 2005: 39-44). Georgia is among the countries where strong traditions and patriarchal values limit women's opportunities and ambitions; society sets up

high expectations as to how they should act and they must adopt the role of a working mother.

Associations of women with the home or private sphere and equaling men with work or public sphere in the Georgian context lead us to a discussion about citizenship. While an understanding of public/private is central for the concept of citizenship, female MPs perceive these areas as complex webs of practices where boundaries of public and private are fluid, dynamic and ever-changing. Some feminist scholars even name such a traditional understanding a "false dichotomy" and claim that in reality these terms are not reflecting a binary and are not that distanced from each other, but rather are interlinked through the gender relations between male and female (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2006: 72-73).

Participation in the parliament challenges the traditional approach to citizenship and public/private distinction claiming that women frequently are not only passive citizens, just bearers of the status of a citizen, but rather exercise their agency by different expressions, in this case through political parties and the Parliament. As Voet mentions, this enables us to see women as "active" citizens and in particular the political dimension of the relationship between an individual and a state through participation in political processes and governance. Such relationships imply, holding authority and power accountable to citizens, and experiencing citizenship as a set of rights and responsibilities (Voet, 1998:16; Jochum & Pratten, 2005: 25-38).

To sum up, in a conservative and traditional society like Georgia women experience multiple roles and identities. By being in formal politics women show they are active citizens and can fully exercise citizenship. However, given the challenges presented by participation as well as passivity and association of women with domesticity, there are certain boundaries between the public and private realms of female MPs. At the nexus of patriarchy and a traditional value system, women's burden is doubled despite the ability to make choices and

decisions independently. As Yuval-Davis states, the state frequently reinforces particular roles not only through laws and policies but the customary and religious norms as well: thus, both society and state have their role in constructing women's identities (Yuval-Davis, 1997: 10). Analyzing the experiences of female MPs in this study reveals that female politicians speak about and experience double burdens, combining the identity of family caretaker and public figure or a politician. Furthermore women do not set clear limitations to their public-private responsibilities; women who experience this double burden have to find solutions for it and thus, tend to be flexible and benefit from the kinship relationships and support of close family members.

5.6. Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the experiences of being a female member of the Parliament during the times of democratic transition in Georgia. Drawing on the narratives of female politicians, I explored what it is to be a female MP, their decision for becoming an MP, roles and tasks women perform as MPs. I have also inquired about the extent to which women engage in networking and how female MPs experienced solidarity. In addition, I have also examined the existing division of labor that combines public-private responsibilities of female MPs.

This chapter has shown that in addition to party level characteristics women, coming from diverse backgrounds, have agency to examine their own circumstances and determine when they should engage politically. The women in the three Parliaments of 2004, 2008 and 2012 come from various backgrounds and therefore different factors that have shaped their decisions to become party members. Female MPs made such decisions because they could perceive a need for changes for the welfare of the country; for some, it was contribution and acknowledgment of their roles in the country's development, while for others it was also an

opportunity for professional growth and experience. Such practices indicate that women have agency to make choices, act on their own and others behalf, become engaged in legislative processes, make important decisions for the wider interests of the society and, thus, challenge the passive status of citizenship through political commitment and participation in the national Parliament.

The analysis presented in this chapter identifies that in the Parliament, which at the moment is a very masculine institution; rules are created and set by the leadership of men. Based on the women MPs experience, their competency, skills and experiences of women are often undergoing criticism, are disputed or simply ignored. The collected data leads us to conclude that the division of labor comes from the party leadership, women may stay ignored; however, division of roles and assignments largely is defined by interests, competency/qualification and gender. They also face ignorance and criticism towards women, particularly with regard to what they say and how they act.

While networking and informal discussions and agreements happen largely among men in different contexts in Georgia, networking among MPs is also occurring in the given example of analyzing the Parliament of Georgia. However, female MPs can openly participate in a number of legislative processes. Considering that women can introduce initiatives and participate in legislative processes, initiate legislation, work in committees, work with MPs, convince in their arguments, work on amendment in legislation and similar as men do, female MPs do not find themselves politically excluded from decision-making. On the other hand, networking and its meaning for women considering the low number of women in the Parliament would make women's position stronger and make them more visible what, in fact, has been lacking in the Parliaments during the last decade. An explicit interface and common views among women MPs in general and for women's interests in particular and hasn't been revealed by the respondents. The recognition of obstacles that

women face in politics, finding allies and solidarity among women has been largely problematic across parties during the last decade in Georgia.

The stories told by women indicate women's multiple roles, both as public political figures and as caretakers of their families. While cultural norms put heavy toll on women, women constantly face difficulty of combining extremely loaded and heavy public lie with family /domestic responsibilities. This trend is largely indicative of a strong influence of the cultural values and expectation of women in Georgian Society. Therefore, analyzing the experiences of female MPs in this study reveals that female politicians experience a double burden, combining their identities of family care-taker and public figure, a politician. Interestingly, while every female MP identified women's domestic and family responsibilities as part of the traditional culture and conservative society as established in Georgia, female politicians facing this double burden have to find ways for coping with it and apt to the contradictory spaces and identities. However, given that participation in political public life challenges passivity and association of women to domestic reality, there are certain boundaries between the public and private realms of female MPs and at the nexus of patriarchy and the traditional value system, women's burden is doubled despite the given ability to make choices and decisions independently. In addition to what are some of the practices and forms of women-state relationship, frequently the state reinforces particular roles not only by its laws and policies but the customary norms and deeply-rooted practices and society has its role in constructing women's identities.

Chapter 6: Women's Political Representation, Democracy, State and Citizenship

This chapter examines the relationship between women's political participation, a state, the meaning of citizenship, and democracy. I argue that it is important to discuss these links as all citizens, including women are influenced by state processes and by the state's institutions. Furthermore, women's citizenship influences the development of democracy and nation-state building processes. It is therefore not surprising that relations between these concepts and practices were revealed in interviews with women MPs and experts.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, Georgia has undergone a number of internal and external struggles, and has also achieved several successes that have had an impact on its citizens, their statuses, and their rights. The transition during the nineties was painful but has also allowed women to experience new roles and opportunities and to adapt to changes. In this context, women's roles have increased--women have become breadwinners, active as citizens, joined non-governmental organizations, and found ways to survive and engage within the public sphere. At the same time, they have encountered traditional perceptions and attitudes in daily life, with more emphasis being placed on women's functions in reproductive and caretaker roles.

The focus of my study is the period since the Rose Revolution, which in itself has been an extremely democratic and non-violent event that resulted in a change of regime and shift in power. Since then, real steps towards democratic development have started to emerge. Despite the development of a framework of gender equality policies, women's political participation and women's potential to be full citizens has been largely ignored and has seldom been an issue for wider public debates. In this context it is important to unpack the links between democracy, women's political participation, citizenship, and state.

In this chapter, I argue that in any given nation-state, state processes shape women's and men's identities and practices. This also applies to Georgia. Thus the focus of this

chapter is on women's political rights as citizens and how women's political participation is reflected in the context of democratic development of Georgia. I contend further that the links between women's potential and their right to participate in formal politics do not translate yet into the practice in the case of Georgia's democratic transition. My findings reveal that in developing democracies such as Georgia, links between women's participation and democracy are not very strong. Democracy in the case of Georgia hasn't been translated into equality of all groups and, in this case, has not allowed fuller participation of women in state political processes. The discussion, in this chapter, is organized into two subsections: the first focuses on democracy and democratic practices, and the second on citizenship-state relationship. I conclude by arguing that given state's reluctance to act, further and stronger steps have to be undertaken to remedy the low participation and representation of women in formal politics.

6.1. Democracy and women's political participation

"An essential tenet of any democratic framework is the principle of human rights including the granting and exercise of political rights of both men and women. The development of any political agenda that does not include the perspectives, views and experiences of those who will be affected is not credible"

(Ballington,2005:24)

The Rose Revolution came with clear democratic aspirations; however, women's political participation has not been part of the political agenda in Georgia and it continues to be marginalized to date. Political and social uncertainties and an urge for political changes brought women and men out into the streets fighting for a just and democratic country, and although women had been active agents at these events, women' interests had been largely

absent from the mainstream dissatisfaction and demands for changes. Democracy has become a central goal for the new government, since 2003, and indeed various reforms have been undertaken in this regard. The new government, which has been in power since 2012, has once again announced Georgia's push towards democratic development. Despite the strong rhetoric, the practice of relations between women's political participation and democratic reforms leaves much to desire. This is how the interviewed experts assess the situation:

> *"The figure of women's representation in politics has been around ten percent (during the last decade) and it hasn't significantly changed since the Rose Revolution. So we cannot claim that democratic processes indeed brought increase in female political representation… Therefore, I do not consider the Rose Revolution as one of the revolutionary processes contributing to women's political engagement."* (Tamar Bagratia, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

> *"Women's political representation was the same before the Rose Revolution and it hasn't changed much since then. There is slight increase, but is doesn't allow us to claim increased female political representation" (*Elene Rusetskaya, personal communication, 26.02.2014)

> *"I think the period after the Rose Revolution had been very active from gender perspective… Several laws have been adopted and the gender equality council was established… but from the fact that women's representation very much decreased, it is beyond explanation…. After the Rose revolution the idea of putting women on high positions was declared… we just wanted to show the*

world that we were developing in a democratic way" (Nargiza Arjevanidze, personal communication, 18.01.2014)

"There was an understanding that women should be engaged in politics, but there was no consciousness on why it was needed… The Rose Revolution was very sensitive towards the demands of society… and since there was no demand, this topic was just abandoned." (Tamar Sabedashvili, personal communication, 20.03.2014)

As the interviews reveal, the aftermath of the Rose Revolution didn't bring significant improvement in women's political representation. While politicians' commitment to advancing women in politics was declared, it remains as such, in practice, only small improvement in the number of women in political representation has been achieved and no significant steps have been undertaken in the decade of democratic transition. Moreover, although the issues related to low representation of women in formal politics were recognized during the democratic transition, there was no real demand from society that would oblige the state to focus on gender imbalance and to put more effort into ensuring gender equality in formal politics. Despite the fact that the Rose Revolution was a pivotal event in Georgian history, it does not appear that it was effective at advancing women in politics or promoting gender equality in political decision-making.

Analysis of democratic transition of Georgia identifies that on its way to democracy there has been a move to a new system of elections, where parties were able to compete and people could exercise freely the right to vote. However, the new political system has not improved women's engagement in politics and decision-

making (Sabedashvili, 2007). Moreover, while women's mobilization and engagement in national movements had been rather remarkable, women's advancement was not raised at public and political agenda. Besides, the gender equality did not get attention of the policy-makers and women's potential had not been acknowledged (Sabedashvili, 2007).

When discussing women's political representation and democracy, it is important to explore experiences of women who already gave gained access to formal politics. In this regard, the women MPs interviewed were very clear about what democracy means for them. My respondents stated:

> *"Democracy for me and for everyone is the rule of law, supremacy of law and therefore equality of every citizen…. These are the main principles of democracy for me and very important is equality against law and for me an individual is a major value. And, equality of individuals against law is a main reason for me to be in politics… regardless political, ethnic, religious, sexual or other features or belonging, I'm against dividing people according to any trait. Therefore, my major task is to take this principle as a fundamental principle of a democratic state. State should be secular and necessarily democratic…" (*Woman MP#4, personal communication)

> *"You know, there are totally different visions here with us and I'm not surprised at all. We are a country of a new democracy and I'm not surprised that political culture and political knowledge of the society is at a very low level, because we not only used to promote it but also have made sacrifices for it… Democracy is the freedom of an individual."* (Woman MP# 7, personal communication)

In their definitions, women MPs do acknowledge some of the core values and practices of democracy. They also acknowledge differences and draw comparisons between approaches exhibited by political parties and the parliaments at different times. These interviews allow us to argue that for women MPs, democratic principles must include an acknowledgment of the principles of law, value of individuals, and commitment to equality and freedom.

At the same time, while subscribing to democratic practices, women MPs, in their definition of democracy, do not link women's political representation with democracy. This is an indication of the lack of existing, in people's perceptions, bridges between democracy and women's political participation. Not surprisingly then gender perspective became marginalized during the democratic transition. Therefore, what women respondents identified as "problematic" is in fact the low women's representation. Indeed, there was unanimous recognition (regardless of political affiliation) among all respondents that despite Georgia's push towards democratic values, women's political participation is one of those issues that doesn't match the aspirations of a democratic development of Georgia. This does not mean that the participants did not acknowledge improvement in women's participation in politics since Rose Revolution; in fact they did. Where the gap emerged, is between the expectations they had after the Rose Revolution and the reality of today. This is what they said:

> *"Of course the number of women in the current Parliament doesn't match the principles of democracy…"* (Woman MP#1, personal communication)

> *"The Rose Revolution has had some good expectations for democratic transformation … I think great potential has been created for the country, it*

has become a case and our country could benefit from it; however much has been lost and this chance hadn't been used by the country" (Woman MP#6, personal communication)

"I remember pressure from international organizations and it is a shame, in particular for a country striving towards Western values. I think that by their pressure this [women's political participation] has increased; maybe it was a little bit artificial and not a real will from politicians, among them female politicians, what on its hand affects not only the quantity but the quality as well" (Nargiza Arjevanidze, personal communication, 18.01.2014)

Scholars in the field of politics and gender argue that democracy is largely considered to promote women's political participation, and voting by women; what's more, it is largely believed that democracy can open up opportunities for further engagement and political citizenship, thus making the government more inclusive to various marginalized groups (Norris, Inglehart, 2001; Phillips, 1991). However, a large body of scholarship is also devoted to the idea that in democracy some groups still may suffer from exclusion, and that the same marginalization will continue, meaning that women may not have opportunities for advancement despite promises (Young, 2001; Walshe, 2011; Hawkesworth, 2001; Regulska & Grabowska, 2012).

The interviews, conducted for this study, lead me to agree that democracy in case of Georgia does reflects both of these explanations. Georgian democracy is frequently seen as male-dominated, and Georgian democratic institutions and practices are often not women-friendly and do not support advancement of women either. In fact, it seems that the everyday political practices of Georgian politicians promote the spread of male-biased gender norms

and regimes in the public sphere. I would argue that it is quite relevant to apply Walshe's claims to Georgia's context; although democracy should ensure women's access to the political sphere, in reality we encounter quite contradictory practices, and as a result democracy may not bring about the advancement of women's rights. Moreover, advancement of women's rights is defined by the quality of democracy through just debate across the society.

Walshe elaborates by saying that a just debate in democracy--which means an open and inclusive discussion that shapes public opinion and state institutions--allows women to speak about their concerns and interests. In some developing democracies, just debate was part of the development agenda. For instance, in South Africa a just debate led to a reshaping of the political agenda, and brought women's issues to the center of discussion (Walshe, 2011). A just debate allows openness and inclusiveness, which means women can have the chance to be heard. Women's advancement then becomes a concern, a part of the public discussion agenda and creates a possibility for the state to support gender justice (Walshe, 2011). But in case of Georgia that just debate has not taken place.

Participants of this study acknowledge the importance of democracy for women's political participation, and believe that Georgia hasn't reached the level of democratic development when the just debate can take place. A gradual move towards the adoption of democratic principles is believed to have a positive impact on women's political participation in formal politics, and women's political participation is seen as a necessity for the democratic development of the country. Respondents emphasized that society also has to understand the importance of the impact that women's participation will have on democratic development:

> *"People have inappropriate perceptions. We need to make them see that women's political participation is necessary for democratic development."* (Woman MP#6, personal communication)

Respondents are aware that this is in fact a concern that goes beyond the establishment of democratic principles; this, they argue, is also a matter of economic growth as well as of the realization of human capital potential:

> *"Gender issues are the same as any other issue, no one bill, no one law or no one act will solve the problem… and furthermore it is important to connect the dots, if Georgia' economic growth is to fully realized, if their potential in terms of human capital and resource is to be fully activated, if their desire to achieve a truly representative democracy is genuine, then addressing gender inequality is a fundamental aspect of that. It's not simply a chore it's a reward. I think that ultimately has to come from civil society where they have to both embrace that, organize themselves on that behalf and then make that the focus of their efforts."* (Luise Navarro, personal communication, 26.01.2014)

Women's political citizenship is believed to be advancing democracy, and it is also true that the level of democracy can correlate with the advancement of women's rights. Georgia's democracy is new and in the process of development, therefore not addressing women's political participation and representation may hinder its successful democratic development. If we link the question of women's political participation to the principles of liberal democracy (as its development has been observed in Georgia), than we need to ask

whether liberal democracy can provide sufficient attention to women's rights. Even in many Western democracies, despite the fact that the principles of democracy have been put into action, women's representation is low. There is then evidently some opposition of liberal democracy towards women's political participation and representation, and liberal democracy whilst advancing women's rights in some cases, is not always doing so (Walshe, 2011: 219-220; Phillips, 1999: 60-91). In Georgia, it is assumed that democracy will bring shift in dominant discourses and practices and that along with democratic reforms, some dominant traditional opinions about women's political participation will undergo desired change. Yet, after almost two decades, some of these views and practices are so engrained and rooted in the society that their eradication and change are difficult. As a result, some groups remained marginalized such as women are in the political arena and therefore women's advancement in democracy is hindered.

Although women's political participation is limited within the formal political sphere, (such as within political parties or the Parliament), women are still visible as political actors, particularly in civic organizations. This has been the case in a number of former Soviet and East European countries. More precisely, while formal politics is not that easily accessible for women, women are not passive, but rather enter new political areas and create new political identities that allow them some degree of influence over the political processes and outcomes (Regulska, 1997). They do so by engaging in NGOs and other civil society organizations; in general they take leadership roles at a grassroots level and in their communities. This leads us to conclude that, indeed, political participation is not just about formal politics; the latter is just one avenue through which participation takes place. That avenue is, however, an important indication of a country's democratic development. As discussed in this dissertation, women in Georgia encounter barriers on various levels that place restrictions on their representation in political office. Nevertheless, women's understanding and practicing of

politics has increased since regime transformation and has become not limited only to formal participation; rather it is expanding democratic transformation, just as it had in Poland and other countries in Central and East Europe (Regulska, 1997).

Analyzing the case of women's political participation from a democratic angle enables us to take into account the complexity of factors that have been shaping Georgia's politics and development since transition. In case of Georgia, one such factor was the developmental approach that the country adopted. This was largely due to donors' policies and programs that were implemented in Georgia, and to a lesser extent an expression of political will or a real recognition of inequality by Georgian society. The initial approach was 'women in development,' which meant empowering women for the advancement of women. Later it was replaced by a gender and development approach. While the former approach centers on women as a category and focuses on actions oriented on women, the later approach considered gender relations, and didn't see women as a separate category. However, for many, the term "gender" is still associated with women only, which pushes men out of sight altogether. Such situation, some would argue is not desirable as there is a need to engage men also. Development scholars and practitioners tend to agree that without considering gender inequalities in relation to women and men, the impact of an inclusive development agenda wouldn't be effective when eliminating gender gaps**.** In addition, as scholars point out, the development of women's political subjecthood doesn't occur in an empty place, but rather it is the result of the intersection of various factors; as places and practices undergo changes, the position of a subject is not static, but ever-changing, as a result there is a need for continuous adjustment of strategies employed (Regulska & Grabowska, 2007).

Keeping this line of argument, in the case of Georgia, we can notice a strong influence of both local and global developments with equally strong pressures for democratic

change and strive to attain European standards and values. At the same time, while female political representation has been limited as it has been in many CEE countries that have undergone transformation, these changes open opportunities for the creation of new political spaces where women's subjecthood began to be shaped. In this way, women gained new political identities and experiences of political activism at the local, grassroots level through non-governmental organizations. Women in Georgia have become active citizens and agents of change by participating local women's mobilizations (and to a much smaller degree in national level organizations), but also by struggling to secure welfare for their families and communities.

One thing that was largely lacking during the last two decades was a closer cooperation between donor agencies, local organizations, and political parties. Such cooperation could have created a bigger platform for advocacy, debates, and support for increased women's political participation. The "pressure" from donors was persistent, in general, in regard to gender equality and women's advancement. This had been one of the reasons behind the emergence of a large number of NGOs in the late nineties and the NGO-zation of the women's movement itself. "Pressures" from donors, the international community, and the push towards Western European standards by NGOs and selected politicians pushed Georgian government to begin taking first steps towards gender equality policy adoption and implementation in the name of democracy. These developments echo the claims by Young (2001), who argue that global factors need to be taken into account in the process of democratic nation-state building. Such interventions may take place in different form and at different levels, through donors' support, policy creation and implementation, development of new governmental gender sensitive strategies, and revision of established practices. It may also include capacity building of NGOs and working with civil society organizations more broadly. In case of Georgia, all these actors' involvement took place. The

diversity of actors and actions does indicate the complexity of the processes involved and may to some degree explain a slow progress in the advancement of women in politics, although it does not fully justify it. I would argue that the lack of transformation of gender orders and of the advancement of the feminist political agenda has been, primarily, the result of a lack of political will exhibited by the Georgian top leadership.

As this section demonstrates, the intersection of democracy and women's political participation is a complex issue. The Rose Revolution hasn't brought advancement of women in politics despite its democratic principles. In the new democratic state of Georgia women continued to be marginalized and state policies are reluctant to address such an exclusion of women. With gender blindness and only declarative character of its policies, Georgian state shaped a relationship between women and state's institutions that resulted in marginalization of women and women's groups within the political decision-making process. Despite various efforts by local groups, the pressure from within--neither from political parties, nor society--has not yet occurred in Georgia in a way that would make the state more accountable towards women and society at large. Therefore, a just debate ,hasn't taken place in the context of Georgia. In the next section I will discuss how and if women do exercise full and political citizenship in Georgia.

6.2. State and Citizenship

This section discusses the relation between the state and women's citizenship and how state processes have shaped women's political representation during the lasttwo decades. Even before the Rose Revolution, Beijing Platform for Action began to serve as an effective tool allowing for identification of inequalities between men and women in political participation and political decision-making. Georgia is among the countries that have adopted the Beijing Platform of Action in 1995. The Platform calls on countries for implementation of

provisions of the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which also concern the discrimination of women in political decision-making. Therefore, all the signatory countries, by adopting CEDAW, have agreed to take measures for women's advancement and among other issues, promote women in political decision-making (Ballington, 2005). Therefore, the acknowledgment of women's inclusion in political decision-making has been one of the demands on the development agenda necessary for advancement and democratic transformation. The implementation of such a demand is however often limited by state's political will to act. As state is a guarantor of human rights, it is obliged to respect and protect its citizens as well as to implement the pledged obligations (Goetze, 2007). The question is to what extend such progress has been made in Georgia?

The first Parliamentary election following the Rose Revolution was conducted in 2004, followed by the 2008 and 2012 parliamentary elections. The Rose Revolution resulted in a change in political power, and has been considered one of the most critical events in the democratic development of Georgia's modern history and of country's development as an independent nation-state. Women have been involved in this social and political mobilization as leaders and as participants, thus, as citizens by acting on behalf of their interests and those of a larger of society. They protest and demand changes, they exercised active citizenship and claimed their agency (Chkheidze, 2006).

As the many years of the Georgian transition demonstrated, women have been active in civil society and national movements as this became an alternative space for them. This is where they could exercise their agency and engage in active citizenship, by recognizing the need for and undertaking action that would result in social and political transformation. In such a context, women's limited political participation in formal politics is even more visible and it gained on significance, because while women constitute half of the population, they are

still poorly represented in the national legislative body. Indeed, the interviews conducted do highlight this tension in the Georgian state-women relationship.

> *"In fact, by looking at the national movement and civic engagement in early 90ies, more expectation for female political engagement could have been predicted. However, it didn't happen so… During the national movement women's empowerment wasn't an issue at all. Everyone was united around the national issue only and women's advancement or empowerment hasn't been mentioned at all."* (Tamar Sabedashvili, personal communication, 20.03.2014)

Therefore, while Georgia has been struggling with the power distribution, development and national awakening, it left women aside from inclusion in certain processes. Even though the transformation processes opened new opportunities to women and they were found informally engaged in the nation-state building processes through their civic activism, no prospects for female political engagement were brought. Strive for power as well as processes and events on the transition didn't offer inclusive and diverse political representation.

In Georgia, as in all countries around the world, the state and its institutions do play a significant role in shaping women's political citizenship. This is accomplished in various ways through which state chooses to intervene. By state intervention in Georgia, I understand dominant political discourses as well as specific laws and their implementation and monitoring. Such interventions are also revealed by state's gender neutrality and/or failure of the state and its institution to recognize gender inequalities, and cultural norms that impact women's status as citizens. In the case of this research, as the interviews revealed, democracy has appeared to be a main discourse utilized by actors across the entire political spectrum.

Yet, often their intentions are not necessarily clear. The question to what extent gender equality policies introduced by the state are based on real intentions to advance democratic changes, or are they more declarative not making much difference for women remains unanswered.

Gender equality policy is part of the democratic rhetoric, but to a lesser extent of the political discourse in Georgia. I am making this point because the respondents highly value the gender equality policy adopted since the 2003 political changes took place. Although, they acknowledged more declaratory character of it, still, they emphasize its importance for women's advancement and women's political participation. They also agree that the Gender Equality Council has played a significant role in the events of the last decade. In particular, since 2008, when several new initiatives were undertaken, the biggest of which is the adoption of the Gender Equality Law in 2010.From the respondents' perspective, the gender equality policies have been seen as one of the factors that facilitated women's political participation in formal politics. Respondents, both experts and women MP, indeed see clear relationship between enactment of the policies and progress that has been made. This is how they describe it:

> *"Talking about gender, the more [intense] discussions started after the [Rose] Revolution for instance, in this regard we have signed documents and we have to do it; we have a law and the state has to take responsibility to implement it."* (Nargiza Arjevanidze, personal communication, 18.01.2014)

> *"As for the gender equality policy, we are still at declaratory level and implementation of what has been declared isn't yet implemented."* (Tamar Sabedashvili, personal communication, 20.03.2014)

> *"The period after the Rose Revolution, namely, those years from2004-2008 I think have been the most active from a gender perspective; the Parliament had its most relevant composition [in terms] of women's [participation], because during that period the law on domestic violence and trafficking and the concept of gender equality and later a law on gender equality were adopted. Therefore the Gender Equality Council of that time had been much more active than it is today. Also [an important factor is the fact] that the Council members were not only MPs but also NGO representatives and the work of the Council was more cooperative and productive."* (Woman MP#2, personal communication)

As pointed out earlier, the respondents have seen important changes since 2003 when the domestic legislation focused on improving gender equality in Georgia has been introduced. These efforts included the adoption of several bills, and national action plans; respondents have positively evaluated them all. The policy amendments and changes on gender equality indeed fit the democratic rhetoric of the state as they allow citizens to be treated equally and provide for equal opportunities and participation in politics. As the changes has been noted, We can argue that the existence of such policies has made a difference for women as citizens, thus reinforcing the notion that from a gender equality perspective, the involvement of state is key in reinforcing citizens rights to be protected equally and to be able equally exercise their rights and freedoms.

Although in the case of Georgia, state involvement through gender equality policies is highly significant, nevertheless, there are at least three reasons why a gender equality policy may stay, for now, only as declaratory rather than a policy that has been implemented and

reinforced. The first question is who really wants such a policy to be implemented? What are the root-causes of such policies, or in other words, what are the motives for adopting a gender equality policy – whether it is the recognition of a real problem or is it a demand from the donors and pressures to ensure European standards? This is how one of the experts interprets these pressures:

> *"While there have been some issues that are sort of clearly identified [by] women that have been moved and which have progressed since the Rose Revolution, whether these are issues related to domestic violence, or trafficking or maternity coverage;...these [changes] seem to be as much if not more the function of international interests and the desire to meet international standards than they are sort of a grassroots effort for Georgian women."* (Luise Navarro, personal communication, 26.01.2014)

> *"In the recent draft national Action Plan on Gender Equality women's political participation was not included at all and we urged to include it. It means that either the issue was not recognized at all or little attention was dedicated to it." (*Elene Rusetskaya, personal communication 10.12.2013)

> *"It is a recent development [that discussion on women's political participation is taking place]… Certainly, the role of donors that invest in it is immense. This topic wouldn't emerge automatically from the Georgian reality if not support of international donors. Unfortunately, it is so."* (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

Indeed, Georgian development of gender equality policies is less likely to be based on the recognition of inequalities within the society, but rather can be considered more as a response to the demand from international structures and donors. In particular the adoption of a stand-alone gender equality policy hasn't been followed by political will to support implementation of the policy from state budget. In addition, many pieces of Georgian legislation haven't been harmonized with the gender equality policy. Both are very good indicators of the internal resistance on the part of politicians as well as state bureaucracy to implement further these policies.

Secondly, the Rose Revolution as a non-violent change of political power demonstrated that the will of people to bring positive reforms starting from the elimination of corruption to developing police reforms, puts Georgia high in terms of its ability to introduce wide-range of democratic reforms. As mentioned above, there have also been significant moves towards the adoption of the gender equality policy after the Rose Revolution, in particular discussed above the development and adoption of the Gender equality and domestic violence laws and development of appropriate national action plans. However, gender equality policy is not strong enough in terms of the promotion of women's political participation. In 2006, gender equality policy was ensured by a framework document in which it was defined as State Concept on Gender Equality. It was followed by the adoption of national action plans and finally, in 2010 the Law on Gender Equality was passed. Provision on women's political participation has been part of every document dedicated to the advancement of women and the establishment of gender equality adopted by the Georgian government. The Law on gender equality, Article 11, includes the following statement regarding women's political participation: "1. Everyone has the right to take part in elections on equal terms without discrimination; 2. Equal opportunity for participation of representatives of both sexes shall be ensured in enforcement of the right to be elected in a

representative body; 3. Women and men can be elected on equal terms without discrimination" (Law of Georgia on Gender Equality, 2010). While this kind of statement is rather general, it is relevant to the type of document it is part of; however, such a general statement is insufficient for the current reality of women's low participation in formal politics and wouldn't be sufficient and effective to ensure equality between women and men in political participation. Moreover, while women's political empowerment has been part of the national action plans devoted to gender equality, again the general statements results in an ineffective strategy to increase women's political participation.

The third reason why gender equality policy remains, in Georgia, only as a well-meaning declaration, is the lack of its implementation. While the interviews mention this, monitoring of previous national action plans on gender equality in particular emphasize a weak implementation mechanism from the state. State contributions are minimal in this regard and any progress largely depends on the good will of donor agencies and international organizations. They are often the only one that supports women's groups in Georgia in their efforts to advance women's status and position or to monitor and evaluate progress being made. These actors are the one that foster the implementation of the activities agreed upon in the national action plans; state achievements as discussed above are minimal (Aladashvili & Chkheidze, 2009). The weak implementations mechanisms and the lack of any efforts to monitor and evaluate state progress have been widespread, regardless of political options in power.

International and local women's organizations did offer some monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to review progress made by the gender equality policies in Georgia. Since 1999, when the government of Georgia put the gender equality issue on the political agenda and expressed political will for women's advancement (by establishing a special commission followed by the elaboration and adoption of the action plans), the state approach

remains pretty much the same and is limited to restating previously made statements. Although, the government followed the elaboration and adoption of national action plans as part of gender equality policy, government failed to implement activities and achieve planned goals (Aladashvili & Chkheidze, 2009). A good example of such declaration, is the Gender Equality Law adopted in 2010, an unquestionable step forward. However, again as it is a more general legal document and mechanisms for its implementation aren't explicit, it is impossible to speculate what difference this law will have for ordinary women in Georgia unless there is a clear implementation and monitoring strategy.

At the same time, the governments' approach to fight trafficking as well as domestic violence has been quite successful. In 2006 Georgia passed the Law of Georgia on Combating Domestic Violence and Protection and Support of its Victims, and the Law of Georgia on Combating Human Trafficking. Adoption of the Law on domestic violence was followed by adoption of the relevant national action plan on combating domestic violence and formation of an Interagency Council on domestic violence. In addition, The State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of (Statutory) Victims of Human Trafficking has been also been developed tasked with protection, assistance and rehabilitation as well as coordination of the activities of the state for combating human trafficking. Domestic violence and trafficking are the two areas where cooperation between state agencies and non-governmental organizations has become very good one and it is an excellent example of how a strong alliance and collaboration can be developed and implemented.

My study participants do acknowledge that political parties and their policies are important for women's representation and participation in the Parliament. In this context, it is important, whether the state sets any rules and regulations that would shape political parties practices, which in turn could affect women's political engagement. For example, the political parties may receive from the state budget 10% of supplement if in he nominated

party list it includes 20% of different gender in every 10 candidates. This measure was introduced in 2011 in the Law of Georgia on Political Unions of Citizens. However, the experiences of the last few years indicate that the voluntary affirmative measures have not been very popular among political parties and it hasn't been adopted by the leading political parties overcoming the threshold in the Parliamentary elections In this instance then we have a state policy and even state willingness to support the cause, yet the positive effects are minimal.

Soviet legacy may be one of the factors behind the lack of willingness to introduce any affirmative measures for increasing women's representation in formal politics. Affirmative measures are associated with the Soviet past and since there is a tendency to abandon the Soviet-past experiences and support new democratic development, this largely makes the introduction of any mechanisms for women's promotion in politics almost impossible. As discussed in this chapter, ratification of gender equality legislations and women's advancement policies was an important step in shaping women's status. Yet, because of the mainly declaratory character of the gender equality policy, with little impact so far on the repositioning of social groups, the disparities between more privileged groups, such as men and those that are more marginalized, remain intact. In the case of women such a marginalization excludes them from decisions-making processes, like representation in the national legislative body or local government, and political and state institutions, relevant state bodies and institutions where still men dominate in the hierarchy of decision-making

Therefore, relationship between a state and a citizen may be formed as a result of negotiation, or even struggles and frequently concerns challenging boundaries and established norms (Yuval-Davis, 1997:72-73). Not surprisingly, being in an unprivileged and in marginalized position, forces citizens to be positioned differently in relation to the state and its institutions. As women in Georgia are largely ignored by state, as well as are their

challenges and problems they face, they have been unable to fully exercise their citizenship rights and become more active actors shaping state processes and decision-making.

In theory, political parties and the state institutions such as Gender Equality Council of Georgia had the opportunity and potential to promote women's political rights and participation. The Gender Equality Council had been very effective in terms of adopting certain legal instruments, but failed to address women's political representation. Indeed, feminists acknowledge the role of state institutions and offices, and other political entities in promoting women's rights and do believe that these actors can act in a useful way to support women's political advancement (Young, 2001*).* However, in Georgia, neither effort by leading political parties, nor by the Gender Equality Council have presented an effective measures for promoting women in formal politics; although the latter did made some successful interventions as discussed above. Yet respondents feel that these were insufficient and that this is a missed opportunity. Georgian case leads me to agree with Orloff that state processes are shaped through gender relations, but in this case even more importantly state processes shape gender relations. In this mutual interconnection, women stay in the subordinated position and insufficient changes in the hierarchy of gender relations are made (Orloff, 1996).

Examples from Central and Eastern European countries, which have undergone a similar political and economic transition as Georgia, show that the state is shaping the construction of political spaces where women act and of political processes that shape these spaces, including exercising control over a wide range of institutions and organizations (Regulska, 1997:692-698). At the same time, inadequate gender debates during the time of transition and lack of the recognition of women's contributions in particular through various forms of political activism and their civic engagement has led to *de facto* marginalization and exclusion of women from the political sphere. These exclusionary practices do indicatea

gendered character of nation-state building process processes and that of democratic development in the region (Regulska, 1997: 698-708), but more significantly from the perspective of this study in Georgia.

The enactment of certain policies is one of the options of state intervention, indeed, adoption of various laws, enactment of international treaties and undertaking concrete measures at ground level, allows women to exercise their rights and citizenship. Gender equality policy can be identified as one of such impositions by the state that defines gender relations by fighting discrimination and the establishment of a just society.

6.3. Conclusion

This chapter argues that women's political representation and participation is closely linked to the democratic development of the country. The respondents of the study acknowledge that women's representation in politics is rather low and this low representation does present a challenge to Georgia's democracy. After the Rose Revolution, which came with high hopes for democracy, the subsequent policy changes resulted in declaratory character of gender equality policies mainly. Little efforts have been put into the elimination of the gender gap in formal political representation. Women's low representation also questions the level of democratic development and effectiveness of state policies in supporting women and in general it questions the ability of state to address the needs of various marginalized and underrepresented groups.

Political discourses do shape women's political citizenship and identities, not only through legislative actions, but also through political processes and cultural practices. Georgian women do not commonly experience political citizenship that guarantees women's participation in politics as well as in the state decision-making processes; just having a right to vote or to run for the office does not guarantee the full meaning of political citizenship

based on the equality principals. Despite these challenges, women in Georgia have been able to realize their political subjecthood to some extent, by becoming active citizens and being involved in informal political activism.

Although state processes and practices shape women's political identities, women have to be seen also as individuals exercising their own choices and liberties. Their choices to engage in social and political activism in informal politics should be seen as women's conscious desires to claim their agency and become an active citizens and thus contribute to the democratic development of Georgia. As revealed through this study, women's political empowerment has been a part of state policies, yet the approaches undertaken by the state and its institution in reality were not able to make a difference or bring women's citizenship in realization to its full extent. Similarly, political parties did not adopt any measures that would make them more democratic, just and inclusive. This results in a marginalized position of women vis a vis state in which women are deprived of the right to exercise fully their political subjecthood.

This chapter attempted to demonstrate a mutual link between democratic development and women's political representation and how democratic transformation has affected women's political representation. I argued that state processes in Georgia shape women and men and their identities as citizens of the country. I have analyzed the extent to which women have rights as political citizens and explored the unprivileged location of women's political participation in the context of the democratic development in Georgia. In addition, the findings reveal that in developing democracies, such as Georgia, links between women's participation and democracy are not very strong. Women's potential and their right to participate in formal politics while have been recognized in Georgia's democratic transition, have not been realized in practice. Despite the low participation and representation of women in the Parliamentary politics, it is imperative to analyze and discuss strategies that

lead to increased women's political participation and representation. The next chapter discusses my respondents' attitudes towards increasing women's presence in politics, in the main national legislative body of Georgia, the Parliament.

Chapter 7: Overcoming Low Women's Representation in the Parliament of Georgia

The previous chapters analyzed and discussed the factors that are shaping women's representation and participation in the Parliament. In the case of Georgia, these processes largely depend on party characteristics, the type of electoral system and cultural perceptions. This research shed also light on what it means to be a female politician in Georgia and how women's political identities are shaped through their membership in the national legislative body. Moreover, the study explored women's political engagement in the democratic transition through analysis of the concept and practices of citizenship, state and democracy.

This chapter will review and analyze possible strategies to overcome the low level of women's political participation and representation. It aims to answer the following questions: How the participants of this research (women MPs and experts) perceive ways of increasing women's political representation? Is quota system a solution? Who are the main players and stakeholders in the discussion on women's political representation? Is public debate regarding women's political engagement taking place in Georgia and to what extent it is inclusive and effective?

I start this chapter with opinions expressed by the participants of the study: what ways of improving women's representation in the Parliament they see as desirable and effective and whether they support quotas. Next, I will discuss the role of political parties as major stakeholders and pivotal players, for promoting gender equality in formal politics. Finally, I will analyze to what extent coordination, among various players, takes place in Georgia. Relying on the opinions of female MPs, who themselves are part of formal politics, and experts, who work closely with political parties, the present chapter concludes with proposals on how to move forward in order to overcome women' underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia.

7.1. Quota debates?

In a number of developed and developing countries, various policy-related measures, mandatory or voluntary, are elaborated to eliminate gender imbalance in political systems and institutions (Dahlerup, 2005). Gender quotas are one of such options introduced to increase women's representation in political parties and parliaments as a way to promote women's political participation; such a method is now applied in a number of countries around the world (Dahlerup, 2005: 141-153; Kook & Childs, 2010). It is therefore important to explore, in the case of Georgia, how participants of this study see this issue.

The opinions of the respondents interviewed are divided and there is no consensus; few women MPs admit a necessity for quotas. Among MPs respondents, who acknowledge the importance of women's political engagement and increased representation in the Parliament, many would still prefer to avoid any adoption of affirmative measures or mandatory quotas by political parties. Largely, MPs are supportive of a gradual increase in women's representation and believe that this will happen when in general, the society will become more democratic and the level of democracy is developed further. One of the MPs, argued that the key to changing attitudes is the educational system:

> *"In general, I consider that one of the political instruments and from where everything starts is an educational system. …fundamental transformations take place in the educational system… the educational system has to provide values and raising awareness should be undertaken based on these values. That's how we should be developing gradually."* (Woman MP#12, personal communication)

Another echoed these sentiments, but she also stressed the need to avoid any gender divisions, arguing that men and women should be treated equally:

> *"We should create equal opportunities in the country, of course, for everyone, women and men. Access to education and a quality education are important. Individuals shouldn't be divided and men prioritized... this is also a problem, a value type of problem and it takes you back to the roots of it, which is education and this all produces state policy. We need to keep to the main principles and I don't think we can divide women and men. The main principles are equality against law, equal opportunities and access to education and if many of these are considered, then both women and men will be helped"* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

The other MP saw a solution in women themselves:

> *"We need to educate women, education of women is key to ensure more women enter politics"* (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

Evidently, a number of interviewed MPs see that an increase in women's political participation is possible without additional measures. In their opinions, everyone is equal against the law; however, the interviewees seems to forget that *de jure* equality is not always putting women in equal position with men. While interviewed MPs acknowledged the importance of *de jure* equality, they also point out that certain rules and perceptions will need to be changed. Respondents believe that a change in women's political participation and representation will change along with the overall level of development of the country. They

have identified a number of related issues. They argue that gender equality will grow along with democratization and development and they assume that transformation in gender norms and cultural values along with other democratic developments will bring an increased number of women into formal politics.

When respondents were asked about their suggestions for future consideration and how the low female representation can be tackled, several female MPs responded that they do not support affirmative measures and presented their arguments against them. This is how female MPs expressed her opinions:

> *"I do not acknowledge affirmative measures. This is very stimulating, but not for our transitional country… "* (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

> *"Many talk about quota systems, some say it is artificial as nobody limits women"(* Woman MP#2, personal communication)

Another woman MP also expressed anti-quota sentiment:

> *"We do not need affirmative measures, we need active busy women who have sufficient experience, can maintain their positions. We need to prepare human resources in this direction, prepare women with relevant backgrounds to be able to have their say. On the other hand, in order to move forward, they should also be familiar with the specificities of how the Parliament works."* (Woman MP#11, personal communication)

The female members of the 2012 Parliament are more skeptical towards quotas and see many 'justifications' against the quota. They argue that it is inappropriate to give advantage to women based on sex. As one of the female members of the Parliament mentioned:

> *"My personal opinion is not to allow women entry to the Parliament through quotas. I think that quality means avoiding extra emphasis on women. Because you are a woman, you enter a parliament… because equality against law means equality for all."* (Woman MP#5, personal communication)

One female MP argued that women should posses certain qualifications and they should not use quota system if they are not qualified as this may ruin the chances of other women:

> *"Parliament is not a play-ground and a place to conduct experiments. You shouldn't bring people there only because of something… Individual should appear in the Parliament after passing certain stages and is prepared, should have understanding of many issues, for instance, how the budget is developed, what kind of constitutional order it is ….the individual should have relevant qualifications. Therefore, I consider that incompetent woman in the Parliament may harm more the idea of increasing female political engagement"* (Woman MP#4, personal communication)

A similar opinion is expressed in the quote below:

> *"Personally I consider quotas very artificial, because for me as a woman it is much more offensive to appear in the Parliament… I can't give priority to a quota. I consider that competitions should be decisive and not the fact whether someone is a woman or a man. …… Privileging men because they're men [would be] a violation of the main principle of equality against the law."* (Woman MP#10, personal communication)

These opinions indicate that women MPs are not supportive of the introduction of a quota system in Georgia's case. Their arguments are based on various assumptions: the quota is considered as an intervention in the political life of political parties; besides, in the case of the adoption of a quota, respondents are afraid that selection will not be based on the competence of candidates and competition, but rather sex will become a noteworthy factor; besides, finding competent women might be difficult and engaging unqualified individuals is a threat to women in general; female MPs also indicate that privileging women based on sex only is "offensive" for women as it doesn't consider women equally with men.

While women are opposed to acknowledging the barriers they face and do not support the idea of affirmative measures, they try to search for other possibilities to advance women in politics and in this regard their suggestions vary, putting less responsibility on political parties and the state. Such opinions revealed, by the interviews, lead us to discuss the low degree to which female members of political parties are supportive of enhancing women's political representation. Evidently, not all Georgian MPs, former and current (in fact few), speak in solidarity with women and are supportive of additional measures and mechanisms for women's promotion and advancement.

Galligan and Clavero have been exploring the issue of acknowledgment and support for female political representation in the case of post-socialist Europe. Their interest had

been, among other issues, whether female MPs across the region could have a joint say or be united to support and promote women's political representation in parliament (Galligan and Clavero, 2003). Indeed, drawing on the developments in the region, the importance of women supporting women's engagement and party level activism of women is explicitly underscored. The research carried out in the region has revealed that facilitating the increase of women in formal politics is important. Galligan and Clavero argue that in the case of post-socialist Europe, female MPs acknowledge necessity for engaging more women in formal politics and recognize this as an issue that needs to be addressed and solved; still their role is not to be activists in the parties or seen as "acting for women" (Galligan and Clavero, 2003:157-168).In the case of Georgia, female MPs, recognize the significance of female representation in the Parliament, but not necessarily see a need for more women in politics and a need for additional measures in this regard. At the same time, they are rarely active in supporting women's engagement in formal politics:

Being in opposition to the introduction of quotas does not alter ones understanding of equality. Even if barriers are acknowledged, only eliminating barriers to increase female political participation cannot result in real gender equality and doesn't create the same opportunities for women. In such a case, quotas, as a compensatory mechanism for addressing the barriers and opportunities for women, may become a form of an equality mandatory measure that is more focused on results for increased share of political seats by women (Dahlerupe, 2005:141-157).

Indeed, while a quota gives opportunities to women to be recruited as members of political parties or parliaments and avoid exclusion, still the respondents have their arguments against quota system. They consider that: quotas are artificial; adoption of quotas puts women and men in unequal position against legislation; quota system is not democratic; quotas do not guarantee that competent and experienced women will enter the Parliament; competency

and not one's se should be decisive for political participation; women are not ready for engagement in politics. Therefore, the opinions revealed in this study reflects the general arguments against a quota system according to which: quotas do not match the equal opportunity principles women are given preference; quotas are not democratic as it limits voters decision to elect whom they decide to vote for; quotas mean to elect based on gender and in this case, electing politicians based on gender may leave aside more competent and professional candidates; in the case of an introduction of quotas, political representation becomes a site of struggle between the social groups; adoption of quotas may develop a conflict situation within political parties; there might not be readiness in women to be elected; once quotas are introduced in politics, quotas may become an issue for other underrepresented groups as well (Dahlrupe, 2005). This kind of approach to the issue, revealed in the interviews, (focused on avoiding any affirmative action or radical measures for women's promotion in politics) is blind in recognizing the discrimination based on gender; it fails to identify the barriers (party level or cultural) that women face while engaging in political parties and parliaments and does not speak to solidarity of women.

In order to explain the antagonism towards quotas expressed by women MPs, it is useful to consider that one of the arguments for being against quotas might be the Soviet past and former experience of gender quotas in formal politics in the Soviet Union. While women had access to political representation in the soviet past in Georgia, transformation in the nineties was followed by a drastic decrease of women's share of political seats in the newly established democratic institutions. Indeed, in Georgia, the number of women in the national legislature fell to 6% in the 1992 Parliament. Such a past situation may explain the lack of interest in adopting quotas in Georgia: quotas are considered a strongly Soviet practice and there has been unwillingness to consider quotas since everything Soviet was and is rejected. Besides, political parties in the democratic transition had ignored women's interests and

women's issues and the leaders holding political power didn't consider the interests of various groups. It is also true that women themselves were not prepared for political leadership and that transition placed an extra burden on them meaning that due to loss of employment, destroyed healthcare and poor social infrastructure, women started adapting to new realities and remained caretakers in their families. Due to cuts in social security, there was no support for the traditional women's role within private realm and lack of time simply hindered women's engagement in politics. Scholars have indicated a similar trend in the CEE countries experiencing a similar route towards transition in which all these various factors have shaped women's choices and those of political parties that in turn have resulted in low female representation in the national Parliaments as well as in local government (Sabedashvili, 2007; Brunnbauer, 2000).

While not all current and former female MPs are supportive of quotas, still several interviewed female MPs are more open to speak about affirmative measures for political parties and making quotas mandatory. This is how they think they and others should argue the case for quota. Many believe that this is necessary:

> *"If there is no critical mass in politics, women's political vision won't be reflected in politics. When we are represented in few numbers, it is very hard to claim something and still a lot depends on their political will. They listen to you, but don't do/follow you. Therefore, international organizations should put more pressure on political parties and government for a quota; there should be more pressure! Maybe this is bad what I'm saying but everything that is done in this regard, it's all through the support of an international organization and only then it is government who sees some positive in it"* (Woman MP#8, personal communication)

> *"Now I will be frank and give my personal opinion that mandatory quotas are not a bad idea considering the deplorable situation we have currently; however, I will have and I do have many opponents in my team, what is actually normal as every individual has their own opinion. I think that women's advancement should happen naturally, but at this stage quotas wouldn't be a bad idea. Nevertheless, what decision my party makes, I can't yet say that"* (Woman MP#9, personal communication)

> *"When there are few women, it is hard to achieve anything… Still a lot depends on the political will of women… there should be more pressure to introduce quotas"* (Woman MP#2, personal communication)

> *"I'm not quite sure but I think there is a serious need for quotas as women spend three times more efforts to be equal to men"* (Woman MP#12, personal communication)

While adoption of quotas is not a dominating opinion among women MPs, still some see an explicit need to adopt special measures and to consider that important changes are hardly achievable without quotas; for this purpose, more pressure is required on political leadership to introduce quotas.

While some female MPs are confident that introducing quotas is the only way for overcoming women's low representation, a similar opinion and attitude comes from experts interviewed for this study who admit that the only way forward, for increasing women's representation in the Parliament, can be the introduction of some kind of affirmative action at

party and parliamentary level. Furthermore many experts do recognize the need to discuss mandatory quota systems with political parties:

> *"Today, in order to have rapid results, we need to adopt quotas… however, this issue is not that simple… as it requires a considerable amount of work… and there will be huge opposition. Nowadays, I do not see readiness inside the Parliament for supporting gender equality in the Parliament"* (Tamar Bagratia, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

> *"Quotas is the only way, despite that we may have opponents in this saying that quotas are non-democratic… Despite ma lot of forts and funding since the Rose Revolution, the result is zero."* (Nino Dolidze, personal communication, 29.08.2013)

> *"I think it is important that the state fulfills its obligation… and demands more intra-party democracy from political parties… [financial incentives as an affirmative measure] I think should be mandatory for all parties because parties themselves fail to recognize this kind of obligation and therefore, the state has to demand it from them, and if it happens so, there will be strong support from society and the majority of political parties. The state should act when certain issues can't be solved on its own and the state needs to intervene and solve them."* (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

> *"… Women need encouragement and if quotas are not considered, women on their own will not be able to enter politics… I consider that quotas can play a*

*very large and positive role but women also need to develop and prepare for a political career." (*Medea Badashvili, personal communication, 20.02.2014)

"We have worked with all the political parties, but no steps have been undertaken on heir side in practice. The only way is [o overcome low representation of women] is through obliging them to take action; there is no need to raise awareness… There is no better alternative than legislative quotas to increase female political participation… It might be temporary measure, but it is a necessary measure as, otherwise, we are not able to move forward." (Lado Mkervalishvili, personal communication, 29.08.2013)

In their suggestions, the respondents argue that affirmative measures should be part of the intra-party democracy and a state as such has to play its role when political parties do not recognize the need for additional measures; the adoption of clear policies for an inclusive and equal environment that will be based on competition and equal opportunities is necessary. Experts also recognize that given the reality, no advancement in women's political representation is expected unless introduction of quotas take place. Of course, the process of the introduction is not expected to be easy as this requires commitment from all main stakeholders as well as it places responsibility on women themselves. Experts do acknowledge this, but they believe that in the given context quotas are crucial for overcoming women's low representation in the legislative bodies of Georgia.

Experts strongly take a position in favor of quota system, but they also recognize that voluntarily acceptance, encouraging quotas that are in force didn't appear effective and didn't result in more women candidates presented by political parties. Although, since 2012, political parties that have 20% of women among the first 10 candidates, on the candidate

lists, are eligible for a 10% increase in their funding few committed them to quota system. Only one political party has adopted this measure during the 2012 elections; it wasn't however successful in the 2012 Parliamentary elections. Some of the former female MPs and experts argue, that in reality when voluntary measures are not applied by political parties, the adoption of a mandatory quota is the only guarantee for achieving an increase in women's political representation; otherwise, they fear, it will take decades to achieve the same effect that quotas can bring in a shorter period of time. Moreover, political parties haven't yet acknowledged that women's inclusion will help them to progress and to claim democracy. Experts acknowledge the structural and cultural barriers women encounter in formal politics and quotas for women are seen as compensation for the barriers and obstacles that women face in their attempt of accessing political seats. Therefore, it has been largely claimed that introducing quotas is the only chance for achieving women's critical mass in the Parliament of Georgia.

Significantly, opinions expressed by respondents reflect some of the general arguments supportive of quotas, which have been identified by scholars in gender and politics (Dahlerup, 2005; Dahlerup & Freidenwal, 2010). Scholars claim that a quota system is necessary because at the heart of elections is representation; secondly, the adoption of quotas means recognizing the barriers that women have in political parties and parliaments that do not allow women to claim political seats. The introduction of quotas doesn't aim to discriminate against men in political parties or institutions, but quotas are mechanisms to control the nomination of men only. The argument for adoption of quotas is linked to the argument for the necessity of women's participation in politics in general; women's interests and experiences are important and men can not represent women and their interests; most importantly women are equally qualified as men (Dahlerrup, 2005).

Georgia has a voluntary affirmative measure for increasing women's political representation introduced in the legislation on political parties, allowing parties to get 10% supplement in funding in case they include 30% different gender in every ten candidates (Organic Law of Georgia in Political Unions of Citizens, 2011) The role of international and local NGOs as well as oppositional political parties outside the Parliament had been important in achieving this. But since discussion on increasing female representation in parties, local governance and the Parliament is on-going, pressure comes from international organizations and local women's groups who mostly lobby for mandatory party quotas, calling to set a certain percent of women among all candidates and party members.

Debates over women's political representation in Georgia resemble many quota debates in many developing countries in Central East Europe and Latina America. Several countries of these regions have agreed to establish legislative quotas, i.e. initiating reforms in electoral laws and party laws and requiring political parties to nominate certain number of female candidates. Through this approach, gender is recognized as a political issue and sanctions in case of non-compliance by political parties have been guaranteed in the legislation (Krook, 2010: 8-9).

Local studies also report that quotas debates have been failed in Georgia during the last decade. Political parties have unclear fears related to adoption of quotas and none of the political parties use party quotas (Bagratia & Badasvhili, 2011) While political parties in Georgia support increase in women's representation in politics, they do not have developed clear strategies and approaches; at the same time, they largely neglect adoption of quotas (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011).

As this section shows, there is a diversity of opinions among female MPs regarding moving forward to increase women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia by using quota system. The opinions are divided as one group of MPs consider that the increase in

women's representation should not go faster than the country's development believing that after certain progress, there will be more opportunities for women to engage in formal politics. Another group of female MPs strongly opposes an introduction of quotas and finally, a third group of MPs does see the significance of quotas and are strong in their support for its implementation. All the interviewed experts consider that the only way out of the current women's underrepresentation is the introduction of mandatory quotas as this can lay the foundations for political parties to acknowledge the importance of the issue, ensure that parties become more democratic, and make their rules and regulations more precise and gender balanced. The following section discusses the role of the main stakeholders and players in the current debates on women's political underrepresentation focusing, at first, on political parties.

7.2. The role of political parties

Leaders of political parties and the members of leading political parties can have the most powerful voices in the quota debates. While the engagement of women's groups to achieve increased women's representation has been ongoing for a couple of decades already, engagement of political parties in such discussions is a necessity and a rather new trend.

As the respondents of the study reflected, the role of political parties is crucial for advancing women in formal politics. MPs and experts interviewed agree that work needs to be undertaken to make political parties more sensitive about women's underrepresentation in politics; the sentiment was that Georgian political parties lack acknowledgment of their role and responsibility as that of a major player in the formal politics. This is what respondents mentioned in the interviews:

"[Political parties are] crucial to promote women in political structure. Secondly, it is important to increase women's engagement in politics in general…" (Woman MP#10, personal communication)

"…crucial is that political parties should notice that women's participation is a political issue… Political parties do not admit that women's participation may be useful for them in pragmatic and rational terms, therefore demonstrating this would be very important… [it] is important that by including women and by giving them more opportunities, parties won't lose…It is an achievement that political parties come and attend meeting, but they do not admit that it is a political issue and since it is apolitical issue they also need to take responsibility and do something about it. Parties are more consumers and not leaders and until it is this way, it will be hard to make any achievements…. It is important that government takes responsibility in addressing women's political participation because through taxes of tax payers state support political parties and it has to take responsibility, I mean the main decision-makers Parliament, MPs and demand more intra-party democracy from political parties" (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

"There is a variety of ways in which political parties can do this. The very first step they could do is quotas within their party leadership because the ways political parties choose candidates is through party lists, [decision about] party lists is usually made by handful of people, in most of the political parties that means handful of men, the most important step they could take [is by

introducing] internal quotas…" (Luise Navarro, personal communication, 26.01.2014)

The above opinions show that the participants of this study recognize the need for engagement of political parties and of party's role as that of a main player. Yet, political parties fail to acknowledge that women's political representation is a political issue; they do not discuss it in the context of intra-party democracy. Similarly, they lack understanding of the significance of and benefits steaming from women's inclusion in formal politics. Most importantly, they do not have in place policies to make processes in a party more transparent and just. Scholars in the field of gender and politics, argue that in every country the size of the representation of women as well as strategies to promote more women or include more women in the party lists vary. Since parties are pivotal for forming the parliament, it is therefore important to understand whether and how parties promote women's access to parliament and what are their strategies for encouraging greater women's representation (Lovenduski, 2010; Caul, 2010).

Experts interviewed for this study have mentioned the lack of cooperation among political parties and efforts to get united to advance women's inclusion in formal politics. Even, women members and women's departments/units of political parties fail to find a consensus over the issue across the parties. Nevertheless, more effort and discussion about women's participation in political decision-making by political parties is taking place. As some of the experts indicated:

"None of the political parties are ready to make decisive political steps in this regard… Earlier political parties would say that this is not an issue at all, not big enough part of political spectrum admits that this is a problem and [that]

something needs to be done about it." (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication. 19.02.2014)

"Political parties have become active and political parties and its members have a rather big role… but I think there is a serious lack of information for instance on importance of quotas as mandatory special measures" (Tamar Sabedashvili, personal communication, 20.03.2014)

This suggests that although political parties may recognize gaps in female representation, they do not consider that something needs to be changed or that they have sufficient recognition about the importance of the quota system; their approach is inconsistent and their knowledge about women's political participation is insufficient. As discussed above, public debate about women's political participation in Georgia has been ongoing for more than 10 years already and, unfortunately, political parties have not put much effort for establishing strong mechanisms to increase women's participation in formal politics. Local non–governmental organizations have had a few efforts, but as this study revealed, international organizations have led discussions and initiatives and participated in the public debates on women's political participation. The international organizations, like National Democratic Institute, Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, and International Foundation for Electoral Systems, among others, have taken a lead in discussions with political parties as well as civil society. Their contributions are unquestionable, yet their role should be more limited to advocacy and the process and debates will be healthier if political parties themselves take the leading role:

> *"Work in this regard has been actively carried out for the past few years. Of course the role of large donors in this process is important, who invest in this and this topic wouldn't appear from local context if not international support for making this issue important"* (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

> *"International organizations should put more pressure on political parties and government on adopting quotas, for instance. Maybe it is not nice to hear but most of the work is carried out by support of international organization and only then government recognizes and sees its importance"* (Woman MP#9, personal communication)

The role of political parties has been crucial in promoting women in formal politics, if we draw examples from other developing or developed countries. These examples indicated that no progress is made unless there is enough attention given to the issues by political parties and, what's more, unless direct engagement of political parties takes place (Krook and Childs 2010). This study is also indicative of this trend as despite no-objection to women's advancement in parties and representation in the Parliament, no concrete results are obtained by engagement of only one interested group, in this case of international organizations. Engagement and commitment by political leaders and political parties is key to achieving progress.

In the countries, undergoing democratic transformation, the responsibilities of political parties are pivotal in establishing justice, equality and democratic values and practices as political parties are major stakeholders in the political hierarchy. In the current political context, women's advancement in formal politics depends largely on political

parties. The extent to which political parties address gender equality or women's inclusion issues is largely indicative of the level of intra-party democracy. Importantly, however, neither political parties at present are fully open and ready to support mandatory quotas nor the Gender Equality Council at the Parliament of Georgia have been supporting it. In this regard, all major initiatives for promoting women in politics that took place in 2003, 2008 and 2010 have failed and gained insufficient support by leading political parties.

The leading role of political parties is key for establishing national level women's representation in the Parliament. Following Caul, parties may be facilitating as well as discouraging women's involvement in the parties or the Parliament through the type of party organization and structure as well as rules and ideologies. Parties that have certain formal rules in place, creating equality for women and men and, what's important, follow their implementation and thus encouraged women, did achieve results in an increased number of nominated women (Caul, 2010:159-165).

As this section demonstrates, women's political participation has gained increased attention in the country and is now discussed in political spaces and not only among women's groups. However, it still hasn't reached the point where political elites and parties acknowledge its significance and find it necessary and beneficial for the country and the society to commit themselves to a greater women's political visibility. Gender equality speaks on the level of intra-party democracy of political parties what has not yet become a concern for a number of political parties in Georgia. What's more, leadership of political parties, openness for collaboration, recognition of the issues and willingness to analyze ways for increased female representation has not yet happened; yet these processes would in fact facilitate successful solution to women's underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia. Obviously, initiatives of the actors and players need to be coordinated and agreed for better results.

7.3. The role of women's NGOs

The present section discusses the role of women's groups as one of the important players in strategizing on women's political representation. Significance of women's groups and organizations has emerged in a number of interviews conducted. The interviews revealed that discussion over the topic of women' political representation has been ongoing in Georgia for at least couple of decades.

Since late 90ies, women's NGOs have been arguing for increase in women's political participation in the Parliament and at local governance level. Importantly, in 2003, NGOs initiated quotas but hearings in the Parliament failed. In 2008, more than 32 thousand signatures were collected for making changes in the legislation regarding political parties; however, this initiative hasn't been discussed in the Parliament. Draft Law on Gender Equality also envisaged provisions on gender equality in politics, but most of its statements have been removed from the draft version and the final version includes only a general provision without obliging political parties any measures for establishing gender equality in parties (Law on Gender Equality, 2010). The demand of NGOs was aimed at raising the quota issue to secure its place on the Parliament agenda for discussion and by doing so raise awareness about its significance (Gejadze, 2010). The quota bill was prepared as a result of participation of various actors including women's NGOs and political parties that were outside the Parliament. There has been, however, an increased disagreement about the amount of quota, with some claiming that women should compromise at least 30% of the seats in the Parliament and others demanding even higher numbers. Due to these disagreements as well as to other factors, women's NGOs hadn't been successful in promoting increase in women's political participation through demanding quotas (Gejadze, 2010).

The respondents indicated the active role of women's NGOs was. They also spoke about existing challenges and problems of women's group. This is how some of the interviewees spoke about women's groups and organizations in the context of women's political representation:

> *"NGOs have made a number of efforts to promote an increase of women's representation in the Parliament, but in vain. They were listened to but what was lacking was a demand from the society that would justify women's political representation."* (Tamar Sabedashvili, personal communication, 20.03.2014)

> *"We have a big problem; there is no women's movement…. If you want to protest something, you won't be able to, as consolidation will be very difficult…. There is no consolidation among women's organizations… Of course there are in the women's organizations those who have expertise and are qualified, but only one organization cannot be strong enough and united enough to be able to make significant changes"* (Tamar Bagratia, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

The respondents pointed to various reasons for unsuccessful women's efforts, among them they indicated:

> *"I see a problem in the fact that women's organizations work mostly according to their routine, grants and projects only and are abandoned from reality… they are used to the situation that anyway nothing will be changed…*

Always it was like this: why don't you have any initiatives? But when we had initiatives, response was zero..." (Woman MP#7, personal communication)

"Women's groups need to grow-up, need to become more progressive and catch up with the time… There is only discussion and uniting and setting goals is missing" (Medea Badashvili, personal communication, 20.02.2014)

*"Women's organizations themselves often mention that one of their problems is absence of a strong women's movement. In general, our society is to less extent in solidarity in regard to many issues and the same can be applicable to women's issues. Therefore, a strong women's movement that would have had a strong lobbyist influence is absent in Georgia" (*Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

"Women's groups were the leading force. But if there is no coordination and solidarity, achievements are impossible. Organizations need to forget competition, financial and personal interests if they want to solve this issue." *(*Lado Mkervalishvili, personal communication, 29.08.2013)

Yet, the respondents do not find the efforts made by women's organization as sufficient. They seem to recognize the limitations that women's NGOs face. The respondents are explicit that there is a rather weak women's movement, women's groups lack goal-oriented approach, which is more project-focused and there is a clear lack of solidarity among various women's groups. To clarify, when I refer to women's NGOs I mean those non-governmental organizations that work on gender equality and women's rights issues, are

mostly managed by women, employ women and are targeting women's empowerment issues. Thus, I explore women's NGOs and not the entire civil society or NGOs headed by women, which are not necessarily working on gender equality or women's rights issues.

The respondents have emphasized the important role of women's movement in the country, in advancing and promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Most, of women MPs, are aware of the initiatives of some active NGO working on women's rights and gender equality issues. Women's movement is viewed by them as totally necessary for democratic development of the country; however, they believe that women's movement in Georgia needs to learn how to work together and how to undertake joint initiatives as well as how to effectively work with executive and legislative branches of the government to develop and implement more tangible policies leading to the improvement of women's status and of their living conditions in the country.

Analyzing women's movement and women's groups in Georgia, we need to keep in mind that Central and East European countries have history of women's movements starting in many instances in the 19th century. In case of Georgia, at the end of 19th century, initiatives by few educated women can be considered of feminist nature, as they were quite explicit in requesting women's rights for political participation and education. More recently, after the transition began, in several countries of CEE, women' movements and women civic activism influenced certain gender and women's right issues. In Georgia, like in many post-socialist countries, transition has also taken a heavy toll on women and women often have to find strategies to cope with these challenges. Women became active in civic organizations by establishing and joining volunteer organizations or women's NGOs and addressing a variety of social issues, thus undertaking a number of leadership roles in Georgian society. However, unlike women's civic activism, women's representation in politics is an unresolved issue,

although both dimensions of such women's engagement are critical (Lanzinger and Frysak, 2006).

Early post-Soviet period, witnessed birth of a number of NGOs and by 1997 their number was over 3000. Not all of these groups were active and the government didn't show much trust towards NGOs. The international community was the main supporter, advancing cooperation with and among NGOs, but also facilitating development of dialogue with government and helping to put relevant women's concerns on the government agenda (Sabedashvili, 2007). By 2008, the number of non-governmental organization (registered) was 9000, with major geographical accumulation in the capital of the country, Tbilisi while there were 180 registered women's NGOs (WIC, 2013).

Women's engagement in political activism has taken different roots and forms, frequently not necessarily promoting feminist agenda. This very much resembles how women's participation in social movements in Central East European was with many different forms. Different roots and causes and varying structure of groups and the level of women's participation resulted in different aims. Some groups aimed either at changing the system of patriarchy as oppressive to women or rather bringing more freedom to women and creating conditions under which they could equally participate. Women's activism as citizens and their involvement in the social movements may also be determined by the collective welfare of a community or defined by the will for the common good (Gelb, 1989: 30-161).

Lack of feminist activism is indeed a problem for women's movement in Georgia. While the transition and development agenda facilitated birth of many NGOs, women's NGOs were forming women's movement, but to a lesser extent these actions were rooted in feminist activism and feminist agenda. Establishing or joining NGOs was in a way source of survival and offered employment opportunities for many women (Durglishvili, Agdgomleashvili, 2005). Many of the women's NGOs that emerged in the 90ies discontinued

functioning by now, but initial approach of these NGOs was more oriented on human rights and development agenda; they aimed at bringing equal freedom and opportunities to women. Indeed, not many organizations considered themselves as feminists and many were not able to articulate their feminist ideas and concerns (Sabedashvili, 2007). In general, unawareness and a negative connotation of the word feminist and feminism in Georgia was prevalent; this applied not only to wider public but obviously also to women's NGOs and groups. This resulted in not necessarily feminist character of women's involvement in civil society. Instead, we saw emergence of a number of NGOs that targeted women's and gender issues, but didn't have a feminist agenda.

Emergence of clearly feminist groups with strong feminist identity, agenda and vision has been taking place in Georgia only more recently. These new groups involve mostly young educated women, who express their claims and concerns publicly in a visible way. These feminist activist groups are considered radical groups, raising voice publicly, by arranging demonstrations, making claims on behalf of various groups of women, and using social networks. However, the radical feminist groups do not have much support from a wider group of more traditional women's NGOs. Indeed, these women's NGOs may not recognize the need for new agenda inside the movement. This new activism inside the movement, may be even emerging as a reaction to inactivity of a movement and lack of feminist activism as such; thus it, can be regarded as a new blood, new energy and new wave of the women's movement in Georgia. Still, movement in Georgia, whether grounded in NGOs or in activism, faces challenges, among which the biggest is lack of solidarity.

The fact that there were more than hundred women's non-governmental organizations by 2000 and only few were feminist groups, indicate an early stage of feminist movement development in Georgia. The presence of a number of international and donor organizations not only put women's rights issues on the development agenda in the name of democracy, but

also created new resources for women's organizations. Yet, the uneven commitment, strategy and approach of donors and international development organizations have also to be noticed. Donors' approaches influenced women's representation and participation in organizations as well as their ideology. Besides, the policy of development organizations to lesser extend implied building capacity of local NGOs and to sustained their activism, but rather it did replace to some extend the work of local groups and give their work more project-based character, thus *de facto* depoliticized the women's NGO agenda. These developments resulted in the drawback of more vulnerable women's groups, meaning they became less sustainable, more donor-driven and less political. The emerging unsustainable and more donor depended environment, which relied on project based approach, increased competition among NGOs. These in turn hindered groups' strong positioning over any women's issue, collaboration and solidarity.

Nevertheless, NGOs in Georgia despite challenges, do cooperate with political parties that are in the parliament and to lesser degree also with the parties that are outside the parliament. As interviews revealed, education of women at the local level, raising local women's leadership potential, encouraging them to enter political parties are some of the activities constantly being carried out by local women's NGOs. Political parties are open to cooperation with them through discussions and workshops. At the same time, proposals of women's groups rarely got consideration by political elites. Importantly, women's NGOs have done immense amount of work with women candidates before elections. They were lobbying for women candidates, preparing them, teaching them, negotiating with political parties, seeking support from local groups and society and doing many more of different activities; all with the aim to advance number of women candidates. They also work with women voters throughout Georgia to increase awareness of political principles and of the

need for women to make independent voting decisions. Still, there is not much coordination with women MPs for promoting gender equality policy agenda.

In summary, interviews have revealed several of the challenges that women's movement in Georgia faces. First of all, the biggest challenge for the movement is to adopt a strategic approach to women's political advancement, which has to be based on common values, collaboration and consistency leading to increased female engagement in formal politics. The same applies to adopting a strategic vision in general by women's groups for advancement of women and uniting around the same goal and ideology. The women's movement lacks bottom-up approach. There is also absence of space for cooperation where movement can analyze and revisit its strategy, identify challenges and build dialogue with diverse groups within the movement. Secondly, lack of solidarity among women is another crucial barrier. Lack of ability to deliver messages with united, one common goal and approach, and to communicate it to different audiences (including state institutions), is a big challenge for the women's movement in Georgia. Finally, an integration of women's organizations into human rights and civil society organizations is a ground for marginalization and lack of societal support for women's and feminist groups.

Therefore, establishing and joining NGOs was at certain point insufficient to voice women's concerns regarding the speed and outcomes of the democratic transition. The project based approach with less activism and lack of clear common goal hindered women's capacities to be heard and to create a strong and effective intervention into the undergoing political changes. The diffusion or feminist and women's goals and lack of dialogue between radical and less radical groups within the movement further complicates the advancement of women's political participation and representation. Often, the fact that radical groups are not aiming at collaboration with other organizations, governmental or non-governmental, pose problems and presents a negative image of women's NGOs in the eyes of wider public.

As respondents mentioned, women's organizations have played an important role in the democratic development of the country and in raising women's political participation; however, they haven't been able to find important allies in their efforts and foster and sustain the idea that there is a need for equal political representation of women and men in the national legislative body and local government. As the interviews reveal, during the last two decades, Georgian women's groups didn't know how to effectively deliver their demands and negotiate with the state institutions and political parties. Their role and participation in the coordination and raising the women's concerns on political and public agenda is key in promoting women's political representation in the national legislative body of Georgia. The subject of coordination is the topic to be addressed in the next section.

7.4. **Coordination**

There is no question that there is a need for effective coordination among various partners in order to increase women's political representation; the significance of the issues has emerged from the conducted interviews. As mentioned above, despite a number of efforts, by women NGOs for many years, there has been lack of coordinated actions among various stakeholders. Similarly, the language of common understanding was lacking. This has resulted ina prolonged lack of cooperation between political parties and women's NGOs as well as with other stakeholders that are concerned with democratic development, human rights or intra-party democracy. This trend began to change around 2012 elections, with more coordinated activities of political parties, women's NGOs and international organizations. While it is too early to talk about joint achievements, the fact that things began to change is encouraging.

Focused discussion about women's political participation in Georgia is not something new, but was only sporadically taking place during the process of democratic transition of the

country. It had largely stayed as a woman's concern and rarely managed to be included on the agenda of political parties. Women MPs and experts believe that while progress has been made, numerous stakeholders should be involved simultaneously, including women's groups, media and more broadly Georgian civil society. Most of all, they see education as a starting point of these changes:

> *"I think that there is progress as there is much more discussion about this topic… We need to be more active and through education and awareness we can overcome the barriers that we encounter today and is so evident in our society." (*Woman MP#10, personal communication)

> *"The point from where everything starts is education. Profound changes need to happen in education system and generations must be raised on certain values. And this all needs to happen slowly an gradually" (*Woman MP#5, personal communication)

> *"There is a very low level of perception of what gender equality means. If there is a proper evaluation of the meaning of gender equality in the society, a lot of issues will be settled… There are many barriers what is reflected in the inequality and what makes woman a victim, voluntarily or involuntarily… Secondly, it is important to increase women's participation in politics that women should vote and support women candidates. Awareness is also important. I absolutely support these two goals…" (*Woman MP#11, personal communication)

Despite existing challenges, the respondents believe that the debate on women's political participation, engaging various stakeholders, and importantly, political parties, is just emerging. They see both the role of women's groups and political parties as crucial in this process. Participants suggest that in order to increase women's political representation and participation it is essential to target several levels simultaneously. Along with political parties, women's NGOs need to collaborate with other civil society groups working on democracy issues. Interviewees mentioned the need to identify barriers limiting women political engagement, stressing the necessity of collaboration across many groups.

In countries of Western and Northern Europe, where introducing quotas had been rather successful, engagement of women's groups and political parties has been crucial. For instance, a big portion of success in Scandinavian countries was defined by pressure from women's organizations and women's movement; a success in women's political representation was reached before introducing quotas (Dahlerup, 2005: 146-149). Women's engagement in civil society, through numerous groups and informal political actions, or by engaging on a community level are very important as this could become ground for raising issues and putting them forward as topics of public and political discussion (Fuchs, 2003). Such collective and collaborative approach puts pressure on governments to be more accountable and, thus becomes critical for achieving higher formal political participation.

In general, while all stakeholders have their place and role in discussion and debates regarding women's political participation, the interviews reveal that there is more readiness for such debates and discussions than was the case a few years ago. Political parties and civil society are engaged in these discussions, although this is a topic where international organizations show greater involvement. This is how some of the experts evaluate current situation:

*"You might have recognized that people are discussing this issue more lately via TV, radio, in social networks, in particular for the last 2-3 years. Maybe some speak in negative context, but still this issue is discussed." (*Nargiza Arjevanidze, personal communication, 29.01.2014)

*"The only progress is that political parties, part of political elites, admit existence of the problem of women's political participation… and desire for doing something to solve this is growing gradually… Women's political participation still stays to be a topic of international and a few local organizations… In general, our society is in less solidarity to a number of important issues, the same applies in regard to women's issues" (*Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

"There is now a discussion on gender as an issue of politics. This demonstrates how even in the short periods of time there is measureable improvement and change." (Luise Navarro, personal communication, 26.01.2014)

As the above quotes indicate, change has happened, but it is still insufficient. The unified pressure, from the society, hasn't happened yet, in Georgia, but respondents see it, as the foundation of making government feel more responsible and accountable towards its citizens:

> *"You should create demand and how to create it? It is possible through activism, various forms of activism, but unified and aimed at the same result."* (Lika Nadaraia, personal communication, 26.02.2014)

> *"Root of many problems is in society's education. I can't demand anything from men if women are not sensitive to this issue…" (*Woman MP#11, personal communication)

It is essential that debates on women's political participation involve various stakeholders simultaneously and in a coordinated manner. While increasingly political parties and international organizations started to engage, involvement of public and demand from society for increased women's political participation as well as support of a number of gender inequality issues, is still absent. One of the experts describes this process focusing on generating demand for such an increased political participation as follows:

> *"There is a variety of ways in which this can be tackled but it's a function of political will and societal demand. .. Until you start really seeing a greater emphasis on gender from within civil society and media…as you see from the international donors, you are going continue to see the sort of herky-jerky evolution on gender issues. At the point there is indigenous women's movement advocating on behalf of women, the discussion will become a lot more heated but you'll also see greater results."*(Luise Navarro, personal communication, 26.01.2014)

Coordination of efforts focused on addressing women's political participation is important then. The interviews indicate an immense role of international organizations in this regard. While ownership by political parties on the debates and coordination on female political engagement is missing, international organizations are leading the discussions and based on their initiatives a Task Force on women's political participation has been established in 2014. Prior to that, already in 2012, National Democratic Institute organized a conference "Win with Women", which was followed by an agreement of a number of political parties on "Win with Women Action Plan". In 2013 additional parties added their signatures to the document; they all committed themselves and publically expressed willingness to promote women and to engage more women in the respective parties.

While it is important to have a starting point for cooperation among various players and to have an agreement on a common strategy and vision for promoting women's political participation in the Parliament, local government and in political parties, so far only ad-hoc and random cooperation and collaborative efforts, before elections, have been observed. Yet, more systematic, consistent and sustainable approach is needed in order to have long lasting results. Interviewed experts make this point explicitly:

> *"Various mechanisms should be used for women's advancement… and I still think we should discuss election system as a whole and efforts shouldn't be permanent and only prior to elections. We wanted to change something and we see we can't change much, so we think there should be a certain plan, a meaningful plan that we will follow." (*Elene Rusetskaya, personal communication, 26.02.2014)

> *"Donors have been actively taking a leading role. Now we want political parties themselves to be leaders in this issue and we are ready to support them. We want them to trigger this issue…."* (Levan Tsutskiridze, personal communication, 19.02.2014)

The so far undertaken developments, focused on coordination and collaboration, certainly indicate a step forward as operationalization of the special Task Force on Women's Political Participation will put the issue on the public and political agenda for the society and political players.[4] The objectives set by the Task Force include:

- T
  o improve information sharing and coordination among the stakeholders working in the women's political empowerment field
- To assess and analyze systematically gender situation in Georgia to feed in the informed initiatives
- To establish a platform for joint advocacy and strategizing for improving women's political participation in Georgia
- To strengthen networking and solidarity among different stakeholders resulting in consolidation of resources and efforts for achieving better results in the field of women's political empowerment (Terms of Reference, 2014)

To meet these objectives, the Task Force envisages adopting a format of effective cooperation and carrying out a number of activities. In this regard, the Task Force has planned more intensive work with political parties and support to the government to implement the provisions on women's political participation foreseen by the Gender Equality

[4] By leadership of the National Democratic Institute, a Task Force on Women's Political Participation has been created in 2014 prior to municipal elections

National Action Plan for 2014-2016. Yet, in this process it is crucial that political parties have a consistent approach also and what is even more important is that they themselves claim the issue and stop just being listeners, but rather become leaders and active participants. For this to happen, political parties need to first understand what is women's political participation, why women should be in politics and what might be the best way, in case of Georgia, to resolve the current situation. What needs to happen is for political parties to take a look at themselves and identify strategies and concrete plans for recruiting and advancing women in formal politics. In addition, women inside the political parties need to also raise their voice in solidarity and to form women's subgroups or wings through which political parties will be able to work with potential women candidates on the ground. Most of all, political parties and women's groups have to realize that their collaboration to advance a common cause will result in a strengthen agenda and greater successes.

Therefore, the approach of political parties should not only be declarative, but political parties need to adopt strategies and approaches enhanced by concrete actions for women's engagement. As previous studies also identify, although political parties recognize the issue of women's engagement in political they fail to adopt relevant strategies for overcoming low female representation (Bagratia & Badashvili, 2011 : 33). By recognizing the role of women and the need for women to be part of political decision-making, and addressing the issue in a systematic and collaborative manner and not on an ad-hoc basis, is a key approach and an approach that is indeed missing; making women's engagement more integrated into a party structure can only make women's engagement in formal politics sustainable.

Political parties need to cooperate with women's groups and women's organizations as these groups do have the biggest expertise in this field at the moment, but also because women's groups have access to women's networks and are embedded within the local

communities. Engaging in a just dialogue and debate is profound for progress and consensus that is largely needed not only among political parties but also in cooperation between political parties and civil society. Learning how to talk in one language might be not easy, but such a constructive approach is quite possible.

7.5. Conclusion

The present chapter has been devoted to analyzing the opinions of interviewees regarding the need for and approaches to the increase women's political representation and participation in Georgia. In particular, I have focused on examining the rationale behind implementing quotas and MPs and experts opinions on this subject. I have also reviewed the role of main players, such as women's groups and political parties, and discussed the need for coordination among them.

The study revealed that women MPs do not have a common vision for overcoming women's underrepresentation in the Parliament. While quota is not supported by majority of women MPs, experts see quotas as the only way out from the current reality. The supporters believe quota is a fast and most effective affirmative action strategy for increasing women's political participation and much needed in Georgia's context. Yet, it has to be mandatory as so far the results show that the non-mandatory quotas are not sufficient. The opponents are in particular concerned that quotas is not the best option and provide their arguments claiming that: quotas are offensive to women, quotas are artificial, political representation should be based on competency and not one's gender.

It is important to underscore that discussion and debates on female political representation are already taking place. The role of both, women's groups and political parties, is crucial in this process. Success will be hardly achieved unless political parties take a lead in this process and acknowledge benefits of women's inclusion in the political parties.

The strategy for the inclusion of women in political parties shouldn't only rely on the just argument, but discussions and debates should help parties identify real gains and benefits of women's greater representation and support their promotion. Based on the mixed responses of my respondents, one can conclude that the country has not yet reached such point. Cooperation of political parties with women's groups is absolutely essential. Women's organizations have a rather distinct role; they need to think about the weaknesses and challenges of women's movement and put effort for more unified action and adopting a strong stand on women's advancement in politics.

Coordination of efforts is also pivotal, as it will gradually increase interest of all stakeholders and in particular political parties, and it will generate support and cooperation for joint actions; it will also reinforce the notion that this is a responsibility of all the players involved. Currently, coordination is enhanced by international organizations as they have taken a leading role in communicating with civil society, government and political parties, but what did not have happen yet is that a real commitment to women's political representation and ownership of raising and solving the issue have been undertaken by political parties. Political parties have to commit themselves to advancing women in formal politics. Similarly, increase in women's political participation and representation is not yet on a demand list put forward by the Georgian society. Such a demand would force the Georgian government to acknowledge existence of gender injustice in formal politics and would make political parties more accountable and responsible towards its citizens.

The present study shows diversity of opinions regarding the strategies on how to move forward to achieve the increase in women's political representation. Political parties cannot agree on mandatory quotas or recognize a need for it, while analyzing the situation from outside the experts urge for radical mandatory changes. Neither the transitional democracy allows acknowledging when political parties become mature and democratic

enough to make their lists inclusive and representative. In addition, women's groups as sole players are not able to bring success for women in politics due to a number of factors discussed in this study.

Therefore, for moving forward, there is a need for more public debates and awareness on challenges women face in formal politics, as well as benefits of quotas. There is a need for a greater ownership and leadership exhibited by political parties rather than international organizations, and continuous demand and collaboration among women's groups and NGOs. Considering that the voluntary quota doesn't work and political parties do not use it even for increase their funding, mandatory quotas can be the best option in the current reality and the context.

Conclusion

This study was devoted to exploring women's political participation in Georgia during the times of democratic transition. In particular, my research focused on the analysis of women's engagement in formal politics, in the Georgian Parliament. I looked at the period after the Rose Revolution till the 2012 parliamentary elections. During this period, women's representation in the national Parliament of Georgia changed very little. In 2004, women compromised 9,4% of MPs, and reached only 11% after the 2012 elections. In fact, women representation experienced a decline between 2004 and 2008, when the share of the seats occupied by women reached low of 6%.

In order to examine why women's representation in the parliament is low, I have posed several research questions. First of all I was interested in learning what are the factors that shape women's political representation in the Parliament. I also wanted to understand how women experience membership in the Parliament and what forces shape their experiences. As Georgia has been undergoing extensive social, political, economic and cultural changes, in her strive to become a democracy, I wanted to learn how women's representation in the Parliament is implicated in and implicates democratic development of the country. Finally, given the low participation and representation of women in the formal politics, in Georgia, I wanted to explore attitudes of my subjects towards different strategies that would allow overcoming women's underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia.

While there is a considerable literature on women's participation in formal politics, existing studies rarely address the South Caucasus region; countries such as Georgia are often omitted from the analysis. Moreover, often research on women's political participation focus on electoral politics or on examination of institutional context and its impact on women's ability to be elected. My study departs from such an approach by focusing on women MPs

and their experiences. By doing so I am focusing on women MP's agency and their abilities, and capacities to claim political identity. Thus, my study examines, in detail, the specificities of women's political representation, during a democratic transition, from women's perspective.

In order to address my research questions, I conducted 29 interviews with women MPs of the three Parliaments – 2004, 2008 and 2012 and with the representative of the organizations working with political parties on gender equality and women's advancement issues. I used grounded theory to investigate my questions. Through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, participants' observation and analysis of secondary resources, I collected data that allowed women MPs and experts to explore their own and others political engagement in the Parliament.

Drawing on the data collected for this study, I argue that the democratic transition did not result in the increase of women's representation in the Parliament of Georgia, rather we see women being underrepresented in the Georgian Parliament. My data show that this underrepresentation is due to the interplay of a number of factors that can be clustered into three groups: 1) role of political and cultural context; 2) gendered experiences of being a member of the Parliament, and 3) democratic transition and the role of the state.

In regard to the first set of factors, I argue that the institutional and cultural context represent a dominant set of factors that have shaped women's engagement in formal politics and their experience as parliamentary members. Within this first factor, there are especially three elements that are of major influence. These are: political party's characteristics, the type of electoral system and cultural-psychological factors. As my study demonstrates, political parties remain a major platform for women to enter politics, therefore party level characteristics and their actions are crucial in shaping women's political representation. However, it is not so much the party's ideology, but rather its team, political leadership, party

rules and policies and the level of democracy within the specific party that determines women's representation in the national legislative body. The interviews indicated that there is a clear lack of intraparty democracy and absence of clear rules and strategies to recruit or advance women within political parties in Georgia. As a result, much depends on the will of party leaders. The more centralized a party is, the stronger the role played by the leader and, thus, the degree to which women are excluded or included depends on the will of a particular leader.

The interviews also revealed the significance of electoral systems in advancing women's political representation and therefore also participation in formal politics. The changes introduced, in Georgia during the last decade, to the electoral system and the move to the so-called "mixed" system that combines proportional and majoritarian systems may provide greater possibilities for women's inclusion on party lists and therefore also in the Parliament. In 2008, the number of MPs has been reduced from 235 to 150 with a mixed system of majority/proportional lists. Proportional system generally allows more women to gain seats. While there as a decline in women's representation in 2008 and in particular out of 9 women only one was through majoritarian system, allows claiming negative impact of the mixed electoral system and reduced number of MPs. However, after the mixed electoral system was introduced, the number of women elected through both the majority and plurality lists has increased as a result of 2012 election and women's representation elected through proportional list reached 14.2% (compared to 10%). Also, after the 2012 elections, seven women were elected as majoritarians compared to the one woman elected in 2008. As the majority system is not favorable to women, the fact that women gained seats through that form of electoral system is probably due to due to consideration of other factors, like, the winning by the Georgia Dream Coalition of the majority of votes. The reluctance to advance women, as candidates, is further underscored by the fact that political parties have not utilized

available to them financial incentives to place women candidates on their lists. These examples indicate that the electoral system is neither the only determinant for women's inclusion on party lists, nor for seats occupied by women in the national Parliament.

Finally, within the group of factors shaping political and cultural context, my study showed that among the factors hindering women's political participation are traditional gender roles and expectations towards women. Indeed, gender roles and women's domestic responsibilities represent a visible obstacle to their political participation as these traditionally assigned roles often prevent women from running for the office. On the other hand, the study also indicated that women's lack of self-confidence to engage in formal political life is influenced by cultural-psychological factors and women's subordinated status in the family and society.

The second group of factors shaping underrepresentation of women in the parliament is the diverse experiences of women as MPs. I argue that the parliamentary membership is a visibly gendered practice. Drawing on the narratives of women politicians, this study explored what it is to be a woman MP, how women decide to become a MP, and the roles and tasks women perform as MPs. I have also inquired about how women politicians are perceived as well as the extent to which women MPs engage in networking and in supporting each other. The responses of women MPs indicated that women exercise their agency to determine their own aspirations, circumstances and engagement in politics. At the same time, women's decisions to engage in politics were based on their understanding of how the patrimonial system works. While some women were motivated by their commitment to the future advancement of their country, others were largely interested in activism and in gaining experiences of public and political life. Such examples, as above, suggest that women have agency to make choices, act on their own behalf and for other's welfare, become engaged in legislative processes, participate in making important decisions for the wider interests of

society and, through their behavior, they can challenge the passive status of women's citizenship. Yet, as mentioned earlier, ultimately their candidacy depends on the political will of the party leadership and thus, in many ways, women are restricted in exercising and claiming their agency and political identity.

There is no question that the Parliament of Georgia is a masculine institution operating under the leadership of men. With men as the majority of members, women MPs experience the gendered character of their membership. While women stay active and engaged in political processes within the Parliament, at the same time, they are often criticized for what they say and how they act and might be ignored because of their gender. Women are involved in various legislative processes, but the division of labor among the MPs is not only based on the competence, but also is gender based.

Women have a lesser role in leadership. Yet, surprisingly, my respondents, women MPs, do not see much difference in terms of the tasks and responsibilities women and men MPs perform in the Parliament. One aspect that in analyzing women's experiences of being an MP emerged is the notion of networking. While, women MPs participate in a number of legislative processes, can propose new initiatives and be engaged in all the necessary procedures in the Parliament, networking rarely happens among women. In particular, few informal exchanges or bargaining among women take place. Women often do not agree and do not have a common position that would advance women's interests specifically. The study shows that the recognition of obstacles that women face in politics, such as finding allies among women and solidarity among women MPs to advance women, has been very limited across all parties, during the last decade in Georgia. This fact, in turn, leads to the lack of recognition of the unprivileged position of women, to continued discrimination against women and to gender inequality at large. Based on these findings, I claim that women MPs face the double burden of combining family and public responsibilities within the context of

conventional gender roles and gendered perceptions. In addition, they also encounter forceful challenges within the public and political spaces that limit their political aspirations. In the end, women politicians face this double burden and have to constantly find ways for coping with diverse circumstances and adjust their identities and roles. In a traditional society like Georgia women have to opt between their family obligations and public interests and women in such a context do not have much encouragement and support from the society to overcome the obstacles and enter formal politics.

The third set of forces that implicates women's underrepresentation in the formal politics, in the parliament, is the context of Georgia's democratic transition and the role that state has played in this process. I argue that women's participation in formal politics is one of the indicators of democratic development of the country. Unfortunately, the last decade of the democratic reforms has brought limited advancement in women's representation in the Parliament. For better or worse, Georgia is not unique, as similar phenomenon is also recognized in a number of developing and developed countries. State processes, institutions and laws shape women citizens; their rights and status as citizens are defined by state policies and practices. In Georgia's experience of building an independent state, women have been active. At the same time, gender equality policy aimed at eliminating gender inequalities in a number of fields, did not target women's political representation and participation. In the process of promoting women's advancement, there has been no recognition that women have a significant role to play in the democratic transition. As a result women's visibility as political subjects and their political voice remained marginalized during the development of the democratic state of Georgia.

My research shows that state's weak commitment to women's political participation is one of the contributing factors to low representation of women in the formal politics. While gender equality legislation has been adopted, the new policy has little impact on political

parties or women themselves in terms of reaching gender equality in recruitment or advancement of women. There is an agreement among the respondents that further changes have to take place. While all experts interviewed recognized the need to adopt quotas, only some women MPs share this opinion; therefore there is no widespread acceptance of the mandatory measures, such as quotas. This reluctance may, in fact, result from lack of understanding of the importance of women's political representation for the democratic development of Georgia. What's more, open debate initiated by political leadership and political parties have been largely missing during the last decade. Such initiatives could however stimulate greater consensus over the issue and could lead to a greater public awareness of the benefits that gender balanced representation and participation in politics brings. Recognition of low women's representation in the Parliament by political parties and active and systemic engagement of all the stakeholders, but in particular of political parties and women's groups, is necessary to increase women's political representation and for the results to be sustainable. International organizations and women's groups have played very significant and supportive role. The collaboration and cooperation of various actors is in fact critical; such a model would also foster intraparty democracy and lead to greater representation of women in the national Parliament.

In closing, this study contributes to several bodies of scholarly literature on women, gender and politics, on the one hand, and on citizenship and democratization on the other. My research focused on the South Caucasus region and Georgia in particular, an area of the world that continuous to be under-researched, in general and in particular, is invisible in regard to women's political participation. To fill this gap, this study has produced the first examination of discourses on women's political participation, citizenship and democracy in Georgia. In addition, as in Georgia, the existing paradigms in these areas of inquiry fall short of capturing the interaction and importance of cultural norms and practices, my research has focused on

examining not only institutional reactions to women's low representation in the parliament, but rather stress women's individual responses. The focus on women's agency and its practices within the prevailing Georgian traditional and often-hostile gender norms and practices, is critical to our understanding of challenges that women face when entering politics.

In addition, my study contributes to the literature on women and politics during the democratic regime change. The research places the discussion of women's experience in a national legislative body within the context of debates on citizenship, women's political activism and democracy in Georgia. Moreover, the study draws attention to the role of women's agency that is highly visible within the arena of social activism as has be exemplified through the rapid establishment of numerous successful women's non-governmental organizations, but much less visible within the political spaces. Thus, I argue that Georgian women are capable to construct and claim their political identities, but a variety of political, institutional and cultural barriers often prevent them from doing so. In the end, their identities translate into political participation, in the arena of social activism and through the NGOs, but not within the formal politics of the Parliament.

The obvious question to be answered is what next? How women's participation in formal politics can be increased? What personal and institutional strategies should be employed? What measures should be devised and implemented? How women can be empowered? I conclude this thesis with suggestions for overcoming women's low representation in politics. While some respondents are not convinced that the state institutions and political parties should adopt specific mandatory measures, others strongly believe that this is the only way to move forward. Thus the question of if and how these measures should be implemented remains to be studied. By bringing diverse bodies of scholarship and confronting it with women's MPs perceptions and knowledge of doing politics in under-

research country of Georgia, I hope this study advances the debates on women and politics under the conditions of democratic regime changes.

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Annex 1 - Women's Representation in the Parliament of Georgia

Year	Name of legislative Institution	Total number of MPs	Total Number of Women MPs	% of Women
1995	Parliament	250	16	6,4%
1999	Parliament	235	17	7,2%
2004	Parliament	235	22	9,4%
2008	Parliament	150	9	6,0%
2012	Parliament	150	17	11,3%

Data obtained from Geostat

Annex 2 - List of respondents

- Manana Nachkebia, member of 2004-2008 Parliament, New Rights Party, interview by author, 12.02.2014
- Tina Bokuchava, member of 2012 Parliament, United National Movement, interview by author, 10.02.2014
- Nino Kalandadze, member of 2004 Parliament, National Movement-Democrats, interview by author, 22.04.2013
- Manana Kobakhidze, Vice-Speaker, 2012 Parliament, Coalition Georgina Dream, Head of the Gender Equality Council, interview by author, 30.01.2014
- Ketevan Makharashvili, member of 2004 Parliament, National Movement-Democrats, interview by author , 25.10.2013
- Lali Papiashvili, member of 2004 Parliament, National Movement-Democrats, interview by author, 14.03.2014
- Rusudan Kervalishvili, member of 2012 Parliament, United National Movement, interview by author, 6.12.2013
- Nino Goguadze, member of 2012 Parliament, Coalition Georgina Dream, interview by author , 10.01.2014
- Magda Anikashvili, member of 2008 Parliament, Christian Democratic Movement, interview by author , 27.12.2013
- Guguli Magradze, member of 2004 Parliament - National Movement-Democrats, member of 2012 Parliament - Coalition Georgian Dream, interview by author, 11.02.2014

- Piqria Chikhradze, member of 2004 Parliament, New Rights Party, interview by author , 06.02.2014
- Khatuna Gogorishvili, member of 2004 Parliament - National Movement-Democrats, member of 2008 and 2012 Parliaments - United National Movement, interview by author , 21.07.2014
- Tamar Kordzaia, member of 2012 Parliament, Coalition Georgian Dream, interview by author, 21.01.2014
- Irine Kurdadze, National Movement-Democrats, member of 2004 Parliament, interview by author, 23.03.2014
- Ani Mirotadze, member of 2012 Parliament, Coalition Georgian Dream, interview by author , 08.01.2014

Representatives of the organizations working on women's political participation:

- Luise Navarro, National Democratic Institute, interview by author, 26.01.2014
- Nino Lomjaria, International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy, interview by author , 27.03.2014
- Nino Dolidze, International Republican Institute, interview by author, 29.08.2013
- Nargiza Arjevanidze, Tbilisi State University, interview by author, 18.02.2014
- Levan Tsustkiridze, Netherlands institute for Multi-Party Democracy interview by author, 19. 02.2014
- Elene Rusestkaya, Women's Information Center, interview by author, 26.02.2014
- Lika Nadaraia, Women's Political Resource Center, interview by author, 22.12.2013
- Maia Kuprava-Sharvashidze, Gender Equality Network, interview by author, 23.03.2014

- Ketevan Chachava, Center for Development and Democracy, interview by author, 15.04.2014
- Medea Badashvili, Tbilisi State University, interview by author, 20.02.2014
- Tamar Sabedashvili, UN Women, interview by author, 20.03.2014
- Natia Jiqia, Central Election Committee, interview by author, 30.04.2014
- Lado Mkervalishvili, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, interview by author: 29.08.2013
- Tamar Bagratia, Expert on gender and politics, interview by author, 19.02.2014

Annex 3 - Questionnaire for women MPs

Introduction: My research aims to explore women's political participation in the Parliament during a decade of democratic transition of Georgia, from the Rose Revolution till 2012. In particular, this study aims to address the following questions: what are the factors that shape women's political representation in the Georgian Parliament? How do women experience being members of the Parliament? How is women's representation in the Parliament implicated in the democratic development of the country? And finally, what are the issues that should be address in order to overcome women's underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia? In this regard, your experience and opinions will make a valuable contribution to the findings of the research.

1. Let me start with more general question: what is your background – education, work, family, etc.
2. How you started/got engaged in politics – when was your first interest towards politics?
3. What are factors that have influenced your decision of becoming MP in your case?
4. What is your role/assignment within the party and the Parliament?
5. What is your role in the legislative processes in the parliament?
6. Could you describe the processes in the parliament in which you are participating? How often? What roles you have, etc.
7. How often there is a space for you to offer a new imitative within a party or the parliament?

8. What is your definition of democracy? How would you define it for yourself?
9. What are some of your approaches and strategies to achieve your goals?
10. What are some of the challenges in your work as a politician?
11. In your opinion, what has had the most influence on shaping you as a politician and MP?
12. Do you think being a woman MP is different from being a man MP?
13. In your opinion, what needs to be done to increase women's engagement in politics?

Annex 4 – Questionnaire for experts

Introduction: My research aims to explore women's political participation in the Parliament during a decade of democratic transition of Georgia, from the Rose Revolution till 2012. In particular, this study aims to address the following questions: what are the factors that shape women's political representation in the Georgian Parliament? How do women experience being members of the Parliament? How is women's representation in the Parliament implicated in the democratic development of the country? And finally, what are the issues that should be address in order to overcome women's underrepresentation in the Parliament of Georgia? In this regard, I interviewed women MPs; however, I consider that opinions of the representative of the organizations working on women's political representation would be helpful to draw a more complete picture of women's political participation.

1. How would you evaluate women's representation in the Parliament since the Rose Revolution?

2. How would you evaluate women's representation in the current Parliament?

3. In your opinion, how different is women's representation in the Parliament from women's representation during the transition period?

4. In your opinion, what are the factors that influence women's inclusion in the party list?

5. What can be some of the challenges that affect on women' representation in the Parliament?

6. Are there any facilitating factors for promoting women's political representation and if yes, which ones can you identify?

7. Georgia has adopted so called mixed electoral system. In your opinion, does the Electoral system have any influence on women's representation in the Parliament?

8. What would be your evaluation of the gender equality policy and do you think it sufficiently addresses the issue of women's political participation?

9. How would you evaluate women's organizations /women's movement and their demand for women's increasing women's representation in the Parliament?

10. Political parties – how they can improve women's representation?

11. In your opinion, what needs to be done in order to increase women's representation in the Parliament?

Annex 5– Organizations working on women's political participation in Georgia

There are a few local and mostly international organizations that work on women's political participation n Georgia. A Task Force on Women's Political Participation was formed by initiative and leadership of NDI in 2014. It serves as a coordination body on women's political participation and brings together in one format of meetings and discussions political parties, local and international organizations and experts. The ask Force plans to carry out intensive work with the political parties, in particular with leaders of political parties, and lobby for legislative quotas.[5]

In addition, development and donor organizations present in Georgia have formed a Gender Theme Group (GTG), a coordination mechanism, through which organizations are able to exchange information effectively, identify gaps in gender equality policy and approaches, plan joint initiatives and lobby for women's advancement in various fields. Women's Political empowerment is one f the priority directions of the GTG during 2013-2014 and it aims to strengthen joint efforts more in future.

Here is a brief description of the organizations and their work on women's political participation:

Gender Equality Network – has been established by IFES support to enhance women's leadership, participation and gender equality. GE Network brings together 35 local

[55] The Task Force has developed its ToR based on which the following activities are planned:
Undertaking regular mapping of all relevant and recent activities in the field of women's political empowerment in Georgia as well as knowledge products and place them in accessible format online; Organizing strategic planning session of the Task Force to identify short term and long term goals; Conduct regular task force meetings; Identify additional areas of joint action such as advocacy campaigns, awareness raising campaigns, capacity development work, etc. among its members; Organizing meetings with the leadership political parties; Organizing a meeting with high level political leaders on political quotas for women involving high level experts in partnership with Parliamentary Council for Gender Equality; Support implementation of women's political empowerment sections of the Gender Equality NAP 2014-2016; Analyzing and sharing information on Georgia's gender profile, including development of a sector specific knowledge to be able to provide advisory services for the Task Force members

NGOs and 600 individual members. GE Network has set up coordination units across all municipalities in Georgia aiming at raising public awareness on gender equality and providing capacity building to local women leaders.

Women's Information Center - Women's Information Center is one of the NGOs active for he last ten years. By support of local and international donors, WIC carries out a number of projects on various gender issues, including violence against women, women's political participation, gender equality legislation, women's leadership, internally displaced women and similar. By Oxfam GB support is carrying out a project on supporting female political participation on local governance level and works intensively with on municipal level in this regard.[6]

Women's Political Resource Center – is one of the leading NGOs and one of the first NOGs established in Georgia. They work on various directions, but mainly adopt feminist principles and aim to reduce discrimination of women in a number of fields. WPRC was one of the first NGOs to start targeting women's political participation in Georgia.[7]

International Center for Women's Education and Information – is one of the NGOs operating already for about a decade. They aim raising awareness of women, overcome gender discrimination and enhance gender equality. One of the main directions of the organization is to enhance women's political participation. The organization was involved in collecting signatures for legislative changes in 2008, however was not successful. International Center for Women's Education and Information carries out various projects and effectively communicates with the other women's groups on women's political participation issues.

National Democratic Institute (NDI) - chairs Task Force on Women's Political Participation. NDI is currently implementing two projects – Parliamentary Strengthening

[6] Information has been provided by Women's Information Center, more on Women's Information Center can be accessed at http://www.ginsc.net/
[7] Information has been provided by WPRC

Project (funded by USAID) and Building Public Trust in Electoral processes (funded by SIDA). NDI is also implementing Future Women Leader's Training Programme aimed at building capacity of mid-career professional women (currently 20 parliamentary staffers are undergoing the training).

Within the framework of another programme – Political Parties Leaders Training Programme, NDI trains women potential candidates building their capacity to engage in politics and run for elections.

International Republican Institute (IRI) – is a partner organization of USAID the mainly work on elections and with political parties active in Georgia. The main directions in operation are: enhancing party structure, enhancing youth wings of political parties and enhancing women's department and organizations and empowerment of female members of the parties.[8]

International Foundation for Elections Systems (IFES) - aims to strengthen women's political empowerment and gender equality in Georgia. Gender is part of IFES program Increasing Trust to Electoral Systems under which IFES carries out activities related to Civic education, voter education, increasing awareness for supporting female politicians. Along with the Gender Equality Network, IFES has established a network of journalists for gender equality bringing together dozens of representatives of electronic, print and web-based media. IFES has recently created a database of women leaders who have been trained within the framework of capacity building trainings and plans to use the database to promote women leaders in the upcoming local government elections in 2014.

[8] Information has been provided by a representative of IRI; more can be found at http://www.iri.org/countries-and-programs/eurasia/georgia

Within the framework of the project, IFES is also advocating for introducing quota legislation in the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, along with advocating for establishing Gender Equality Machinery within the government of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara.[9]

Center for Development and Democracy – is a new players among local organizations and mainly works on electoral issues and with political parties. Strengthening the democratic processes and the rule of law, protecting human rights, observing and monitoring elections, supporting gender equality, promoting environmental protection, advancing peace negotiations including confidence building processes, promoting the development of the civil sector, advocacy, enhancing civic awareness and citizens involvement in current reforms and more. wherever necessary.[10]

International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) – is a non-governmental organization founded in 1995, focusing predominantly on monitoring of elections. It is the aim of ISFED to ensure transparency of elections, effective realization of election procedures and building of public trust in election results. Since the day it was founded ISFED has monitored all important elections and referendums in Georgia. It has also implemented parallel tabulation of votes and monitoring of voter turnout for the last 9 elections.[11]

Oxfam Great Britain- started the implementing Gender Justice Programme in Georgia in 2013. It currently runs three projects aimed at promoting women's engagement in the decision making. Currently, Oxfam GB operates in 2 regions in partnership with local organizations. Oxfam GB supports two Women's Development Committees (1 per region) comprised of local women leaders. Oxfam GB also provides capacity building for the women leaders in targeted regions to promote their engagement in the decision making both at formal

[9] Information has been provided by a representative of IFES; more can be found at http://www.ifes.org/countries/Georgia.aspx
[10] Information has been provided by the representative of CDD; more can be found at www.cdd.ge
[11] Information has been provided by a representative of ISFED; more can be found at www.isfed.ge

and informal levels. Oxfam GB further advocates for appointment of gender equality focal points at the municipality levels and further providing capacity building trainings for the newly recruited advisors. Oxfam GB also supports Public Defender's Office, including recruitment of a gender equality officer to strengthen PDO gender equality department and elaboration of special report on discrimination against women in the workplace (GTG, 2013).

Netherlands Institute of Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) is one of the members of the Task force on women's political participation and they work in various directions, including promoting intraparty reforms and interparty cooperation for women's political representation.

USAID runs a variety of projects and programs in Georgia supporting democracy and governance, energy, environmental protection, economic growth, health, education and agriculture. USAID ensures gender is mainstreamed in all programs and projects in accordance with the USAID newly elaborated strategy on gender mainstreaming.

USAID recently awarded several NGOs to implement gender equality projects with focus on women's political empowerment, peace building and women's economic empowerment. The organizations which were awarded with USAID grants are as follows: Women's Information Centre, TASO Foundation, Association of Young Economists, AVANGARD (Gali-based organization), Institute for Peace and War Reporting, Constitutional Article 42 and International Centre for Conflicts and Negotiations.

USAID further supports NDI, IRI and IFES projects on strengthening women's political empowerment. Within the framework of another USAID supported governance project, women's clubs were established with the Centers of Civic Engagements in different cities across Georgia (GTG, 2013).