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Gender Inequality and Women's Negotiation of Public and Private Spaces in Contemporary Georgia

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of PhD

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Abstract

Women in Georgia face gender inequality in many aspects of their lives. While academic studies often concentrate on structural oppressions, women's experiences of everyday manifestations of gender inequality are absent from academic scholarship. Women have a space to discuss these topics only among friends and closed Facebook groups. This thesis is concerned with how women experience and respond to gender inequality in their everyday lives in urban Georgia, specifically in urban public spaces and at home. It critically engages with Western-dominated literature about space, place, and gender and explores how women are oppressed or liberated in and through these spaces.

In this research, I draw on the qualitative data that emerged from the interviews with 42 women and participant observations that I conducted in the three largest cities of Georgia – Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi. Using thematic data analysis, I explored how women experienced the gendering of home and urban public spaces and how contemporary gender ideologies in the country (namely, post-socialist and contemporary neotraditionalist) influenced this process. The thesis argues that both home and urban public spaces can be sites of, on the one hand, oppression and, on the other hand, contesting, challenging and negotiating gender hierarchies. It shows the variety of ways in which women in Georgia respond to everyday manifestations of gender inequality and how they often have the potential to destabilise gendered power relations.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Printed Name: Sopio Davituri

Signature:

May 30th, 2022

List of Abbreviations

CRRC	The Caucasus Research Resource Centres
GeoStat	National Statistics Office of Georgia
GOC	Georgian Orthodox Church
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
USA	The United States of America

Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis is concerned with how women experience and respond to gender inequality in their everyday life in urban Georgia. By examining women's experiences of everyday gender inequalities in urban public spaces and at home, the thesis seeks to understand how the gendering of these spaces is experienced in the Georgian context. Moreover, it aims to explore how contemporary gender ideologies influence the gendering of these spaces. I draw on the qualitative data that emerged from the semi-structured interviews I conducted with 42 women, follow-up situated interviews with 14 participants (from 42 women), and participant observations. My fieldwork took place in three cities in Georgia (Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi).

Women's experiences in Georgia are under-researched both in Georgian and Western scholarship. Most studies around gender relations and women's experiences in Georgia are conducted by local and international non-profit organisations and focus on policy-level changes (e.g., UN Women, 2017). Academic studies in Georgia rarely explore themes like women's everyday lives and experiences. They often concentrate on women's structural oppressions (e.g., Barkaia & Waterston, 2018). Consequently, how women experience urban public spaces and home, how they are oppressed or liberated, and how they respond to everyday manifestations of gender inequalities in these spaces have not been explored in the Georgian context.

The introductory chapter will be divided into three sections. The first will look at the genesis of the study and will lay out its aims; the second will clarify the key concepts I use in this study. The final section will outline the structure of the thesis and provide a summary of individual chapters.

1.1. Genesis of the thesis

This is the first attempt to examine women's everyday experiences of gender inequality in urban spaces and at home in the Georgian context. The initial research proposal that I developed as a result of my MRes dissertation was about

women's participation patterns in the public sphere in Georgia. In that study, I interviewed women's rights activists. My initial ideas for PhD research were to interview women living in the urban spaces of Georgia – on the one hand, women who are or had been involved in women's rights activism (either through NGOs or individually) and on the other hand, women who were not. I envisaged a study which would clearly see the differences between the experiences of these target groups. Furthermore, I had already had established contact with women's rights activists (during my MRES studies)

The initial research questions of the thesis were the following:

1. How do women living in the urban areas of Georgia experience gender inequality in everyday life?
2. How do they respond to gender inequalities, and what are their practices of responding to gender inequalities in everyday life?
3. How do participants' practices of responding to gender inequalities vary according to their involvement in formal versions of activism?

With this in mind, I visited Georgia at the beginning of the second year of my studies. As the research developed, the borders between the categories of activist/non-activist blurred. There were occasions when a woman was not involved in any kind of formal activism but self-identified as an activist. Consequently, the distinction between activists and those who were not involved in activism softened, and the research questions took the following form:

1. How do women living in the urban areas of Georgia experience gender inequality in public spaces?
2. How do women living in the urban areas of Georgia experience gender inequality in private spaces?
3. How are these inequalities influenced by the socialist past of Georgia and the current gender ideology?
4. How do women respond to gender inequalities in everyday life?

During the fieldwork that lasted approximately five months, I used qualitative methodology and interviewed 42 women living in three cities of Georgia (Tbilisi,

Kutaisi, and Batumi). I asked all of them if they were willing to take part in follow-up situated interviews, which were located in spaces that the participants selected (e.g., cafes and public/private transport). I conducted situated interviews with 14 participants. In addition to this, I attended women's rights activists' meetings as well as political demonstrations around women's rights and did participant observation there. The research has been guided by a feminist standpoint epistemology in which women's experiences play a central role. More details of the methodology are outlined in Chapter 4.

1.2. Key concepts

The study revolves around gender inequality. I will offer the conceptualisations of these terms in this section. Nevertheless, before looking at these concepts, I will briefly note how gender is understood in this thesis. Gender is not biological; instead, it is something that people do in their interactions with others (West & Zimmerman, 1987). People produce and reproduce particular social meanings associated with their gender in everyday interactions. Production and reproduction of gender mean that it is repeatedly performed (Butler, 1990: 140). However, it should be noted in this thesis I understand gender as a lived social relation as well (McNay, 2004). As I mentioned above, these structures of oppression are manifested in everyday life of women and are experienced by them on an everyday level. The importance of women's experiences will be examined in detail in the methodology chapter (Chapter 4). Women and men experience lived reality differently. Their experiences are not only different from each other but unequal as well. This inequality is manifested almost in every domain, e.g., education, employment and legislation, but most importantly, this inequality exists as a cultural script.

This study has an interdisciplinary character. In the thesis, I draw on debates and concepts from different disciplines, for instance, feminist sociology, feminist geography, and anthropology. My aim in this study is to see how gender inequality is played out in the everyday. My approach to studying the everyday is to look at how the everyday is gendered and what are women's experiences and negotiations of particular spaces (e.g., the home, the streets, leisure spaces). I

focus on both unchanging, routine parts of the everyday and “the terms of its transgression” (Vaiou & Lykogianni, 2006: 734), even momentary and fragmented.

Everyday acts reveal social phenomena and patterns that are manifested in the everyday. Thus, the ‘everyday’ is “infused with power, politics and historical significance” (Scott, 2009: 2). In order to be able to study these acts, they have to occur in a social context (e.g., contexts of family, leisure, and religion in which we act differently) (ibid). Moreover, they must be localised in space, e.g., at home, on the internet, or in the street. In this way, the everyday connects with the central concepts of the thesis – space, place and gender.

Spaces have symbolic meanings and gendered messages associated with them (Massey, 1994). They influence women’s lives and the production of femininities. Gender relations are constructed in and through space and place, and space and place also construct gender (Bondi & Rose, 2003). Moreover, on the one hand, women are constrained by spaces, and on the other hand, women have the possibility to contest the dominant understanding of space (Bondi & Davidson, 2005).

The concepts of space and place relate to the binary categories of private/public spaces. The public and the private are associated with either masculine or feminine meanings. These meanings influence and are influenced by gender relations (Kilde, 1999). This binary concept is deeply gendered (both in terms of ideology and space), where women have subordinate positions and are historically associated with the private spaces (Morgan, 2007). However, the division adopts a somewhat different meaning in the postsocialist context: According to Gal and Kligman (2000), in the Soviet Union, ‘public’ was associated with the state and the ruling people and ‘private’ – with the space that was free of the state. However, both in postsocialist and Western contexts, private/public spaces constrain women and, as I already mentioned, leave the potential for possible subversions (Rose, 1993). The distinction in this thesis is expressed in concepts such as home and urban public space. Both these spaces have the potential to restrict and liberate women at the same time. Home and urban public space are the central concepts for the empirical chapters as well.

Women often negotiate, challenge or contest dominant gender structures in public/private spaces and for this, they often use the 'informal' means. In this thesis, I focus on the three conceptualisations of informal politics interested in hidden forms of challenging the dominant gender structures. The first is everyday resistance/infrapolitics (Scott, 1985; Scott, 1990, Johansson and Vinthagen, 2019), which consists of everyday acts that destabilise power. The second form is everyday activism (Pink, 2012) which consists of everyday practices that aim to maintain or undermine the status quo. The third is "consentful" contentions (Turbine, 2015) which are contentions that do not seem oppositional at first.

1.3. Outline of the thesis

Chapter 2 offers a review of the historical processes in Georgia during the Soviet era, after the collapse of the USSR and later, when the "modernisation" of the state began. This chapter situates women's experiences in context and makes it possible to look at how these experiences were influenced by the Soviet gender order, poverty during the transition period and contemporary neotraditionalist gender ideology. Firstly, it examines several stages of the "woman question" during the Soviet Union and describes the changes that occurred in gender regimes in the pre-Stalinist, Stalinist and post-Stalinist eras. Secondly, it shows how economic, social and political changes in the 1990s reconstructed gender relations in the country. Another alteration in gender relations happened after the 1990s when the "modern" state was established in Georgia. At the same time, religious nationalism became dominant, and the rise of the Georgian Orthodox Church and nationalist sentiments re-introduced the traditional gender order. This chapter argues that women in Georgia negotiate 'modern' gender roles with 'traditional' gender ideology, constantly moving between these contradictory contexts (Gavashelishvili, 2017).

The third chapter, the literature review, discusses key concepts around themes that will help understand women's experiences in urban spaces and at home. The first concept I look at will be everyday life and how it can be studied. Second debates evolve around concepts of everyday life, space, place and

gender. In this section, I argue that power structures of gender are constantly produced, reproduced and transformed in space. However, these spaces always construct alternative possibilities and are not limited to only traditional spatialities. Third debates evolve around gendering of public/private spaces. In this section, I argue that social, political and economic changes influence the gendering of public/private. I review how these changes during and after the Soviet Union influenced gendering or public/private in Georgia. In the fourth and fifth parts of the literature review, I discuss how spaces such as 'home' and 'urban public space' can be conceptualised. After that, I look at how alternative possibilities can be constructed (that was explored in the first section of the chapter) and how traditional spatialities can be destabilised. I stress the importance of informal politics and its different expressions in this process.

Chapter 4 outlines the research design and methodology, as well as the choices and decisions I made in the process of researching women's everyday experiences. I illustrate that this research is influenced by my epistemological stance and my position as a researcher. After clarifying these influences, I review the methods I used in this study and the sampling strategies I employed.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 outline my project's empirical findings. Chapter 5 is the opening data chapter and explores women's everyday experiences of gender inequality in domestic space. The study findings reveal that the home restricts women in Georgia on many levels: it reproduces power relations that confine women to domestic space. Moreover, it restricts women's sexuality and choices and controls their appearance. However, it can also be a space for positive experiences, where women have "their room" and where they can relax.

Chapter 6 moves on to explore women's everyday experiences of gender inequality in urban public spaces. The participants' accounts revealed that women experienced the urban space in terms of both control and liberation. I argue that women try to navigate public spaces safely, and for this reason, they come up with strategies to minimise danger. Similar to the previous chapter, this chapter establishes that urban spaces can be liberating as well as controlling for women.

Chapter 7 is the final empirical chapter and explores how women respond to everyday manifestations of gender inequalities. It looks at how women exercise their agency when responding to gender inequalities and how their actions can, in fact, destabilise dominant gender relations. Different practices that women employ when responding to gender inequalities are explored here. Such practices include leaving the space, responding with silence, responding with verbal argument, asserting agency over their bodies, and responding with gestures and facial expressions. In this chapter, I will argue that the participants were choosing these practices from "available options" determined by the repertoires of power in Georgia.

The last chapter is the concluding chapter. It highlights the key themes that have emerged from the data. These key themes are the following: (1) both urban and domestic spaces are contradictory, i.e., they oppress women but also have liberating properties; (2) women use different strategies to destabilise dominant power relations; (3) women navigate both public and domestic spaces and aim to minimise danger; After these key themes, I will talk about the contributions of the thesis, its limitations and the areas for future research.

Chapter 2. Gender Inequality in Georgia

Introduction

Georgia is a former Soviet republic situated between Black Sea, Turkey, Russia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. Nowadays, it consists of 9 regions – Samegreli-Zemo Svaneti, Racha-Lechkhumi and Kvemo Svaneti, Imereti, Guria and Atchara (an autonomous republic) in the Western part and Shida Qartli, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Mtskheta Mtianeti, Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti and Tbilisi (the capital city) in the Eastern part of Georgia. The country has two territories that Russia occupies: Abkhazia, which has the status of an autonomous republic, and Georgia does not have effective control over the region and South Ossetia, the status of which is not constitutionally defined by Georgia. According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia (National Staticsitc Office of Georgia, 2021), the country's population is 3 728 600[1] people, with 1 202 700 living in Tbilisi. 1 796 200 from the population are men, and 1 932 400 are women (National Staticsitc Office of Georgia, 2021). According to the 2014 census, the population of Georgia consists of different ethnic groups such as Georgians (86.8%), Azeris (6.3%), Armenians (4.5%) and other ethnic groups (2.4%) (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016).

Georgia's near past is full of difficulties. On the one hand, it is a post-Soviet country that could not escape the influence of Soviet rule on its politics. On the other hand, it has a legacy of several internal conflicts and the civil war, making Georgia's situation quite dramatic in the 1990s. After the Rose Revolution in 2003, democracy replaced the previous political systems.

In this chapter, I attempt to explain the context of Georgia concerning gender equality. I start this chapter by reviewing the historical context of Georgia, dividing it into three parts – Soviet, post-Soviet and contemporary experiences of

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[1] As for the 1st of January 2021

Georgia in terms of gender relations. The second section is about the rise of religious nationalism in Georgia. In this section, I will talk about how religious and nationalistic discourses became dominant in contemporary Georgia and what role the Georgian Orthodox Church played in this. The third section discusses how women navigate "traditions" and "modern" life. Here I will argue that "bricolage" or a mix of "traditional" and "modern" values are characteristic of women living in Georgia. I show that the current situation concerning gender inequality is deeply rooted in Georgia's past in terms of its history and in gender regimes that were available in the country.

Throughout the chapter, I often rely on the official statistics and the grey literature (i.e., the reports written by either international or local NGOs and non-academic studies conducted by research institutes (many of the research institutes have the legal status of NGOs in Georgia). As I mentioned in Chapter 1, academic research about gender inequality in Georgia is limited. Most of the statistical data about the scale of gender inequality are obtained either by the National Statistics Office of Georgia or by research institutes (all of which are NGOs).

2.1. Historical context of Georgia

2.1.1. During the Soviet Union

In February 1921 the Red Army advanced into Georgia, and on the 25th of February, the Red Army entered Tbilisi, the capital city of Georgia and established a government of workers' and peasants' council. In 1922 Georgia became a founding member of the Soviet Union, and "for seventy years in the 20th century, colonial status forced Georgia (*Sakartvelo*) to be separated from the rest of the world by the iron curtain" (Kikvidze, 2006: 50). Georgia was politically, socially and economically ruled by the Soviet system, influencing the Georgian gender order.

I should note here that although I will talk about the Soviet gender regime in this subsection, it does not mean that gender regime was the same in all Soviet

countries; different countries had slightly different gender regimes. Nonetheless, I will speak about the overarching characterisations of the Soviet gender regime and draw out the aspects and nuances that were more specific to the country. This discussion outlines how debates over women's rights and roles played out in the Soviet Georgia.

The main point that can be made in relation to the Soviet Union is that the state controlled all spheres and realms of life. The state defined women's roles and responsibilities in relation to the state's economic and demographic policy decisions (Racioppi & O'Sullivan, 1995: 823). However, it did not address the social construction of gender roles adequately, and because of this, pre-existing patriarchal structures continued to be significant (Turbine, 2007: 59). These structures were based on the assumption that there are essential differences between men and women and that women and men have their 'natural' roles.

The Bolsheviks: 1917-1930

During this period, the Soviets were experimenting in the realms of gender and sexuality. Their policies aimed to resolve the "woman question" in a manner that would be relevant to a classless society. However, the Bolsheviks assumed that patriarchal power structures were a consequence of classed power structures, and once class equality was achieved, gender inequalities would also disappear (Attwood, 1999). In Soviet Georgia, too, proletarian women were idealised as the bearers of the Soviet emancipatory politics. At the same time, the new Soviet order considered proletarian women to be "backward" because they still had pre-Soviet values and needed enlightenment (Barkaia, 2018: 34). "Backward" here means that these women were not supporting women's emancipation enough and/or were religious. Early marriages and other patriarchal features were considered to be "backward", "eastern", "Asiatic" practices (Barkaia, 2018: 35). For Moscow, Georgia was "East", but for Georgians "East" was the eastern regions of country, where minority Muslims lived (ibid).

The Soviet Union during this period introduced policies that would grant women's 'equality' to men, e.g., new divorce laws and abortion regulations (Attwood, 1999). Drawing women into employment (and education with this aim)

was also a very significant policy. However, in Georgia, the woman question took a slightly different turn. Although the Soviet Union offered important changes in women's lives, men were unwilling to accept women's emancipation fully. Barkaia (2018: 36) notes that both proletarian and peasant men were resistant to change and thought that emancipation was a way for their daughters and wives to become “degenerates”.

However, women's duties were not changed in the domestic realm, and women's primary responsibility was assumed to be domestic duties (Gal & Kligman, 2000). In Georgia, transferring household labour to the public sphere did not change gendered labour segregation in the family or the public domain. In the household, women were responsible for domestic tasks and in the public realm, women tended to perform waged household work, which was considered to be “accustomed to women’s hands” (Barkaia, 2018: 37). They linked the image of women to tenderness and kindness that was important in this kind of work. This image of women still reproduced essentialist views towards gender.

The *Zhenotdel* (women’s department) was established in the Soviet Union to' emancipate women'. It held social activities in Georgia as well. It actively used different methods to engage women in public events; they were establishing orphanages and helping women with different services. They even opened women's clubs and offered them lectures and training as well (Barkaia, 2018: 38). Their goal was to promote women’s participation in the labour force. Women’s magazines also encouraged women to adopt a new worker identity and called them to perceive work “as a central life value” (Barkaia, 2018: 38). They published the portraits of the New Soviet Woman in contrast with the pre-Soviet women who cared only about their appearance. Those women who did not want to work were called "burdens on society" (ibid). Consequently, these efforts were partly successful as women became more engaged in the labour force; however, they were not advancing to leading positions in their workplaces. There were obstacles to women's advancement, including sexism in the workplace, the lack of childcare facilities and women's duties at home.

The Stalinist Soviet Union

Soon Stalin came into power and ‘closed’ the ‘woman question’. Stalin’s position was that women did not need any special policies aimed at them to guarantee their participation (Turbine, 2007: 61). It was considered that women’s liberation was already completed. Thus, the second period could be labelled as “totalitarian androgyny” (Temkina & Zdravomyslova, 2003) since a growing number of women started to participate in economic production, and this was believed to be sufficient proof of their liberation. This was the case especially during World War II, when women had to carry out traditionally 'male' roles. The Soviet System claimed that women's participation in the labour force would be enough for gender equality (Turbine, 2007: 61). Stalin declared that women's equality was already achieved; however, due to demographic pressures linked to WWII, strengthening the family became a new goal for the Soviet state (Racioppi & O'Sullivan, 1995: 823). Because of this reason, the freedoms in marriage and divorce were reframed, and women's reproductive choices were restricted - abortions became outlawed. In the 1940s, motherhood was a promoted role for a woman and "a cult of motherhood was established" (Turbine, 2007: 62.). The nuclear family was also promoted, where women fulfilled their 'traditional' role with "self-sacrifice" if needed. Consequently, women had to be a kind of 'superwomen' – equally committed to their families and the production.

In 1930s Georgia, the image of 'superwoman' was also promoted. Georgian journals were writing that Georgian women managed to fulfil multiple roles of waged worker, mother and wife, and it was possible to achieve a balance between work and family (Barkaia, 2018: 42). Both women who preferred to participate only in waged work and women who stayed at home were criticised for their behaviour. However, the primary duty of a woman was believed to be motherhood (ibid). The illustration of this is a monument of a Georgian mother (*Qartlis Deda*). It was created in Tbilisi in 1959 and depicted a mother holding a bowl in one hand to offer guests and a sword in the other to meet the enemies with a weapon. Similar monuments were created in different cities of the Soviet Union. This particular one illustrates the importance of motherhood in the Soviet Union and Georgia as well.

The post-Stalinist Soviet Union

The third period dates from 1956 to the demise of the Soviet Union. During this period, the 'woman question' was one more time introduced with a softer approach. It was debated how it was possible to balance production and reproduction better. The image of the Soviet 'superwomen' who could combine the roles of mother and worker equally well was presented as something unfeasible (Turbine, 2007: 63). Nonetheless, it was still State which defined and controlled gender regimes.

The state's new goal was to ensure women's participation in decision-making positions and public life. It was recognised that women's equality had not been achieved, and the state started to search for reasons for women's lower levels of participation in the public sphere (Turbine, 2007: 64). The state recognised that women had lower earnings at work and a 'second shift' at home and that childcare and domestic labour could have served as barriers for many women. Khrushchev's government introduced targeted policies for women, mainly addressing women's domestic work and reproductive rights. The state soon renewed debating about communist morality: mothers were responsible to spend time educating children and caring about their *'kulturnost'*[2], which added pressures on a working woman (Ibid 65). Despite this, the state's official position was that women were liberated.

This notion changed during Brezhnev, and it became clear that the woman question was not resolved, and women had a number of social issues in their everyday lives. However, the state was more committed to redefining women's roles than its ideological assumptions (Kay, 2002: 53), and it continued prioritising falling birth rates and high levels of divorce (Turbine, 2007: 67). The public debates became more open during Gorbachev's government, and they concerned issues such as women's inequality in the public sphere and women's reproductive health (Turbine, 2007: 68). However, the woman question in this period was characterised by calls for women to 'return to the home'. According to Turbine (2007: 70), this call had two implications: on the one hand, it redefined women's rights and left space for their 'choice', and on the other hand,

[2] Cultureness, the level of culture and education a group or a person has.

it reinforced essentialist approaches to gender, which, in turn, had implications for women's perception of public space. The essentialist discourses influenced the perception of gender roles after the Soviet Union.

The revolutionary idea of the Soviet government was to create a new Soviet man and woman, free women from patriarchal oppression that was characteristic of the pre-Soviet era, educate them, and incorporate them into the labour force (Ziemer, 2020: 3). The Soviet governments introduced policies that guaranteed education equality and equal opportunities to employment. However, these policies did not essentially challenge traditional gender divisions.

2.1.2. After the Soviet Union

Georgia stayed in the Soviet Union until the 9th of April 1991, when it declared its independence. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, Georgia moved from communism to market economy and "from a subordinated administrative unit of the Soviet Union to representative democracy" (Chkheidze, 2018: 79). The process of transformation was rapid. It influenced the entire population. In this period, the country experienced a civil war and two ethnic conflicts in autonomous republics of Georgia - South Ossetia and Abkhazia, both of which the central government lost (Nodia, 2005b: 39). As a result, the country had approximately 300 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) (UNHCR, 2003: 399) who became victims of wartime crimes, poverty, and exclusion (Chkheidze, 2018: 80). At this point, Georgia was often described as a "failing state" (Nodia, 2005b: 40).

All former Soviet countries experienced difficulties during the transition, such as the decline in the availability of jobs and economic production (Heinen, 2006). The same complications were present in Georgia - the economic conditions of the population worsened dramatically (Wyzan, 1995: 116). The country lost its exports and imports from other former Soviet countries; factories that were built during the Soviet industrialisation, were closed; electricity was not always available in many urban and rural areas (Dunn, 2018: 226). Sometimes electricity outages lasted from one day to one month in outlying districts of Tbilisi (Narayan, et al., 1999: 39). Narayan, Patel, Schafft, Rademacher and Koch-

Schulte (1999) describe the scope of poverty in 1990s Georgia quite vividly: because of poor economic conditions, despite hospitality being a strong social norm, people avoided being either hosts or guests, since hosts had nothing to serve guests and guests had nothing to bring to hosts (Ibid 55).

Most importantly, the Soviet food production, processing, and distribution system fell apart. Some families were living without food (or on only bread and tea) for several days both in urban and rural areas (Narayan, et al., 1999: 58); As Dunn (2018) rightfully notes, cities that previously (during the Soviet era) underwent urbanisation and industrialisation, in the 1990s had some characteristics of villages:

> […] people raised chickens and pigs in urban apartment buildings, and cattle roamed the streets even in large cities such as Kutaisi. Most of the tasks associated with the subsistence economy fell to women: raising chickens or milking cattle, for example, were deemed tasks for women, as was canning fruits and vegetables to ensure a food supply in winter.
>
> *Dunn, 2018: 226*

Dunn (2018) here describes that women's domestic labour became crucial in terms of the family's survival. In addition to the tasks described above, women started to search for low-paying jobs; some became self-employed (e.g., sold goods at markets or in the streets, became babysitters or house cleaners) (Chkheidze, 2018: 80). In this sense, by taking the lead in earnings in families (Sumbadze, 2018: 172), women found a way to secure their families' livelihoods (Ibid). Meanwhile, men were trying to earn a living by participating in the grey market: buying and selling gasoline, trafficking cigarettes and drugs (Dunn, 2018: 226). It can be argued that men lost their economic power and occupational status during the transition, whilst women's economic importance rose. The economic changes have influenced the power structure of the family in terms of generations as well – if previously the family was dominated by elder members, who also were breadwinners, now young adults became more

important in the household’s survival strategy (Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2005: 226).

As a last resort, women were leaving the country to find jobs abroad. Some of them travelled in small groups between countries like Russia and Turkey and sold and traded goods (Narayan, et al., 1999: 146). International labour migration became an important economic strategy for Georgians in the 1990s and the 2000s (Badurashvili, 2004). However, the direction of migratory flows changed during this period. In the first years of independence, most of the migrants were men, and they were migrating, primarily, to Russia, due to language proficiency, already established networks and visa-free travel conditions (Zurabishvili, et al., 2018: 181). In the second half of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, the composition of migratory flows changed: it was women who started to migrate to more distant locations such as Greece, Italy, Israel, etc. They were taking jobs as domestic workers in these countries and were migrating independently, without their families (Ibid. p. 181). Unsurprisingly, they were migrating primarily because of economic hardship (Ibid.: 183).

2.1.3. “Modernisation” in Georgia

Some Western and local scholars described the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 as a "democratic breakthrough for the post-communist country" (Dobbins, 2014: 759). The revolution was taken as a theoretical reference point by other Eastern European and Central Asian countries like Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan (ibid). This era was characterised by reforms in the education system, police structures, and other state institutions (Nodia, 2005b: 16). As the anthropologist Martin Demant Frederiksen (2013) notes, cities were modernised as well, and city ‘lights’ became a symbol of change in the country (because the lack of electricity was dominant in Georgia during the 1990s) (ibid, 2013: 37). The reforms promised to transform the Georgian economy the same way as other post-socialist countries did in the 1990s (e.g., Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary). New neoliberal economic policies brought some stability; however, they also brought growing economic inequalities (Gugushvili, 2014).

Some scholars (e.g., Hale, 2006) did not see the revolution as a substantive change in the political system; but as a continuity of the old system, i.e., 'patronal presidentialism', which has already existed in Georgia since the 1990s (Hale, 2006: 307). In such systems, the elected president is a source of power and has a strong political and societal influence. To some extent, Hale's (ibid) observations are fair because the political system became more authoritarian after some time and formed "hyper-presidentialism" (Dobbins, 2014: 761), where the balance between different branches of government was absent.

The goal of the Georgian government was to make Georgia economically and politically independent. Its political goals were to join the Euro-American alliances, such as NATO and the European Union (Dunn, 2018: 228). Joining these alliances became increasingly important because of Russia's expansionist politics, especially, after the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, in which Georgia lost some of its territories. A commitment to human rights was (and is) a key EU policy, including women's rights. From this period, the EU and the Georgian Government started to fund projects that aimed at "empowering" women. Moreover, "gender mainstreaming" (i.e., a strategy aimed at the inclusion of women's and men's needs throughout the development process with an emphasis on women's empowerment (Moser & Moser, 2005) became a requirement of EU's development projects (ibid). As Dunn (2018) notes, "the message was clear: to be European, one had to support the equality of women and men. This was not lost on the Georgian government" (ibid 228).

One of the essential elements of the campaign to join NATO and the EU alliances were to claim Georgia's essential Europeanness (Dunn, 2018: 228). However, political debates in Georgia included some "anti-Western" stances as well (Tskhadadze, 2018: 48). Such positions underlined that Georgian people are different from Western people. In her work, Tamar Tskhadadze (2018: 50) notes that two contradictory discourses characterise the Georgian transition: the one that sees Georgians as ancient Europeans and the other that emphasises the difference between Georgia and the "West". It must be noted here that the concept of "West" in these debates relates to the progress, human rights, and prosperity, supposedly existing in Western Europe and the USA (ibid). In this sense, the "West" is a hyperreal idea, only a theoretical reference point, and it

does not necessarily depict any actual geographic space. Both narratives have an underlining theme that Georgia's European path has been blocked first by the Russian Empire and then by the Soviet Union (ibid). This statement is based on the assumption that Georgia must go through the exact processes that the "West" went through. Such a stance idealises the "West", perceives it as monolithically good, and criticises Georgia for its "backwardness" (ibid). Of course, there are alternative stances that understand the "West" as monolithically evil, aiming to destroy Georgian "identity" and traditions. This "progressive versus reactionary" dichotomy has characterised the dominant political discourse in Georgia over the past several decades" (Tskhadadze, 2018: 56). Generally speaking, many Georgians believe that the country is somewhere “between the East and the West” and takes the best of both (Krebs, 2020: 24). How these opposing positions relate to gender more specifically will be discussed in the last section of the chapter.

The EU and the Georgian Government funded projects were carried out mainly by non-Governmental institutions, which were not new for the post-revolution Georgia. However, these projects did not start from 2003. It was from 1992 when European and American countries started to promote civil society in the country (as in other post-socialist states). The newly established NGOs, which were financially dependent upon western foundations, became "the main form in which civil society existed" (Nodia, 2005a: 14). These NGOs promoted Western liberal principles in society; however, the topics they addressed were often dictated by the funder's (i.e., western foundations') priorities (ibid).

Even if international organisations did help with projects related to women's rights, it does not mean that generally, women's rights were the "corollary of the European/Western orientation" (Tskhadadze, 2018: 55). Firstly, the Soviet Union contributed to women’s rights to some extent, as I described earlier; secondly, women's rights are essential to many non-Western countries as well; thirdly, women’s rights were discussed before the Soviet Union in independent Georgia in 1918-1921 and even before that, during the Russian empire (Tskhadadze, 2018). The debate about women's rights in the country began in the second half of the nineteenth century when Georgian intellectuals started to promote these ideas (Gaprindashvili, 2018). Women were adapting some aspects of granting

women equal rights to education and civic participation. Although these were political demands mainly carried out by elite urban women, they probably still can be considered as first-wave feminism in Georgia, which was later erased in the Soviet period.

During this ‘modernisation’ period, according to the requirements of EU’s development projects and with the support of NGOs, Georgia made legislative reforms focusing on women’s rights. For example, the country adopted the Domestic Violence Law in 2006 (Sabedashvili, 2007: 29), the Gender Equality Law of Georgia (which focuses on ensuring gender equality in labour relations, education, healthcare, social protection, family relations, etc.) in 2010. It criminalised the offence of domestic violence for the first time in 2012. The law included topics such as mechanisms for prevention, identification, and elimination of domestic violence, social and labour guarantees for victims of domestic violence, rehabilitation measures for abusers and protecting minors from domestic violence. These developmental projects continued after the change of government in 2012, when an opposition coalition, "Georgian Dream" (*Qartuli Otsneba*), headed by oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili came into power.

The developments in relation to women's rights were important during this period as well, however, the government's commitment to these developments was still superficial. There is a significant difference between *de facto* and *de jure* situations in terms of women's equality: the Government has "formal rather than a substantive commitment to women's empowerment" (Sabedashvili, 2007: 164). It should also be said that these advancements were not "emancipation from above", from the state, similarly to the Soviet Union; rather, they were "emancipation from outside", from the international organisations.

In addition to this, the attempts did not substantially change women's lives. Indeed, some women were actively involved in women’s rights activism (Chkheidze, 2018: 80), and they still managed to find their way to be involved in the public realm. The similar processes took place in Armenia and according to Ishkhanian, through this, women “have not only been able to maintain a modest existence, but more importantly, they have gained the knowledge, skills, and social connections needed to promote progressive developments in their

countries” (2003: 487), although such activism was quite fragmented. Generally, women’s issues did not get as much attention in the country as they should have (Chkheidze, 2018).

2.2. The rise of religious nationalism

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia, like other Caucasian states, had to reinvent its identities (Filetti, 2014: 223), including ethnic, national, religious, and gender. The forms of these identities changed and transformed several times during this period. However, the search for identity is ongoing, and some of the identity-related issues are still unresolved (Javakhishvili, 2021: 124). Moreover, I do not think any of these identities are stable and fixed. Instead, there are dominant "identities" at play in contemporary Georgia, and other versions of them are either hidden, repressed or have less power than the dominant ones.

The philosopher Giga Zedania (2011) in his work "The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia", suggests that contemporary Georgia is characterised by religious nationalism. Before conceptualising this term, I will outline the main arguments that Zedania (ibid) puts forward. He claims that ethnic nationalism, i.e., nationalism based on blood and descent, existed even in Soviet Georgia and slowly, especially after 2003, developed "its civic counterpart" (Ibid., 2011: 121). Civic nationalism disregarded ethnic origins and instead focused on the state and citizenship.

According to Zedania (2012: 123), later, the conflict between "modernity" (the state) and "tradition" (the church) influenced the birth of the new type of nationalism, religious nationalism, which arose as a backlash against modernity. In his conceptualisation, In post-Soviet Georgia, the religious renaissance was strong and vital. It became impossible to differentiate between religious and nationalist discourse since both had similar narratives – the survival of Georgian nationhood (ibid). This is evident from the research conducted in Georgia and published in 2021: as it turns out, 80% of the respondents agree that the Georgian Orthodox Church promotes the preservation of moral values in

Georgian society and 79% agree that GOC is the foundation of Georgian Identity (CRRC Georgia, 2021: 23).

Nationalism, in general, is always gendered (McClintock, 1993: 61). This is true for civic, ethnic, religious, and other forms of nationalism. The gendering of nationalism means that nations rely on constructions of gender. Kulpa (2016:44), for example, notes that both gender and nation are performative acts. It means that we act up not only gender but nation as well. Moreover, when we enact gender, we enact nationally specific gender (ibid). In the case of Georgia, the "nationally specific role" women have is to reproduce the nation not only biologically but culturally as well – they have to transmit values and traditions to their children. Georgian women are required to preserve and reproduce beliefs that are "perceived as "authentically" Georgian" (Amashukeli, 2017: 2). This gives women the role of carriers of the Georgian nationalistic agenda, and nation-building becomes their responsibility. According to this viewpoint, a 'true' Georgian woman is a selfless mother who is “heroically devoted to family and homeland” (Gavashelishvili, 2017: 27). Consequently, there are two national images of women in Georgia – a woman as a mother and an individual who is less respected (Javakhadze, 2006: 68), i.e., the woman who does not have or does not plan to have children. However, not every kind of motherhood is acceptable: having children is appreciated within a legal marriage only. In this sense, women also reproduce conventional gender roles, in which the concept of womanhood is strongly connected to motherhood (Gagoshashvili, 2008: 277). Despite this crucial role of nation-builders and cultural reproducers women have, their role in the family is still undervalued, sometimes by women themselves (ibid). The devaluation of female children in relation to male children is a good illustration of this: many parents avoid female births and do sex-selective abortions (Guilmoto, 2017: 272); because of this, the sex ratios at birth are skewed, 121 boys for every 100 girls (It should be approximately 105 boys for every 100 girls, and in 2010, the number of girls born in Armenia was 10% lower than expected (Ziemer, 2020: 5).

According to Zedania (2011: 125), religious nationalism makes Orthodox Christianity into a key factor in being Georgian. It is true that according to the constitution, Church and State are separate, and Georgia is a secular country

(Ibid); however, in 2002, the Church and the State signed an agreement (the Concordat) stating that the Orthodox Church has a unique role in the history of Georgia and is a "marker of national identity" (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016: 7). Moreover, it has received 22-24 million Georgian Lari (GEL) annually from the Georgian Government since 2010.

GOC's anti-Western attitudes, according to some scholars (Dunn, 2018; Vacharadze, 2015), resemble Putin's Russia's vision of "traditional values". The church's strong ties to the Russian Orthodox Church and their shared "traditionalist" attitudes may be part of Russia's strategy to reclaim power over former Soviet countries (e.g., Riabov and Riabova, 2014; Laruelle, 2015). Whether these "traditionalist" narratives are purposeful strategies, the church situates these narratives in opposition to the "Western values".

The Georgian Orthodox church, which has strong ties to the Russian Orthodox Church, became a primary actor in anti-Western sentiments in Georgia (Ladaria, 2012: 110-111). The events of the 17th of May 2013 (International Day against Homophobia) exemplify these sentiments well. On that day, the church mobilised 5 000 to 10 000 protesters and attacked the members of gay rights organisations (twenty to thirty people). The Orthodox priests led the attack in ecclesiastical dress and were condoned by Patriarch Ilia II (Dunn, 2018: 230). The police did not protect the activists as well as they should have and were slow to mobilise buses to help them escape the attacks. Some activists were heavily wounded after this violent clash. Authors like Rekhviashvili (2018: 218) point out that LGBTQI rights in Georgia are also viewed as 'western' imposed discourses. The event cannot be seen as a single aggressive event against LGBTQI people. The GOC openly condemns non-heterosexual identities and considers them a "deadly sin". Soon after, the GOC established a "family day" on the 17th of May and, in this way, made sure that LGBTQI demonstrations would never happen on this day. After 2013 there have been some attempts of reclaiming the date, but they proved unsuccessful.

This opposition is not only articulated through epistles and speeches but through open involvement in state politics. For example, in 2014, the Government of Georgia held meetings about the adoption of the Law on Elimination of all Forms

of Discrimination. The Orthodox clergy attended the readings of the bill and opposed the parts of law about LGBTQI rights and gender equality (Chitanava, 2015: 49). Generally, the Orthodox clergy does not attend the readings of any bills and does not offer their position about them. Consequently, the state does not require their feedback on bills. However, in this case, the state considered the position of the GOC and made amendments in the final draft of the law according to GOC's demands (Ibid.: 50).

After a violent attack on LGBTQI+ activists, probably it is unsurprising that the GOC favours conservative or traditional attitudes towards gender norms in Georgia. It is symptomatic that women are restricted from holding positions in the institution. Moreover, the church is in favour of women's subordination and against divorce (Sumbadze, 2014: 8) and does not condemn domestic violence against women; priests only in the most severe cases (e.g., in cases of femicide) condemned it (Javakhishvili & Tsuladze, 2011). Probably the following illustrates the attitudes of the GOC towards gender equality: before entering the churches in Georgia, women are required to cover their heads and wear long skirts or dresses. It means that GOC tries to "promote" a woman's modest, traditional image. Some women follow this image; others find ways to reconcile religiosity with modern life. Gavashelishvili (2017) gives a valuable example of this

> [Pilgrim women] come to the places where the minibuses depart wearing trousers and sports outfits. When they approach the various church destinations, they quickly change their outfits: they dress up in long robes or skirts they have brought along in their bags, and they all put a headscarf on. After leaving a church, everybody immediately changes clothes again until they reach the next church.
>
> *Gavashelishvili, 2017: 28*

Such transformation indicates that the pilgrim women's religiosity is flexible, and it allows them to mix religious lifestyles with modern practices. For example, childless women, who want to have a child, as Gavashelishvili claims, use all means to have a child – they go to doctors and churches as well (2017:

38). I will argue that such “bricolage” or a mix of “traditional” and “modern” values are characteristic to women living in Georgia in the next section.

2.3. “Western” or “traditional”?

The debates about women's rights are interlinked with the debates on "modernity" and "backwardness"; on the "West" and "tradition" in Georgia (Krebs, 2020: 25). Although women were undertaking new roles in society, it did not change their status in the family and society. The social changes in the last 30 years did not necessarily change the "traditional" gender roles but "reinforced" them in a way. Tradition here should be understood as a notion that can embody an expression of survival, which is strongly tied to national belonging.

Many authors argued that there are strict traditional gender norms in Georgian Society (Rekhviashvili 2010; Sumbadze and Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2006). Georgian women are expected to perform their 'traditional' gender roles, which are portrayed as 'natural' for 'normal' humans. Johnson and Robinson (2007) call this phenomenon neotraditionalist gender ideology, which enables re-feminisation and re-masculinisation. Here I should note that Johnson and Robinson (ibid) here talk about postrsocialist countries more generally and not specifically about Georgia. Similarly, other authors like Shevchenko (2007), Turbine (2007; 2015) and Ashwin (2000) talk about Russia specifically. However, the similar processes took place in Georgia. The revival of nationalism and religion characterises Neotraditionalism, and both of them see women's place at home. As Shevchenko (2007: 130) argues, neotraditional gender ideology focuses on women’s reproductive functions in the context of the birth rate decline and, in this way, limits not only their participation in the public sphere but the mainstreaming of non-traditional gender politics. Such (re)appearance of traditional notions of gender was a way to deal with the Soviet past (Ashwin, 2000). On the one hand, the demise of the Soviet structures created new opportunities for women (Turbine & Riach , 2012) but, on the other hand, neoliberal economy and “modernisation” of the former socialist states transformed women into “domestic goddesses or ‘heroines of survival’ (Ziemer, 2020: 7). The inner

contradictions between traditional gender roles and “modern” gender ideology dictates women’s lives in Georgia.

Neotraditionalist gender ideology is strong in Georgia; however, it does not mean that “modern” approaches to gender do not exist in the country. Neotraditionalist gender ideology coexists with pro-European, pro-West liberal values in Georgia (Mestvirishvili & Mestvirishvili, 2014). Gavashelishvili (2017: 27) suggests that modern youth is trying to reconcile the traditional with the modern and create a kind of bricolage: for example, be sexually free but at the same time normative Georgian woman. On the one hand, they trust the traditional institutions, e.g., the Orthodox Church, but, on the other hand, they trust modern institutions as well (e.g., modern medical technologies).

Consequently, on the one hand, women are expected to be “modern” and “European”, and, on the other hand, “traditional”, “Georgian”, “keepers of the family honour and the domestic sphere” (Dunn, 2018: 229). Thus, the neotraditionalist gender ideology is widespread and dominant in relation to more "modern" ideas about gender roles:

> [in Georgia] there is now a strong public perception that women are better suited to taking care of the children and family, that they should not work unless it is financially necessary, that men are the head of the family, and that women should tolerate husband’s insults in order to preserve the family unit.
>
> *Regulska et al., 2018: 141*

The church reinforces such beliefs. It openly declares that “husband should be “the head of the family and wife should obey. […] Hierarchy should always be kept this way” (Jibladze, et al., 2020: 10).

The family and other social ties and kinship (godparents, friends, neighbours) are highly valued (Sumbadze, 2006: 325). Obligations towards family members, kin and friends are a priority (Sumbadze & Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2005: 225). Women in contemporary Georgia marry because of love; however, not so long ago, arranged marriages were prevalent in the country (at least, in some parts of the

country), and the preferred age for marriage was 21-23 years (Arjevanidze, 2018: 134). If a woman married, it was expected that she would be married to one man until death, even in case of violence (ibid). Arranged marriages are not prevalent anymore; nevertheless, women still are expected to have one partner during their lifetime.

“A good Georgian family” is constituted by gendered experiences and roles (Tsuladze, 2010: 61-76). The wives have to be housekeepers and caretakers in the family, and the husbands – decision-makers. Unlike the 1990s, in modern Georgia, women's income from paid employment often is not a considerable contribution to the family budget, and men keep their roles as "breadwinners" (Gagoshashvili, 2008: 277). In this system, wives should obey their husbands will (Sumbadze, 2014: 27). According to the 2017 study, 66% of women and 78% of men agree with the statement that a woman's crucial role is taking care of the home” (UN Women, 2017).

Sometimes “a good Georgian family” does not exclude domestic violence. The first nationwide study on domestic violence in Georgia found that 36% of women experienced controlling behaviour by their husbands or partners (Javakhishvili, 2010); they were forbidden to go out in public, to work, etc.; 14% of women experienced emotional violence such as threats or humiliation by their partners, 6% experienced economic violence and 7% - physical violence from their partners or husbands (ibid). There have been growing numbers of femicide in the country as well. There have been 17 femicides and attempted femicide cases in 2018 (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020).

In her earlier article, Sumbadze (2006: 324) notes that although the traditional family is patriarchal, women still have some power in families; the only thing is that this power should not be openly manifested. This argument is not elaborated in the article; however, I would agree with Sumbadze (ibid) that manifestation of any power women holds in their families is mostly discouraged. The only time they are "allowed" to manifest power is in their relationships with other women in their families, e.g., mothers-in-law and sisters-in-law usually have some control over other women in the family (Gagoshashvili, 2008: 277). Concerning other sources of power, for example, resources, it should be noted

that in public life, women hold fewer tangible resources (e.g., money or possessions) than men and their hold of these resources dictates how they exercise power (Sumbadze, 2014: 176).

The narratives are even more strict when it comes to sexual relations. Women's sexuality is restricted; for example, the church condemns sexual relationships outside marriage. However, it is not only 'traditional' values at play here, but 'modernity' (where women are often commodified and commercialised) as well: Georgian women are expected to be physically attractive but also virgins at the time of marriage (Ibid), men are not held to the same standard. Lomsadze (2010: n. p.) says that one of his participants said the following: "Sex is something you do in Ukraine, Russia or some other place where people are grown-up about this, while here you just get married". The author notes that there is no equivalent for "dating" in the Georgian language; "men and women "dadian" ("walk together regularly") or "khvdebian" ("meet"). The concept does not imply sex" (Ibid). Especially if we consider the nationalistic ideology, where women are only seen as mothers, then women's sexuality and their reproductive rights exist only in relation to motherhood. It means that a woman does not have any 'sexuality' outside 'motherhood'. Motherhood does not leave any space for private activities, for constructing 'womanhood' (Amashukeli & Japaridze, 2018). In this sense, Amashukeli and Japaridze (ibid) state that 'motherhood' completely replaces 'womanhood' with all its characteristics. Moreover, women are often defined by the concept of honesty/integrity: *patiosani* (an honest person). It denotes a woman who has not had sexual relations outside marriage. If the woman was married several times, she is not *considered to be patiosani* anymore.

Thus, women's image is still constructed in a way that is simultaneously connected to modesty, being passive, being patient, and being devoted to the family (Amashukeli & Japaridze, 2018). Consequently, Georgian women's claims on the public space and their power in such spaces remain weak. During the Soviet era, most Georgian women were visible in the public space in terms of their employment (even if the wife's employment was secondary to her husband's) (Regulska, et al., 2018: 141). In contemporary Georgia, there is a belief that women are better suited for a domestic space. It is true that

nowadays, women are more active in public spaces in the sense that they are visible in the streets, in the media and in politics than they were before, but they are not able to enjoy these spaces in the same way men do.

2.4. The scale of gender inequality in Georgia

During the last 30 years, there have been many legislative reforms focusing on gender equality in Georgia. As I mentioned earlier, the reforms were most often initiated by the western foundations and they were linked to the “westernisation” of the country. Gender-sensitive laws in some areas were relatively successful (e.g., concerning domestic violence), while in other areas they were relatively unsuccessful (e.g., social security laws) (Jalagania, 2021). Moreover, effective implementation of the legislative framework in practice was problematic. As a result, women's situation in terms of exercising their rights of gaining equal opportunities did not change significantly.

The National Statistics Office of Georgia defines the term ‘participation in the labour market’ as either being in employment or actively searching for work (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2020). Participation in the labour market is measured using the labour participation rate. The Labour participation rate among women is 40.4%, while the same rate among men is much higher, 62%. According to the data, only 33.9% of women are employed, 16.2%[3] are not employed, while 49.5% of men are employed, and 20.2% of them are not employed (Ibid.). As for the employed women, they earn significantly less than men: according to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, for 2019, women’s monthly nominal earnings were 869.1 Georgian Lari (approximately, 260 GBP) and men’s - 1361.8 (approximately, 412 GBP), approximately 1.6 times higher than women’s (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2019). The above-mentioned statistics relate to women’s role in society explored in the previous section. UN Women’s report states that the root cause of women’s economic inactivity is the gendered division of labour and women’s responsibilities in relation to unpaid care work (UN Women, 2018). According to this study, 24% of women stated that they preferred to stay at home with their children. One in

[3] The unemployment rate is calculated from those who actively look for work and want to start working immediately

five women who were not working said that their spouse was against them working; even when women were working, they stated that their husbands expected them to come home on time (Ibid.). This study suggests that women are still associated with housework in Georgia. Taking care of their families is a cultural requirement for them and sometimes their husbands directly require them to pay more attention to housework than to other activities (Ibid.).

This leaves women in a vulnerable economic situation. According to the World Bank Systematic Country Diagnostic report (2018), almost half of the population of Georgia was at risk of "falling into poverty" (UN Women, 2020, p. 16). In this regard, too, women are more vulnerable. Half of the female-headed households (mostly widows and single mothers) do not have labour income, and they rely on income from agricultural activities or social benefits (UN Women, 2020).

Women's role in society can also be illustrated by the statistics of domestic violence and femicide. The first nationwide study on domestic violence in Georgia found that 36% of women experienced controlling behaviour by their husbands or partners (Javakhishvili, 2010) - they were forbidden to go out in public, to work, etc. 14% of women experienced emotional violence such as threatening or humiliation from their partners, 6% of them experienced economic violence and 7% - physical violence from their partners of husbands (Ibid.). Another study suggests that approximately 14% of ever-partnered women aged 15-64 have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence (UN Women, 2017). There have been 18482 calls at 112[4] in 2020, but only 10321 restraining orders had been written, and prosecution had been launched only in 4637 cases (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). Unfortunately, awareness of public services on violence against women is quite low. As it turns outs, women are not always successful in correctly identifying violence, especially when it comes to economic or emotional violence (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). If identified, domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking and other forms of violence are underreported. Even when detected, law enforcement officials do not inform the victim about shelter and crisis centre services (Ibid.).

There have been growing numbers of femicide in the country. The Public Defender of Georgia was monitoring the cases of femicide as a gender-motivated

[4] Public safety command centre

crime. There have been 17 cases of femicide and attempted femicide in 2018 (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020) and 23 cases in 2020 (Public Defender of Georgia, 2021). Femicide is most often committed by husbands/partners, ex-husbands/ex-partners of boyfriends (ibid.).

There are a limited number of studies focusing on sexual harassment. Statistical data about harassment is unavailable. Despite the changes in legislation in 2019 and the prohibition of sexual harassment, the problem of sexual harassment remains a challenge. According to Public Defender, sexual harassment mainly takes place in the workplace and while receiving medical services (Public Defender of Georgia, 2020). The existence of sexual harassment in the workplace is reflected in a study conducted in 2014 (Bendeliani, et al., 2014). It found that forms of sexual harassment such as sexual jokes, comments about the body and appearance of women, and questions in relation to women's private life are quite frequent in the workplace, but they are not identified by women as sexual harassment; they are identified as "unpleasant" facts. Consequently, only 2% of respondents reported having experienced sexual harassment (Ibid.). Another study conducted in 2015 found that women perceive sexual harassment to be a 'less serious' problem than other forms of discrimination such as physical violence (Supporters of Social Changes, 2015).

There are only several studies that focus on how women experience sexual harassment in urban public spaces. The study Rapid Assessment of Sexual Harassment in Tbilisi Metro (Tbilisi subway system) Stations found that 45% of female respondents had experienced harassment in Tbilisi Metro in the last six months, and none of them contacted police (Women's Information Center, 2014). The study conducted in 2015 was also interested in women's experiences of sexual harassment in public spaces (Supporters of Social Changes, 2015). The study involved, on the one hand, employed men and women and, on the other hand, students. I will talk about these groups separately. Employed women thought that in urban public spaces (e.g., the street) if a stranger made some comments about their appearance, it would not be sexual harassment; it could have even been a compliment. The authors claimed that the students had more information about sexual harassment than employed women. Despite that, 39% of students did not think that staring continuously was sexual harassment, and 27% of students did not think that verbal comments about their

body/appearance were sexual harassment. The trend changed in relation to physical touching and exhibitionism; the vast majority of student women said they considered these acts as sexual harassment (Ibid.).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed different historical processes in Georgia from the beginning of the twentieth century until today. I showed that gender relations were different during pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet contexts, affecting women's conditions. After that, I examined the contemporary gender regime and argued that it was influenced by the cultural images of women that existed in the past. Specifically, I looked at how Soviet legacy, post-Soviet poverty, nationalism and religious revival influenced the contemporary gender regime and women's neotraditionalist role. Nowadays, women in Georgia are still primarily considered mothers and carers and, to some extent, are confined to the home.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

Introduction

The present chapter develops in detail the themes that I introduced in the first chapter. Specifically, it reviews key concepts such as everyday life, space, place, and gender, private/public divide. It also discusses the opportunities women have in the public/private spaces either to destabilise or to uphold dominant gender ideologies. These themes position my research within broader academic debates that I engage with.

The first concept I will review is everyday life. My aim here is to establish that in this thesis I focus on the everyday experiences of women. Everyday life perspective makes it possible to examine the manifestations of oppression or discrimination in everyday life (e.g., Pink, 2012; Vaiou and Lykogianni, 2006) in public and private spaces.

The second central concepts I will examine are space, place, and gender. My aim here is to illustrate how these concepts intersect, specifically, how gender influences spatial patterns and vice versa. In this process, I will outline major theoretical debates: the first perspective will be illustrated by the works of Doreen Massey (1994), who argues that space, place, and gender are fluid concepts, but they still are rooted in the locality; another perspective will be presented based on the works of Gillian Rose (1993) who states that there are hegemonic spatialities which still carry the potential of constructing alternative spatialities. In this section I start to tease out the relation between space, place and gender and introduce concepts that I will use throughout the thesis.

In the third section of the literature review, I will examine how public/private spaces are gendered. Moreover, I will look at how they became gendered in Western societies and in the Soviet Union. In this way, I will argue that the economic and political changes in both contexts influenced and were influenced by the gendering of the public/private dichotomy. The rationale behind

analysing the roots of the gendered dimension of the divide is not comparing Western and Soviet experiences but showing that gender relations were influenced by broader social, political and economic changes in the society. Since these changes were different in the Soviet Union, the gendering of public/private spaces happened differently. Consequently, I will establish that gendering of public/private in Georgia is rooted, on the one hand, in the Soviet past and on the other hand, in neotraditionalisation of gender roles.

In the fourth and fifth sections of the literature review I will look specifically at the concepts of home and urban public spaces. In the fourth section, I discuss how 'home' is understood in a broader context; here, I examine 'home' as conceptualised in feminist geography. I base my arguments on Blunt & Dowling's (2006) and Blunt’s works (2005) who state that home is a fluid concept. The fifth section defines public space and then focuses on urban public space. It addresses two main bodies of literature on women’s experiences of urban spaces: the one that focuses on how women are controlled in the urban public space (e.g., Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1989) and the one that focuses on how the city can be liberating for women (e.g., Ryan, 1990; Domosh, 1998). These discussions will be later elaborated in the first two empirical chapters, where I will specifically talk about how women experience these spaces.

In the last section of the literature review, I link together previous sections and I show that if hegemonic spatialities carry the potential of constructing alternative identities or spaces, then the binary gendered concepts of public/private and formal/informal also carry such potential. This potential can be fulfilled through different kinds of ‘informal’ forms of politics: everyday activism (everyday practices that can open space for the possibility for destabilising or maintaining the status quo), infrapolitics/everyday resistance (everyday acts, techniques or practices that might undermine, destabilise, or even try to go beyond power) and/or ‘consentful’ contentions (acts that do not appear overtly oppositional). I will explain that these concepts focus on the unnoticed strategies that non-dominant groups can use to challenge or maintain the status quo. Though there are some differences between these concepts, I believe that they are valuable tools for women to construct alternative

identities or express their agency. Moreover, these are concepts by which women's activities and their relation to space and place can be studied.

3.1. Studying everyday life

This section aims briefly to conceptualise everyday life and establish that this study looks at the everyday experiences of women living in Georgia regarding gender inequality. Studies using this analytical approach unpack everyday knowledge that women have and the broader structures/social contexts that these experiences represent. This definition of everyday life encompasses experiences in different settings, from the urban public space to home-space. This research seeks to understand, on the one hand, the role these broader structures play in women's everyday experiences of gender inequality and, on the other hand, how women themselves reproduce, produce or transgress these structures. This is where the conceptualisation of everyday life comes in.

The concept of everyday life is not self-explanatory as it may seem. Indeed, it includes practices such as watching TV or attending events, i.e., practices that we do in everyday life and that are repeated (Scott, 2009: 2). I should make an essential differentiation here: even though they are repeated, they are not always routine or boring events; they may be cyclical or rhythmic, and they may be repeated not daily but yearly, for example. Everyday practices always include other people. Other people may be physically absent but present in thoughts and memories (Sztompka, 2008: 32). Our bodies are engaged in every event that occurs in everyday life as well, and by the body here, I mean the whole biological structure of a body, including emotions and thoughts (ibid).

Everyday life is something we perceive as familiar and primarily unremarkable (Scott, 2009: 2). However, once these 'trivial' events of everyday life are unpacked, they reveal that they represent broader social structures. These structures are often hidden, and "the ordinary is something that has to be imagined and inhabited" (Stewart, 2007: 127). Generally, most of the events in everyday life are done un-reflexively, like habits of typical actions. Lefebvre

argues that it is our un-reflexive approach that determines that we do not see the broader exploitative conditions behind them (2008 [1947]).

Studying everyday life refers to the analysis of structures, complex abstractions, social systems, and social actions together (Vaiou & Lykogianni, 2006). These abstractions are realised in everyday life. Moreover, they are perceived and observed in everyday life as well. Sztompka (2008) claims that studying everyday life is possible through the social practices that occur in the interpersonal field. But in order to be able to study these practices, they have to be observable and must always occur in a social context (e.g., contexts of family, leisure, and religion in which we act differently) (Ibid). Moreover, they must be localised in space, e.g., at home, on the internet, or in the street.

Moran, for example, lists four types of spaces where these practices may take place: workspaces, urban spaces, non-places (the kind of places that are "produced by accelerated movement of people and goods in advanced capitalist societies […] [places] in which faceless, contractual obligations replace human interaction" (ibid.: 94) and living space (Moran, 2005). In addition to this, the everyday practices should be performative in Goffman's understanding of the term (Goffman, 1997), i.e., there are always cultural scripts behind performative actions, and social actors enact these scripts through their performance in order to "show" them to the audience (Ibid).

Researching everyday life is possible through different techniques. Scott (2009: 4) lists three techniques that are necessary to study and interpret everyday life practices. The first one is "to make the familiar strange". It is a technique to distance oneself from (or 'bracket out') the familiar and unremarkable phenomena. The second technique is to search for underlying rules, regularities and patterns that are evident from certain behaviours or actions and go beyond the surface, i.e., link micro and macro-level processes together (Ibid 5). The third one is to challenge the assumption about what will happen when the rules are broken when the social norms are not upheld but instead resisted because some social norms may only reveal themselves only when they are broken (Ibid 6).

What is more significant for this study is the point that I already mentioned at the beginning of this section: that everyday life usually reflects complex abstractions, structures and social systems. In this way, everyday life focuses on both social structures and individual acts. Everyday acts reveal social phenomena and patterns that are manifested in the everyday. Thus, the everyday is "infused with power, politics and historical significance" (Scott, 2009: 2). People sometimes follow the rules imposed on them by social structures.

In everyday life, we find issues like power, social and economic inequalities, globalisation, etc. and gender inequalities as well. Feminist theory sometimes uses everyday life perspective to examine the manifestations of oppression or discrimination in everyday life (e.g., Pink, 2012; Vaiou & Lykogianni, 2006). In this process, it is crucial to determine the position of women in relation to social conditions that shape their subordination (Smith, 1987). Dorothy Smith (ibid) argued that women's perspectives problematise the everyday world, and the knowledge that women have in relation to the everyday world is undervalued. Her point here was that women's everyday experiences made it possible to understand how these experiences were shaped by structures that were gendered and also how women's everyday actions engaged with these actions (Ibid 92).

3.2. Space, place, gender

The works explored in this section (such as Massey, 1994, McDowell, 1999, Löw, 2016) explore how space is gendered across different historical contexts. It is crucial to understand the gendering of spaces in order to see how public and private spaces are gendered in the next section. Also, this section conceptualises space and explains how they are employed in the empirical chapters. In order to illustrate how space, place and gender intersect, I will firstly review the concepts of place and space. I will show that spatial structures reproduce actions that include negotiation of power structures. In the second half of the section, I will examine how power structures of gender are reproduced in spaces

and explain why I use the concept of "paradoxical spaces" in my empirical chapters.

3.2.1. Space and place

According to Löw (2016: 19), there are historical controversies between “absolutistic” and “relativistic” standpoints of space. The first one understands space as an absolute concept: space as a physical reality, in which the objects have a unique location; changing their location is only possible if we exert energy. Space is an empirical fact (Women and Geography Study Group, 1997: 5-6). In this conceptualisation, there are bodies (action) in the space, but space exists independently of them (Löw, 2016: 19). In contrast, relativist traditions assume that space is a result of structures of the relative positions of the bodies. These bodies are always in motion, and consequently, spaces constantly change. The relativist perspective understands space as human and material in which not only actions but also space itself is established through processes (ibid). In this thesis, I understand space as a relativistic concept. From this perspective, I will outline the works of Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) and Löw (2016), who explain why space is not an absolute concept.

In *The Production of Space*, Lefebvre establishes that space is not only a container or a 'medium' as absolutists believe (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 87). He believes that space is a setting where activities occur; however, it is also an interlinkage of the built environment, geographic form, spatial practices and perceptions (Ibid.: 26). His triadic division of space consists of perceived space or spatial practice, conceived space or representation of space, and spaces of representation (Ibid.: 38). Spatial practices are space-related behaviours, the everyday practices that are routinely carried out which produce and reproduce spaces (ibid). Conceived space is a conceptualised space "of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers" (Ibid.: 38) which consists of geographical models, plans and the ideological underpinnings they present. The third aspect is the spaces of expression, which are experienced everyday through images and symbols (Ibid.: 39). Spaces of representation consist of imaginations, memories and perceptions.

Spaces are always related to power and knowledge and are politically contested: different groups or classes seek to generate their space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 416) and compete over the production of space. Some groups produce space for domination and others as an appropriation to serve human needs (Ibid.: 164). The example of the first is the reproduction of capital or state power.

Foucault (1986) also challenges the idea that space is fixed and immobile. He conceptualises space as an “ensemble of relations” that exist in time. He proposes that space is historically produced, and in the modern world, it takes the form of placement and storage relationships (Ibid). In this sense, space is a network of procedures, processes and action contexts. In his theorisation, he emphasises power created by arrangement and claims that the execution of power is the constitution of space.

These conceptualisations of space propose that space should be conceived as moving and relational. Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) focuses on the constitution of space whilst Foucault defines space as something where political strategies are developed. However, they do not address how "people and things are arranged" (Löw, 2016: 93) in space. To fill this gap, Martina Löw (ibid 153) proposes the following conceptualisation:

> Space is a relational arrangement of living beings and social goods. Space is constituted as a synthesis of social goods, other people, and places in imagination, through perception and memories, but also in spacing by means of the physical placement (building, surveying, deploying) of these goods and people at places concerning other goods and people. In everyday life, the constitution of space (synthesis and spacing) often occurs in routines. Spatial structures are recursively reproduced through repetitive actions. Spatial structures are incorporated in institutions that are repetitively replicated by relational placements and the recognition or reproduction of these arrangements.
>
> *Löw, 2016: 93*

In Löw's conceptualisation, space is a relational arrangement of bodies, i.e., social goods and people as well (ibid 97). The arrangement here implies the existence of both order (established by spaces) and action of ordering (Ibid 103). In this way, the relational arrangement has not only action but a structuring dimension as well. Unlike the theories of Lefebvre and Foucault overviewed above, this definition includes human beings. It is important since it establishes that people do not only create spaces but are also their elements. These bodies are relationally arranged through spacing, i.e., through the process of positioning themselves towards other people, goods or placements (Ibid 99-100). They are also relationally arranged through synthesis, i.e., through perception, imagination, and memory processes. Synthesis and spacing are simultaneous processes since they are mutually dependent. Both synthesis and spacing often occur as habitual actions that people do repetitively in their everyday lives. These actions include negotiation of power structures as well (Ibid 102). Spatial structures produce actions that reproduce structures in the constitution of space.

As Löw puts (2016: 116) it, the constitution of space occurs through synthesis and spacing. Spacing, she claims, is a process of “placing or being placed”. Thus, places are quite different from spaces; they are goals and results of placements. The constitution of space constantly produces places, and places make it possible for spaces to emerge (ibid). However, places are not fixed and stable as well.

Doreen Massey (19990 argues that place is fluid, historically and socially constructed process. It means that place is an intersection of sets of social relations in varied spaces. The social relations brought together in place create the distinctiveness of place; these social relations stretch beyond that place (Women and Geography Study Group , 1997). However, it is not only social relations that give meaning to places. The place is not only a set of material, social relations; it also has cultural meanings. Human beings experience places, and consequently, human feelings also give places meanings (ibid). Places such as 'home', 'neighbourhood' or 'community' are experienced by humans, and they have their own sense of place (Tuan, 1974; Eyles, 1985). Thus, 'place' is a subjective concept; it does not have meaning only for the individuals; it might

also have meanings and associations for groups. However, these places are experienced differently by various groups. Dominant senses of place usually represent the meanings that powerful groups ascribe to them, which other groups often challenge; that is why "senses of place are often also sites of contestation" (Women and Geography Study Group , 1997: 9). It means that inherently these contestations are defined through power relations.

3.2.2. Situating gender

To arrange social goods relationally, one needs access, and the opportunities of access are asymmetrically distributed among certain groups (Löw, 2016: 122), e.g., men have more possibilities than women. However, Löw (2016) does not examine the relationship between gender, space and place in detail, as do other authors (Ainley, 1998; Laurie et al., 1999; McDowell, 1999). These authors were interested in how multiple oppressions were "embedded in, and produced through, material and symbolic space and place" (Nelson & Seager, 2005: 7), where these multiple oppressions took place and how they related to other social processes. This ‘where’ can be mundane spaces such as the kitchen or imaginary spaces such as 'nation'. 'Where' is a primary question since it can unfold complex relationships between place, space, gender, power, and bodies (Ibid 8).

Bondi and Davidson (2005) outline two influential approaches that talk about interconnections between space, place and gender: the first one claims that space, place and gender are mutually constitutive; moreover, they are flexible; however, they are not easily transformed, “the dynamic interplay between space, place and gender is subject to inertia and “stickiness” (ibid 16). The second approach focuses on the points at which limits of versions of dominant masculinity and femininity "may be reached and breached" (Ibid). This, on the one hand, can be stressful, but on the other hand, it can open various possibilities for social actors. Both approaches challenge the dominant conceptualisations of space and place and claim that these conceptualisations do not properly address power dynamics related to gender, class, race, disability, and other forms of social differentiation.

The first approach is manifested in the works of Doreen Massey (1984; 1994). Massey talks about the symbolic meanings spaces have and gendered messages associated with them (1994). It is important to recognise the significance of perceptions and stereotypes about women, which influences places and vice versa. However, the production of masculinities and femininities are not fixed and stable. On the contrary, they are open and fluid; they always define themselves in relation to other places (Massey, 1994). It means that there exist multiple femininities and masculinities. However, the "stickiness" of gendered and place-based identities" still needs to be considered (Bondi & Davidson, 2005: 19). "Stickiness" refers to the fact that women's lives are still rooted in locality, i.e., locality (for example, income levels of the neighbourhood, racial and class segregation of neighbourhood, etc.) influences women's lives and production of femininities, i.e., gendered and place-based identities are fluid, but at the same time powerful and contingent. Thus, places and gender are mutually constitutive, and they "exist in dynamic relationships across space and time" (Bondi & Davidson, 2005: 20). These dynamic relationships exist as geographical layers, which produces “stickiness” (ibid).

The approach manifested in the works of Massey (1984, 1994) shows that space, place, and gender are not fixed entities; they are interrelated processes. Gender relations are constructed in and through space and place, but space and place also construct gender (Bondi & Rose, 2003). The same is true concerning other characteristics such as sexualities or race. These characteristics (gender, sexualities, race, etc.) are key dimensions “through which spaces and places are produced, reproduced and transformed (Bondi & Davidson, 2005: 26). The approach is vital since it shows us how the spatial and the social are interconnected. Another significance of this approach lies in its reference to feminist political strategies. It contributes to constructing a feminist politics that will advocate gender equality. However, Bondi and Davidson note that one of the limitations of this approach is that it primarily focuses on dominant patterns and not alternative possibilities.

Alternative possibilities are discussed in the second approach, which is manifested in the works of Gillian Rose (1993). She introduced the concept of “paradoxical space”, which is a space “imagined in order to articulate a

troubled relation to the hegemonic discourses of masculinism" (Ibid.: 159). It means that paradoxical space challenges predominant views of gender relations; it opens up space for alternative possibilities and does not limit its scope to traditional spatialities only. Predominantly, this approach emphasises the ordinary spatial operation of gender inequalities. But in doing so, its purpose is to go beyond geographical knowledge.

Rose's (1993) primary critique of dominant understandings of the concepts of space and place is that they limit our experiences and expresses them only in terms of a gender binary. This way requires us to behave according to patriarchal principles and experience space either as a 'man' or a 'woman' (Bondi & Davidson, 2005). Other differences among women and men (such as age, class, sexuality, disability, etc.) are not considered. It does not mean that gender differences do not matter. On the contrary, women are often constrained by space; they do not control space; women live according to masculinist geographical imagination, which privileges men (ibid).

Gillian Rose (1993: 155) claims that women need to "insist on the possibility of resistance". They need to find space to express themselves and challenge dominant geographies. What she means in the concept of "paradoxical space" is that, on the one hand, women are trapped within oppressive spaces; on the other hand, they are excluded from the same spaces in which they are trapped. I.e., women are 'prisoners' and 'exiles' (Rose, 1993: 150); they are excluded and trapped at the same time. This contradiction makes spaces 'paradoxical' for them. However, identities have the potential to challenge these hegemonic spaces, and that is why paradoxical spaces have the emancipatory potential for women.

Bondi and Davidson (2005) claim that we are all paradoxically positioned because of different characteristics such as class, sexuality, disability, etc. Consequently, we contest dominant spatialities in various ways. They provide an example of sexualities. They say that LGBTQI+ people often experience exclusion or being trapped. Just like in the case of gender, spaces are constructed as heterosexual (Valentine, 1996; Butler, 1990); They are constructed according to normative, traditional understandings of sexuality and

exclude anyone who does not comply with these normative sexualities. By exclusion, spaces deny the possibility of "other" sexual identities, and consequently, dominant conceptualisations of space do not include LGBTQI+ sexualities.

LGBTQI+ community found some ways to ‘carve out’ alternative spaces, for example, in the form of gay/lesbian residential neighbourhoods (Lauria & Knopp, 1985; Adler & Brenner, 1992; Rothenberg, 1995; Valentine, 1997). In these neighbourhoods, heterosexuality is not dominant anymore. However, they carry the risk of "ghettoisation": that a neighbourhood will function as a ghetto, containing non-heterosexual identities and not giving them a possibility to exist in other spaces (Bondi & Davidson, 2005); It can even intensify homophobia in other spaces (Myslik, 1996; Namaste, 1996).

Another way for the LGBTQI+ community to "carve-out" alternative spaces, for example, is to kiss in public, which, according to Bondi and Davidson, is itself a subversive practice since it challenges heteronormativity of spaces and dominant spatialities (Bondi & Davidson, 2005); it destabilises taken-for-granted heterosexuality of spaces and constructs "other" interpretations of space. To return to Gillian Rose's conceptualisation, "other" interpretations of spaces are also paradoxical, and that is why they still leave the space for subversions, i.e., alternative manifestations for sexuality.

Another example that the authors use is gay pride parades. They also question the status quo and dominant expressions of sexuality. They challenge the heterosexuality of spaces and enable participants to seek alternative expressions of their experiences. In this way, pride parades are “at least, potentially, transgressive and transformative” (Bondi & Davidson, 2005: 25). However, like in the case of LGBTQI+ neighbourhoods, there is a risk of 'containment' when the emancipatory potential of gay prides no longer 'stretches out' over other spaces (Johnston, 2002). With this example, the authors show that "possibilities for alternative spatialities” does not mean that alternative spatialities will be constructed; they are not automatically emancipatory; they have only the potential to be emancipatory. However, any attempt to speak out about different ways we experience spaces will, in some way, challenge the status quo

and disrupt dominant heteronormative and patriarchal spaces (Bondi & Davidson, 2005).

Paradoxical space as a concept tries to capture different or, sometimes, contradicting experiences people have in different spaces. It tries to understand how spaces of experience and imagination are linked together (Bondi & Davidson, 2005). However, it tries to destabilise the dominant understandings of space and underline the importance of the emancipatory potential of paradoxical space. This approach questions the taken-for-granted features of everyday spaces. It especially expresses interest in human experiences and gendered embodiments of spaces (ibid). In doing so, it focuses on subversive ways to destabilise the status quo and challenge patriarchy. This approach is also important in feminist political strategy as it allows alternative expressions of femininity and, in general, identity.

In this thesis, I use this conceptualisation represented by the works of Gillian Rose (1993). I agree that women are paradoxically positioned in space because of their gender. In such spaces, women have possibilities to contest dominant understanding of space. In Rose's understanding, women are paradoxically positioned in both spaces I focus on in my study (home and public). On the one hand, these spaces oppress women, but at the same time, they leave the potential to challenge them as well.

3.3. Private/Public spaces

Concepts such as space and place relate to the binary categories of public/private. The concept of private/public has underpinned feminist debates about women’s oppression both in terms of activism and in terms of key debates within social sciences (debates about productive/reproductive work and women being defined by motherhood, which will be discussed in detail in this section). Private/public is a central concept to this thesis. It is worth mentioning that I structure the first two empirical chapters around private/public divide.

This binary category offers the possibility of quickly understanding and describing concepts, reflecting dualistic thinking existing in Western thought (Women and Geography Study Group , 1997: 112). I should repeat here that relational understanding of space focuses on the space that is structured by social, cultural, political, and economic relations. It is both material and imaginary. Consequently, boundaries between spaces are also both material and imaginary (ibid). These boundaries are reinforced and maintained through the deployment of binary categories. Moreover, in this way, hierarchies within binary categories are also maintained.

The boundaries between public/private are not stable and fixed; on the contrary, they are fluid. Different groups are trying to change the boundaries according to their values (Women and Geography Study Group , 1997). Donna Haraway (1991) calls this phenomenon 'border wars'. It once again shows how fluid the boundaries and spaces are. Boundaries often have a gender dimension, and it needs to be addressed. Two main binaries are worth examining in this chapter: public and private, and informal and formal. In the case of public/private, feminists reclaimed this binary category by analysing its less valued side (i.e., private) and focused on the significance of invisible private space. They also showed that the boundaries between the two are more blurred than we assumed.

Understanding how public/private spaces are gendered will make it possible to analyse how women use and experience public and private spaces in Georgia and how they construct their identities in them. It will also help understand how women experience gender inequality in these spaces and how they approach the possibilities to express alternative femininities in these paradoxical spaces. In order to continue discussing these discussions later in the thesis, it is vital to conceptualise public/private spaces and explain how they are gendered. Firstly, I will review Western theories about the gendering of the public/private divide. Then I will analyse the roots of this gendering and establish that it was connected with the economic and political changes in Western countries. These changes shaped and were shaped by the ideas and expectations about gender relations. However, gender inequality is not specific to Western or non-Western societies. These changes took place in the Soviet Union as well, and I will show

how the gendering of public/private realms was also linked to economic changes in society.

Analysing the gendering of public/private spaces in the Soviet Union help see the gendering of spaces in contemporary Georgia. However, more detailed analysis is needed to see how the spaces are gendered in the South Caucasus region specifically. The conceptual framework of public/private debates in the West would be insufficient to explain the experience of women in Georgia. It does not mean that modern Georgia is not at all influenced by the European understandings of the public/private, vice versa; it has; however, the public/private dichotomy in the Georgian context is not a replication of European practice. It is also influenced by the Soviet past and by the contemporary cultural dynamics as well, which is neotraditionalisation of the gender roles and “modernisation” of the Georgian state.

3.3.1. Gendering of the public/private debate

Gal and Kligman (2000: 40), focusing on the semiotic perspective, draw attention to “the meaning-making properties of the dichotomy” (2000: 40) and how actors experience this division. Thus, it is a discursive distinction that "can be used to characterise, categorise, organise, and contrast virtually any kind of social fact: spaces, institutions, groups, people's identities, discourses, activities, interactions, relations" (Ibid 41). According to Gal and Kligman (ibid), the dichotomy has two aspects: it is dependent upon a specific context, and it is a fractal distinction, which means that it can be reproduced repeatedly and applied to other contexts (both narrower and broader). This argument leads to the conclusion that both divisions may be subdivided repeatedly (Ibid).

In Western social theory, the distinction between 'public' and ‘private’ has been applied as a conceptual tool to order different aspects of everyday life (Weintraub, 1997). This (ibid 4) distinction traditionally differentiates the private space of domestic relations (including personal life, intimacy, sexuality, care, reproduction) and the public realm (including waged labour, production, the state) (Duncan, 1996). The categories of 'public' and 'private' function as a "paired opposition" (Weintraub, 1997: 4), are complex and often overlapping.

Usually, private life is associated with family, sexuality, childcare and housework and the public world - with wages, employment, education, disembodied, the abstract, rationality, citizenship (Connell, 1987). However, this is not always straightforward. For example, not all sexual relations are confined to private life. Pateman (1988: 17) suggests that prostitution illustrates the "public aspect of patriarchal right" and is a "major capitalist industry", which exists in the public space.

One of the first scholars to write about the public/private divide was Michele Zimbalist Rosaldo (1974), who proposed that gender asymmetry exists in the social division in favour of men. Consequently, the division between public/private is a hierarchical division, where men/public sphere is superior to women/private sphere. The most evident indication of this imbalance is that women are relatively absent in public spaces. However, it does not mean that women's exclusion is total. Women still participate in public life.

The public and private are intertwined, and their division is never separated. They are intertwined on both - ideological and spatial levels. I talked about ideological levels above. Now I will turn to the spatial levels. When examining the spatial levels, the public and private spaces can be both a separation and a continuum, a juncture and a division (Madanipour, 2003). Therefore, Madanipour (ibid) suggests looking at this distinction as if they were boundarie. Boundaries are inherently ambiguous since they are parts of both – private and public; they are an area where public/private meets and comes apart; they shape the public/private divide but also are shaped by them. It should be once again stated that boundaries are socially constructed since they are constantly negotiated and reproduced (Ibid).

The public and the private are mutually constructed spaces. Each of them is associated with either masculine or feminine meanings. These meanings influence women's and men's behaviour and vice versa; their activities influence masculine and feminine meanings of the public/private divide (Kilde, 1999). However, these places are not clear-cut, and as it was argued above, the boundaries between the two are not fixed. The boundaries between these two spaces change continuously and take new forms through everyday practices.

Spatial segregation happens parallel to the construction of the gendered public/private divide, and both explain women's subordinate position. This means that the public/private divide is deeply gendered. It is true that women historically were excluded from public spaces, but it should be specified that they still participated in public life to some extent. They participated not only "by their explicit grasping for political power and economic independence, but through a number of symbolic acts, such as smoking, wearing bloomers or comfortable dress, and riding bicycles" (Peiss, 1991: 818). Thus, the gendered character of the public space is not only reflected in the exclusion of women but also in a hierarchy.

What is significant here is how women enter the public space and how they use it: how they perceive it, how they appropriate it, and how they construct their identities within the space. In order to approach women's experiences of space, it is necessary to understand how public space is maintained as a male space. The key point here is that men define public space. It is men who establish status for both men and women in public space (Ryan, 1990). In this sense, public space is an important element of gender hierarchy.

The construction of the public-private dichotomy according to the categories of gender and the existence of spatial segregation explains two things: firstly, it explains the subordinated position of women in society; secondly, it explains that this subordination is based upon the ideology of separate spheres. However, the dualistic opposition is too simplistic to explain the gender relations in society. Moreover, women do not only use private space, and it becomes visible that clear-cut divisions between these two realms do not exist. The boundaries change and take different forms through everyday practices that are spatial.

3.3.2. Origins of the divide

Morgan suggests that the division of social space into public and private realms have been the central organising principle of middle-class society in 19th and 20th century England and the USA (2007). Jackson (1992) theorises that the separation of domestic and commodity production was the basis of the division between private and public. However, domestic labour was always subject to

patriarchal control; before industrialisation, women were engaged in housewifery (Ibid). The primary activities of women were to manage households as centres of production and participate in the production of goods. This implies that they were involved in the economic life of the household and contributed to the accumulation of capital in the family; however, it was the husband who controlled the productive resources (ibid). Women's duties in these circumstances varied according to class.

With the increased capitalisation of agriculture and expanding commodity markets, aristocratic households began to purchase goods. They stopped producing them for themselves. Middle-class families developed a more private lifestyle, and their duties were reduced to the supervising of servants (Jackson, 1992). Soon men took over some of the traditional female home production activities. Since women were unable to own property on their own, they could not compete with men anymore (ibid). As the separation of household and paid workplace became substantial, women had to combine 'housework' with other forms of economic activity. Jackson (ibid) argues that the division between private and public is connected to the patriarchal mode of production, which developed in relation to capitalism: "history [of housework] has been shaped by interconnections and tensions between patriarchal and capitalist relations and in particular by men's defence of patriarchal privileges under the changing socioeconomic conditions created by the rise of capitalism" (Ibid. p. 168).

While for Jackson (1992), the roots of the private/public divide lie in the changing meanings of housework, Pateman (1988) proposes a different viewpoint. For Pateman (ibid), it is marriage/marriage contract that places women in a subordinated position to their husbands (ibid 115) "When a woman becomes a 'wife' her husband gains right of sexual access to her body (once called 'conjugal rights' in legal language) and to her labour as a housewife". She suggests that the reason behind such inequality is in men's power over women, which is rooted in sexual and domestic relations. For Pateman (ibid), the roots of patriarchy lie in the private sphere. This leads to the concept of 'patriarchy', or the "systemic dominance of men over women" (Hartmann, 1986, c1981: 7) as a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby, 1990: 21) in both public and private domains.

There are other scholars as well who think that men's power over women is rooted in domestic relations: “the critical claim that emerges […] is that the principal threat to women's liberty and equality comes not from public power but from private power” (Higgins, 2000: 859). This position is based on the assumption that the boundaries between private/public realms work to “exclude, denigrate, and dominate” women (Cohen, 1997: 133).

In order to conceptualise the terms public/private in a more concrete concept, Marxist feminists articulated the division as the "mode of production" and the "mode of reproduction" (Sacks, 1975). The "public realm" is equated to a market economy in these conceptualisations. Only the production in the market economy was considered real work, and it was a realm of men; the production of use-values was undertaken at home, and it was a realm of women (Weintraub, 1997). The capitalist commodity production sharpened the separation between "work" and home.

The capitalist mode of production is reproduced in the family (Connell, 1987). Therefore, it is also essential how housework and capital relate to each other. An important reason for women’s oppression, according to Prokhovnik (1998: 87), is that “activity and work in the private realm are not valued like that in civil society”. Such a conceptualisation underlines that in modern societies, or a market economy, only production is considered 'work', and in this context, domestic space is "simultaneously feminised and socially marginalised" (Weintraub, 1997). For Marxist feminists, the family is “the site of the reproduction of ‘relations of production" (Connell, 1987: 43). Domestic unwaged work is described as a ‘hidden subsidy to capital’ (Ibid). The family is an institution, where a wife (whether a housewife or an employed wife) has different tasks (cleaning, shopping, childcare, care for the elderly) in the family and longer working hours (ibid). As Hartman (1986; c1981) argues, women work at home for men, and at the same time, this housework maintains and reproduces capitalism. In the changing context of capitalism and patriarchy, it is important to establish what is the material base for patriarchy or men’s “shared relationship of dominance over … women” (Hartmann, 1986, c1981: 11). Hartmann argues that the material base of patriarchy is men's control over

women's labour power. Men exercise this power by restricting women's access to productive resources and their sexuality (Ibid).

3.3.3. Public/Private in the Post-Soviet context

What has been discussed so far shows that the dichotomy of public/private realms is gendered and characterised by the consistent gender hierarchy. In these understandings, the public and private are interlinked, and social spaces are not segregated from each other but juxtaposed in terms of spatial and ideological levels. Spatial levels imply that the relationship between these two realms can be seen both as separation and as a continuum, i.e., space is both a division between the two and a juncture as well. As mentioned above, the boundaries between the two are unstable and constantly changing; they are also continually negotiated through everyday practices by people. Ideological levels imply that there is an asymmetrical relationship between private and public realms.

I offered an overview of the formation of public/private spaces in the Western world. Although, gender inequality that is characteristic to the modern public and private spheres are not specific to Western or non-Western societies. I mentioned above that the boundaries of these spaces are influenced by cultural and geographical contexts, and the meaning of the public and the private changes due to this influence.

The question of reproduction and production is intertwined with the economic changes in the Soviet Union. At the same time, ideas and expectations about gender relations also shaped economic change. Here I will overview how the gendering of public/private realms happened in the Soviet Union. The origins of private/public division in the former socialist countries are rooted in the gender politics in the Soviet Union. In most communist states, women were defined primarily as workers, which was quite different from the image of nineteenth-century women (Gal & Kligman, 2000: 47). Gal and Kligman (ibid) think it was part of the broader commitment to equalise the population and eliminate social distinctions, including gender. However, from the 1950s, contradictory ideologies emerged: on the one hand, the state needed to increase the labour

force after the WWII and women needed to enter the paid work; on the other hand, women needed to reproduce the nation (again, after the WWII) and have children (Ibid).

The private was also a target of change. The domestic household had to be eliminated as a form of "private property". New regulations, especially in the pre-Stalinist era, eased divorce, introduced childcare facilities, and socialised cooking and other household tasks (Gal & Kligman, 2000: 48). From the Stalinist era, as described in Chapter 2, this policy changed:

> Women became a numerically important presence in public, that is, in the lower rungs of state-owned paid work and state-run political activity. But they retained almost sole responsibility for household work and childrearing.
>
> *Gal & Kligman, 2000: 48*

In these ways, state institutions were trying to regulate a private sphere. The public sphere (wage work in this case) was also under the strict eye of the state – it was compulsory for all and made people dependent on the state (Gal & Kligman, 2000: 49). The private sphere also made women dependent on the state more than on husbands and fathers (ibid). In contrast to the nineteenth-century gender regimes, women were no longer restricted to the private sphere.

From the 1950s, i.e., reintroducing motherhood as a duty of women to the state, the politics of reproduction started to operate (Gal & Kligman, 2000: 49). In this process, the state relied on pre-communist gender stereotypes. As a result, women were employed in the caretaking and service sectors rather than higher-waged jobs (ibid). They were regarded as politically "backward" and were not considered on political positions (ibid). In terms of regulating families, the state started to tolerate "informal" economies (e.g., nonstate production in agriculture), especially because the wages in the state sector were low and could not satisfy people's needs (Gal & Kligman, 2000: 49). Over time, the state loosened their regulatory policies on reproduction and everyday life, and the household became a place where production, consumption, and reproduction

were undertaken, and all of them was considered "private"; "Public" was only state-owned and controlled sector (Ibid.: 50). In this way, the public/private distinction was perceived by people like us/them. However, the same people were often parts of both "us" and "them". In everyday life, "they" were the ones who were ruling and, therefore, distrust towards them and using bribes, "connections", and other means of instrumentalisation of interpersonal relationships were usual practices, whilst the communication among "us" were honest and trusting (ibid). Thus, public and private spheres existed under the different concepts of law: formal law ruled the public/'official' realm, and everyday norms/informal law regulated the 'private', where "the social spheres governed by norms of everyday life expanded at the expense of the realms where formal law prevailed" (Oswald and Voronkov, 2004: 105).

In terms of gender relations, the meanings of "public" and "private" were also transformed: even though families were involved in household production, the household was still "private" and "feminised". However, inside the household, the "public" space existed, where political activities and productive work were undertaken (Gal & Kligman, 2000: 50). In the case of this (domestic) public, women's position there was weaker than that of men. Oswald and Voronkov (2004: 105) call this space socialised space, which was not controlled by the state and, as the private realm, was ruled by the informal law; it had more blurred borderline with 'private' and more fixed with the official realm. This space primarily functioned as a space for expressing opinions and sharing experiences, while the public realm was depoliticised, and this de-politicisation was "an aspect of liberalisation" (Ibid). Interestingly, the de-politicisation of the 'public' and its liberalising effects contradicts the Western conceptualisations of this realm.

Thus, socialism produced different forms of public/private dichotomy, which did not disappear but changed and was articulated as "us" and "them" who were governing the state. In everyday life, people used subdivisions such as (domestic) public. Gal and Kligman (2000: 55) think that it gave people a chance to be more flexible and navigate otherwise rigid spaces that were guided by state policies.

3.4. Home

In this section, I investigate the concept of 'home' as a spatial imaginary and refer to it as a site that can be oppressive as well as a site for learning resistance. Following these conceptualisations, I look at the relationship between home, gender and power.

3.4.1. Home as a spatial imaginary

David Harvey (1996) defines home as space where there is spiritual unity between humans and things; He quotes Bachelard (ibid 1996) and notes that home is a space where a human being develops a sense of themselves as belonging to a particular place (ibid). In this chapter, I use *'home'* as a concept which is not only material but also imaginative. It means that home is a spatial imaginary – it is loaded with positive (belonging, intimacy, safety) as well as negative (alienation, violence, fear) feelings which are related to a specific place (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Material and imaginative realms and processes (physical location, feelings and ideas) are tied to each other and influence each other. In this sense, home is not only a physical location and material dwelling, but it is also a place where "personal and social meanings are grounded" (Rubenstein, 2001, cited in Blunt & Dowling, 2006: 22). Home is "lived as well as imagined" (Ibid.: 254). Consequently, home is not something that merely exists, but it is something that is made (Ibid.: 23) – it is a process of creating and understanding different feelings, values, meanings and experiences.

As Blunt and Dowling (2006: 24) argue in their book, 'home' should be understood not only in spatial terms but also in political terms. Political understandings focus on the processes of oppression and resistance. Such political processes influence people's lived and imagined experiences of home, which, in turn, are "produced and articulated through relations of power", i.e. they have a 'power geometry' (as any other places). 'Power geometry' of homes takes a dominant ideology of home for granted and favours certain social relations and disfavours others. This is specific to time and space. Dominant meanings of 'home' in a certain context may include family, security and patriarchal gender relations (ibid). Thus, dominant meanings of home can be a representation of a whole

social order. Since it represents and reproduces social order that exists 'outside' the domestic space, home "crosses the boundary between the private and the public, between the particular and the general" (McDowell, 1999: 73).

Home is constructed through power relations, "which construct the rules which define boundaries" (Rai, 2007: 81). In the feminist scholarship, it is sometimes stressed that home may just as likely be a place of oppression for women (e.g. Jackson, 1997; Morgan, 2011) as one of retreat or refuge (safe haven) (Manzo, 2003); as a spatial imaginary, it can be loaded with positive as well as negative feelings and experiences. For many women, home is related to violence and isolation; it can be a site of disenfranchisement and abuse (McDowell, 1999). For those women who experience domestic violence at home, it can be a place of suffering and constant fear (Campbell, 1988). As Betty Friedan (1963) described it, home confines women to the domestic sphere and did not let them be fully involved in the 'public' spheres. What is important here is that 'home' confines women both physically and symbolically as well - women are associated with 'home' (the maintainers, the nurturers, the representatives of home) (Brun & Fabos, 2020). However, here Friedan (1963) assumes that women's emancipation is possible only in the 'public' sphere and excludes the possibility of 'emancipation' in domestic spaces.

Nevertheless, home is not merely a site of oppression. Home can have various meanings at the same time: it can also be a site of personal fulfilment in terms of the relationships between family members; It can serve as a site of relationships such as kinship and sexuality (McDowell, 1999); it can satisfy certain human needs and create a space for it (Annison, 2000). It has a contradictory nature: on the one hand, it can be enabling and supporting, while, on the other hand, it can constrain women (McDowell, 1999). For example, as articulated by several black feminist scholars (e.g. hooks, 1991; Collins, 2000), racial oppression in the 'public' space gave a different meaning to home – alongside with the place of oppression, for black women home was also one of the places where they could escape from racism. Collins (2000) states that home for black women can also be a site of resistance.

> We could not learn to love or respect ourselves in the culture of white supremacy, on the outside; it was there on the inside, in that 'homeplace' most often created and kept by black women, that we had the opportunity to grow and develop to nurture our spirits.
>
> *hooks, 1991: 47*

As Collins (2000) points out, home can be an essential source of learning resistance strategies in relation to racism. However, it can also be a crucial source of learning resistance strategies in relation to gender inequality as well. Home is not only a key site of reproducing hierarchical gender relations, but it also is a site where such relations are contested, challenged and negotiated all the time. I want to underline here that home can have various meanings at the same time. As Alison Blunt (2005: 4) puts it, home is a site that is shaped by different axes of power. This approach, which envisions home as a fluid notion (poststructural and postcolonial-inspired understanding), focuses on several meanings of home: It sees 'home' as "both oppressive and a site of resistance, and the many different lived experiences of home." (Blunt & Dowling, 2006: 21).

Rezeanu (2015) argued that 'home' is a place of 'doing and undoing gender', i.e., performing gender differences and enacting their gender identities (Rai, 2007). However, it can also be a place where gender similarities arise and power relations are not as strong as they were before (Rezeanu, 2015). It means that alternative domestic femininities are emerging both in the Global South (for example, women in the Global South are engaged in domestic tasks in order to exercise their symbolic or sacred power within the family) and in the Global North (they are engaged in domestic tasks in order to feel less alienated and depersonalised). Rezeanu (2015: 25) notes that home is not only a stage for gender display, but it is a cite of displaying agency which, in turn, influences gender performativity. She concluded that home can potentially be a site of "crossing the borders of traditional gender asymmetries".

The following sections will focus on this poststructural and postcolonial-inspired understanding of *home* – it will examine 'home' as a site of various practices, whether they are oppressive, restrictive or positive and emancipating. As an

imaginative realm, the home is “a central space for understanding [...] the embodied, everyday socio-spatial relations through which subjectivities are forged” (Hörschelmann, 2017: 236).

3.4.2. Home in post-Soviet context

Blunt stresses the importance of geographic/cultural contexts (2005). I outlined above the debates on 'home' in western feminist literature. Now I will outline the meaning of home in post-Soviet societies and Georgia. Before that, it is important to note once again that during state socialism in the Soviet countries, the Soviet Union had an essentialist position in relation to gender. Although unlike Western societies, in the public realm, the differences between genders were veiled, as though they did not exist at all (Johnson & Robinson, 2007: 7). As Johnson & Robinson (ibid 6) state, women were "men at work, but women at home". This means that in public, women were treated as male workers (except when childcare intervened); the private sphere, 'home', similarly to western societies, was still highly gendered. After abolishing the state socialism, post-Soviet countries were characterised by neotraditional gender order – the idea that men and women have different (again, essentialist) roles, where women are caretakers (ibid). Probably, it was not visible in every postsocialist country. Here Johnson & Robinson (2007) are talking about the examples of Russia and Poland and state that these countries are characterised by neotraditionalist gender ideology. This ideology “justifies” women’s disadvantaged social and economic conditions relying on the essentialist positions (Shevchenko, 2007) and is rooted in the revival of nationalism and religion, which both see women’s place ‘at home’ (Kay, 1997). In the contemporary context, many researchers state that post-Soviet gendered ideologies still "promote a cult of domesticity" (Behzadi & Direnberger, 2020: 203).

The last point I want to make about the specificity of the post-Soviet context relates to the differences between ‘parental home’ and ‘home of choice’ (Stella, 2015). In Western feminist literature, parental homes are defined as spaces where women, on the one hand, socialise and on the other hand, can be victims of violence (Arnett, 1997). Leaving the parental home has been considered to be an essential step for young people to establish their

independence (ibid). In the Georgian context, young women do not leave their parental home when they are 'transitioning' to adulthood. Usually, younger women are encouraged to live in their parental homes until they get married and live with their own families (Sumbadze, 2006). According to Sumbadze (ibid), the reason behind this is that “many traditions and practices of Georgian families” that existed before the Soviet Union were retained during the Soviet period as well. Thus, leaving the parental home in Georgia is not only linked to independent choices; rather, women’s choices are limited by gendered expectations about when and how they can start living on their own.

3.5. Public space

Above I stressed that gender is one of the dimensions (among other dimensions such as age, class, sexual orientation, race, etc.) in these experiences (Nelson & Seager, 2005). In this section, I will specifically talk about urban public space, but before this, I will explain how public space is conceptualised in this thesis and how it relates to gender.

Generally, the term ‘public space’ is defined in terms of access, ownership and control (Franck & Paxson, 1989). This means that space is considered public when it is (1) accessible to everyone (accessibility), (2) owned by the state (ownership), (3) not controlled and regulated by a single entity (control) (ibid). It means that only one of the three criteria needs to be met for the spaces to be considered public. Cafes, for example, are not owned by the state but are open to the public; schools are owned by a state (not always) but are not open to everyone. Both these spaces are public.

Public spaces are “places of interrelation, social encounter and exchange, where groups with different interests converge” (Ortiz, et al., 2004: 219). They have their distinct symbolic meanings and values and are experienced by the people who use them. The authors also state that the key element of public spaces is that people with different characteristics (age, race, class, gender, etc.) experience them differently (ibid).

As in the case of 'home', public space is also a field of hierarchy and gendered power relations. Historically, women had a controversial relationship with public space. Their presence in public space was sometimes seen as a threat to social order. Public space was constructed and maintained as a male domain, and women's participation in that domain was regulated or controlled. In this realm, men established status not only for men but also for women (Ryan, 1990).

Historically, in Western Europe and in the USA men and women used public spaces differently. For men, it was an arena to exchange their ideas and engage in activities for leisure or other purposes. For women, though, public space often was a transit path to other spaces; they were not the ultimate destination for women (Raju & Lahiri-Dutt, 2011). Authors say that when a woman wanted to access public space legitimately, she had to have a purpose for being there and use it to transit from one private space to another (Ranade, 2007 cited in Raju & Lahiri-Dutt, 2011).

3.5.1. Urban public space

Urban public space enforces, produces, and promotes specific social values. Groups that have access to such spaces experience them differently. This chapter is interested in how women use urban public space, how they engage with the city, and how they experience it. It is crucial to understand how women participate in urban life and how they are situated in urban public space through their everyday practices. Thus, urban public spaces in this thesis include ordinary public spaces in which people engage in their everyday activities (the street, cafes, restaurants, parks).

It should be noted that urban space is constructed through myths and representations and everyday spatial practices give them meanings (McDowell, 1999). Spaces are perceived differently by different groups. Each space can be occupied by multiple social groups whose experiences in such spaces are not similar: “the street and the park, for example, in the day and in the evening, or the holiday resort in and out of season, are different spaces in practice, in the everyday experiences of those who live in and use them” (Ibid. p. 293). This quote illustrates that the spaces themselves change through the ways in which

they are used (here specifically at different times). But different groups of people (age, race, sexuality, etc.) could experience a space differently even if they are in it at the exact same time.

Gender identities and relations are constructed and reconstructed by urban life (Bondi & Rose, 2003). Urban life represents societal ideals, and it "is shaped through routine everyday practices, and organised resistance to, and transgressions of, such regulation." (Ibid. p. 236). Thus, the gendering of urban public space is contradictory. There are two main conceptualisations of the city in the feminist literature: the first one focuses on how women are controlled in the urban public space (e.g., Pain, 1991; Valentine, 1989); the second focuses on how the city can be liberating for women (e.g., Ryan, 1990; Domosh, 1998).

Fear and (in)security in the city

Here, I will briefly review the perspective which focuses on women's fear in the urban context. This perspective says that male-dominated urban environments constrain women. In such circumstances, women may develop a sense of fear concerning specific spaces, and they may perceive public space as dangerous, and the home as the 'right' place for them since it is safer (Raju & Lahiri-Dutt, 2011).

As Koskela (1999: 112) argues, women's fear of violence is connected to space, which is "produced not only in political and economic processes but in the practices and power relations of every-day-life, including gender relations". Spatiality and temporality are significant elements for women's fear (Pain, 1997), i.e., both location and the time of the day are equally important to account for women's perceptions of and behaviour in public space. Koskela (1999) adds that fear of violence continuously influences women's perception of space, and it reminds women that they have a relatively powerless position in society.

The liberating city

This perspective focuses on the positive experiences that women have in urban public space. It asks how women manage the contradictions of the city and how

they contest or appropriate urban public spaces. The central assumption here is that women have agency as social actors and can (re)make the urban space through different strategies. According to Elizabeth Wilson (1990), the cities, in fact, liberate women and widen their horizons. Wilson (ibid) stresses that urban space offers women education, employment, healthcare, and other services that can significantly influence their lives.

Moreover, urban public space gives women the chance to escape domestic space and unequal gendered relationships at home. According to McDowell (1999: 259), quasi-public and public spaces are “significant locations in women’s escape from male dominance”. Another vital aspect that the city offers to women is a sense of anonymity. In the city, women can have relationships, receive services, and use facilities while remaining anonymous.

This perspective does not imply that women will not be oppressed in urban space. It implies that although they will be oppressed, women still have the possibilities to improve their lives and appropriate public space. Thus, Wilson (1990) argued that urban spaces, on the one hand, produces existing gender relations but, on the other hand, gives women a space for their potential subversion. In her book *Gender, Identity and Place*, McDowell (1999) refers to public and semi-public arenas as paradoxical spaces for women since, on the one hand, they are associated with danger, but on the other hand, they can have a potential for emancipation. Similarly, I conceptualise urban public space here as a space that can be constraining for women and, at the same time, can offer opportunities to contest hegemonic gender hierarchies.

3.6. Women and informal politics

The first section of the chapter established that women are paradoxically positioned in space because of their gender (Rose, 1993). I.e., on the one hand, these spaces oppress women, but at the same time, they leave the potential to challenge dominant gender structures. However, it is difficult for women to challenge them since they are under-represented in formal politics (Ford, et al., 1994). Women’s issues, such as domestic violence or sexual assault, are

considered inferior political issues (Women and Geography Study Group , 1997). The gendering of formal politics is not limited to a lack of access to politics. The gendering can also be seen in more hidden discourses, one of which is that national identities are also gendered by the state. Often, an idealised figure of a woman represents the nation (Nash, 1994), and in this way, women embody the nation (Staeheli & Martin, 2000). In such circumstances, childbearing is women's national role. This perspective sees women as passive objects and men as responsible for protecting the feminine nation (ibid). However, in contrast to formal politics, women are usually more strongly involved in community-based activities or issues around education and housing (Women and Geography Study Group , 1997).

More than that, boundaries between formal and informal politics are often blurred. As illustrated in Brownhill and Halford's (1990) work, women's political activities can be fluid - sometimes, women engaged in formal politics use the strategies characterised by informal politics and vice versa. This kind of fluidity questions the validity of boundaries. Moreover, these boundaries reinforce gender inequality – it associates formal politics to male forms of political activities and informal politics – to women's activities. Therefore, it is important not only to recognise the role of women in both formal and informal politics but to focus on the undervalued spaces of informal politics and position them within boundaries. I propose three kinds of 'informal' forms of politics that women can use to redefine femininities and challenge dominant gender structures. The first is everyday activism, an informal site of politics; the second is everyday resistance/infrapolitics – a hidden form of 'politics' and the last is "consentful" contention, the process of women's everyday rights claims. This thesis targets the hidden forms of challenging the dominant gender structures, i.e., infrapolitics and consentful contention. It can be said that infrapolitics and "consentful" forms of contention are the means of challenging or upholding dominant gender structures that are available for women in Georgia since they are deprived of the possibility to express themselves through conventional means. This challenging or upholding dominant gender structures consists of specific acts that are might either destabilise power or uphold it. I will focus on such specific acts and techniques in Chapter 7, where I will look at how women

respond to gender inequality in different spaces and whether they can be framed as resistance or not.

3.6.1. Feminist activism

From the 20th century, women became more visible in struggles for their rights and moved beyond being only abstract symbols (Statue of Liberty in the USA and Qartlis Deda in Georgia). They slowly became political subjects (Hancock, et al., 2020). However, "despite the dramatic accomplishments of the women's movement, […] gender equality has not yet been achieved" (Susser, 2005: 282). Today, more and more organisations and activists are working for women's equality; more and more activist groups are informed by feminism.

By the 1970s, "women's liberation" was so widely known in the USA that this phrase "was in the airwaves, on the streets and on the shop floors, in schools and the halls of government, in kitchens and in bedrooms […]" (Enke, 2007: 1-2). However, many people did not know where they would find it. For this purpose, it is crucial to locate activism and analyse the interconnection between space, place and activism. In her research about contested space, place and activism, Enke (ibid) found out that in the 1960s and 1970s USA, the places of activism were bars, bookstores, parks, shelters, and coffeehouses. Women intervened in these public landscapes and social geographies, which were already gendered. The main argument that Enke (ibid) puts forward is that women's activism was about intervening in the established public spaces by creating new kinds of spaces. Moreover, they even turned domestic and civic spaces into sites of activism. These contested spaces were sites of sociality that would assemble actors and propose multiple manifestations of feminism (Ibid). Nonetheless, social geographies also shaped activist communities and activist spaces. Social geographies disadvantaged women, and women had to move 'within and around' these spatial conditions.

Generally, activism aims to promote changes in society. It can take various forms, from demonstrations to small acts (for example, a small act of refusing consumption of fast fashion or acts such as computer hacking, "hacktivism"). It involves practices that are experiential at a personal level but also embodied,

social and political (Pink, 2012). The most visible form of activism is collective action, where women protest together in order to make an impact. A less visible form of activism is, for example, visual activism, which questions the ways in which we perceive the world. It is frequently manifested through bodies and performed "through action, movement, gestures, persistence and exposure [...]" (Sliwinska, 2020: 6). In this sense, visual activism is bodily and focuses on vision, visibility, visuality and counter-visuality, which can transform space of politics and challenge the boundaries between private and public spaces (ibid).

Another form of activism is everyday activism. Usually, the everyday is linked to the mundane and the unnoticed; in contrast, activism is perceived as public, explicit, and direct. Pink (2012) argues that any practice, whether domestic cleaning or creating a public activist event, is neither resistant nor normative. Despite this, any practice is "open to being a source of potential for the production of change, for maintaining things appear as they are or for simultaneously doing both in different ways (Ibid 3). It means that any practice has the potential of opposing and/or maintaining the status quo. Practices are not performed in isolation from the wider contexts in which they are situated. Practices are parts of the place, and the place is both the context and a product of practice. Therefore, it is important to link place and practice together to understand how practices are lived and experienced in any environment (Ibid). Here, 'place' should be understood not as a locality but as a subjective and more abstract concept, as described earlier in the chapter.

Activism influences everyday life, and at the same time, activism is an everyday activity that is frequently undertaken in everyday places such as homes or neighbourhoods. Everyday life is a site that has potential for activist practices (Pink, 2012). Here Pink (ibid) states that she understands everyday life and activism in terms of practices and places, where "everyday life and activism are implicated in the making of places in a unique combination with other processes" (Ibid 4), and both are always in movement. Pink (ibid) suggests that everyday practices such as kitchen practices or laundry routes can open space for the possibility for destabilising or maintaining the status quo, i.e., they can be everyday activist practices. Moreover, she proposes that the internet can also be an integral space for activism.

3.6.2. Everyday resistance/Infrapolitics

In general definition, everyday acts of resistance are acts, techniques or practices that might undermine, destabilise, or even try to go beyond power (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019, n. p.). In order to understand this concept, it is essential to define it in relation to power. I discussed the gendered power relations in previous chapters (Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Chapter 6). In the definition mentioned above, 'undermining power' is a dynamic and complex concept, and power and resistance are often "intimately entangled" (ibid). Like power, everyday resistance is a set of repeated actions. As we see from this definition, resistance is intertwined with power. Here I understand power in a Foucauldian terms, where power is “the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation” (Foucault, 1978: 92). In this understanding, power is a complex set of relations, which aims to ‘discipline’ people and is closely related to resistance (ibid).

Everyday resistance as a concept derives from the works of James C. Scott (1985, 1990). Scott (1985) aimed to study acts that were not as visible as demonstrations or revolutions. He studied these acts in a Malaysian Village, Sedeka and collected material that spoke about the ideological struggles in the village (ibid xvii). The main argument he offered in his book was that resistance is daily individual and collective acts against domination (ibid). He argued that everyday resistance (or, interchangeably, "infra-politics") was disguised or invisible to people in power or mainstream society (Ibid). The examples of everyday resistance used in his book were sarcasm, escape, avoidance, fake compliance and even theft. These acts were, in fact, tactics that people used to undermine the repressive domination of the people in power. He argued that such small acts constituted a layer of resistance which could often be a basis for the struggle against domination; Moreover, they also can serve as a basis of class consciousness and revolutions (Scott, 1985: 349). However, it does not mean that all peasants that Scott talks about are revolutionaries. It means that daily experiences of domination often cause the possibilities of resistance to become apparent.

Scott (1985: 33) introduces two categories of resistance: formally organised and the everyday forms of resistance. According to this categorisation, everyday acts of resistance are continuous, covert, fragmented, and informal/unstructured, and it can be either collective or individual, while formally organised resistance is overt public, collective and often organised. Scott (1985) defines that

> Resistance includes any act(s) by member(s) of a subordinate class that is or are intended either to mitigate or deny claims (for example, rents, taxes, prestige) made on that class by superordinate classes (for example, landlords, large farmers, the state) or to advance its own claims (for example, work, land, charity, respect) vis-a-vis those superordinate classes.
>
> *Scott, 1985: 290*

Scott (1985: 290). recognises that this definition is not without problems; however, it identifies the material basis of class struggle. Interestingly, Scott claims that forms of ideological resistance that challenge the dominant ideologies can also be considered acts of resistance (Ibid). In this definition, resistance is not in the "act" itself but in its intention, i.e., people use certain acts to express their intentions. However, it is difficult to prove one's intention, which Scott recognises. However, the intention is something that gives acts political significance (Ibid.: 296). Moreover, when he focuses on intention, he does not mean that the sole intent of the act should be to destabilise power relations; the act can be self-centred as well as oppositional. Especially when the act is consistent, it can be considered as resistance (Scott, 1985: 296).

Scott (1990) understands resistance in connection to power relations. It is true that Weapons of the Weak was written about class relations; however, as Scott himself proposes, similar structures of domination (e.g., gender, racial relations, etc.) provokes similar forms of resistance (ibid 21). That is why subaltern populations are often studied from the perspective of infrapolitics. Subaltern populations are deprived of access to legitimate channels of expression; they usually do not make claims in conventional ways. Their main goal is to legitimate their views and uphold or challenge dominant perspectives or processes (Marche,

2012). Scott (1990) himself argues that subordinate groups lack a political life, and that is why they turn to "hidden transcripts" to critique power so that it stays unnoticed to the dominant power relations. Using infrapolitics, subalterns covertly resist the dominant; they counter or minimise their appropriation through different ways. Infrapolitical acts operate insidiously, and they cannot be politically detected. Moreover, the less detectable they are, the better they conceal the resistance they inspire in others (Marche, 2012). Consequently, infrapolitical acts are politically significant since the "offstage" discursive practices are pushing the limits of what can be permitted "onstage" (Marche, 2012).

Women's infrapolitics is rarely examined even in Western scholarship (e.g., Vachhani & Pullen, 2018), not to mention the post-socialist context. However, I believe that infrapolitics as a concept has the potential to destabilise the dualism of "formal" and "informal" politics by focusing on unnoticed political or semi-political acts. Moreover, it can be linked to gender since women are often deprived of the possibility to express themselves through conventional means, and they often refer to small, everyday acts that aim to either uphold or challenge dominant gender ideologies (i.e., patriarchy).

Infrapolitics seeks to create and carefully articulate hidden transcripts. Discreetness is seen as a strategic advantage, even if the actors themselves do not realise it. An important question flows out of this conceptualisation – when under which historical or political contexts actors decide to use unnoticed political acts and why. According to Scott (1990: 118), hidden transcripts become available to actors when other social spaces are controlled by those in power. When they insinuate themselves in hidden forms, they usually seek to undermine domination. However, later, other authors such as Marche (2012) engaged in debates with Scott (1990) and illustrated that it is not a requirement for infrapolitics to be hidden or unnoticed. He states that sometimes infrapolitical can mean explicit in terms of its political goals.

Bayat (2009) criticises Scott's theory of resistance and argues that everyday resistance is not necessarily 'hidden'. That is why he proposes another concept – 'quiet encroachment' – that emphasises the 'hidden' and informal nature of such

acts. Bayat (ibid 545-546) thinks that 'quiet encroachment' can, in fact, lead to episodic collective action. It is true that initially, it starts with individual acts; after gaining resources, these thousands of individual acts will contribute to a collective struggle. In this sense, resistance can be public (since it has the potential to be public), collective and sometimes formally organised. Bayat's (ibid) conceptualisation shows that scattered individual everyday acts can potentially lead to mobilisation; however, this is not necessarily the case.

Another element of the resistance theory that has been criticised is the question of intent. Ortner (1995: 175), for example, claims that it is difficult to distinguish between intention to resist and egoistic acts. She claims that it is impossible to grasp the intentions behind acts. Generally, Ortner (ibid) argues that resistance studies (including Scott's theorisation) are "thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of those groups, thin on the subjectivity – the intentions, desires, fears, projects – of the actors engaged in these dramas" (ibid 190). In her view, resistance studies often do not have an ethnographic stance or a commitment to explore the 'thickness' of complex relations (ibid 174). Her main argument is that Scott and other authors in resistance studies simplify reality and disregard the subjective and ambiguous nature of these acts (Ibid 175). This leads Ortner to criticise the category of resistance, claiming that resistance is also ambiguous. Consequently, this category becomes irrelevant as it is impossible to grasp different motivations and cultural and institutional constraints that people have (Ibid).

These criticisms are partly addressed by the conceptualisations of Johansson and Vinthagen (20, n. p.). They argue that "[everyday resistance] is done routinely (as patterns of acts), but […] is not politically articulated in public or formally organised (in that situation)." It is a set of individual or small-group practices that are contextual and regularly done (ibid). The authors stress that everyday resistance often stays undetected as resistance. This conceptualisation will be used in my thesis and will be further elaborated in Chapter 7, where I will look at how women respond to gender microaggressions.

In this thesis, I use the definition offered by Johansson and Vinthagen (2019, n. p.): "[everyday resistance] is done routinely (as patterns of acts), but […] is not

politically articulated in public or formally organised (in that situation)." It is a set of individual or small-group practices that are contextual and regularly done (ibid). The authors stress that everyday resistance often stays undetected as resistance.

The main argument that Johansson and Vinthagen (2019: n. p.) put forward is that everyday resistance is a practice that is "always oppositional or related to power/dominance/hegemony". They argue (Ibid, n. p.), that "everyday resistance is always situated in several power relations at the same time". Since power is not singular, then resistance also is not singular. They both are decentered and intersectional. It means that resistance always exists in relation to different powers. For example, resistance can be oppositional to one power but non-oppositional to other powers (Ibid). It means that power and resistance are interdependent and entangled.

Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) offer four analytical lenses of everyday resistance: (1) repertoires of everyday resistance; (2) their relations to agents; (3) spatiality; and (4) temporality. Concerning the first dimension, the authors state that it is not effective to distinguish the different forms of resistance (e.g., physical or symbolic forms of resistance). Instead, we should refer to them as 'repertoires' since the concept implies that these repertoires are culturally learned. Most importantly, they are contextual and changing, and it is possible to analyse them in relation to power (Ibid). The second dimension focuses on who resists – either individuals or small groups – and what relationships they have with the power holders (Ibid). Everyday resistance emerges from the interactions and relationships between agents of power, agents of resistance and observers of resistance. The third and fourth dimensions are fundamental for this dissertation. The third dimension, spatiality, underlines that everyday resistance is always situated in a particular space: the city, the street, the home (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). Acts of resistance have their 'sites of resistance', i.e., they are practised in and through specific spaces. Similarly, the last dimension, temporality, suggests that everyday resistance is also temporally organised and is practised in and through time (ibid. p. nd.). It should be noted that temporal and spatial dimensions are intertwined and related to each other. All these intersectional dimensions are always present in acts of resistance.

Gender relations are power relations, as mentioned in the previous chapters. It means that the dominant norms of masculinity and femininity are embodied in everyday interactions. If one questions these dominant norms, they simultaneously destabilise the gendered norms and resist power relations. One example of this is the practice of 'talking back'. bell hooks (1989: 5) notes that in the southern black community 'talking back' meant "speaking as an equal to an authority figure". It was analysed as an act of resistance by hooks, where black women articulated their opinions and, in this way, undermined dominant power. Such an act means that women expressed their agency (Ibid). The act of 'talking back' is a small mundane act of everyday resistance and can potentially undermine dominant power relations. Such small acts are difficult to capture since they primarily rely on the context. For example, Johansson's study (2009, cited in Johansson and Vinthagen, 2019) suggests that the practice of humour among lower-class women in Nicaragua can be seen as resistance since the jokes play a significant role in the creation of (1) women's identities and (2) distance from the oppressive systems. While joking, they resist the sexist cultural context. However, "whether a joke is a resistance or not, will depend on the joke, the joke teller, the relationship with the audience and the wider context." (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019, n. p.). It means that a joke can be a resistance when it is done to undermine dominant power relations.

Some scholars looked at everyday resistance in domestic settings as well. Black, Hodgetts and King (2020) studied women's everyday acts of resistance to intimate partner violence. They claimed that women use both overt acts of defiance (e.g., fighting back physically, seeking legal assistance) and subtler forms of resistance to resist violence (ibid). What is crucial here is that domestic violence is usually embedded in everyday practices – acts of violence are, to some extent, routinised and consequently normalised (Ibid). In such settings, leaving can be a typical form of resistance; however, leaving can increase the risk of future violence and backlash from the oppressor. The authors (ibid) claim that the women find other means to express their agency and make their lives more liveable, such as proactive safety tactics and protective actions.

3.6.3. “Consentful” forms of contention

In the post-socialist context exists another kind of "activism" that destabilises the dichotomy of formal/informal politics. Turbine (2015) analyses women's engagement in "consentful" forms of contention in the process of their everyday rights claims in Russia. “Consentful contention” is a term coined by Straughn (2005) that describes acts that do not appear overtly oppositional. In a way, its definition is close to the definition of infrapolitics outlined above. In the article, Turbine (2015) speaks about the blurred boundaries between contentious and consentful contention. Drawing on the framework of contentious politics, she analyses different forms of women's rights activism and explores both "covert" and "overt" contention. Her research showed that some women framed their claims in terms of women's human rights or gender equality while the others did not.

Again, as it was said in relation to infrapolitics, “political opportunity structures” determine what means people use to advance particular claims. Context shapes the forms of activism. Turbine (2015) states that Russia's contemporary political context also shapes how people, in this case, women, make claims on their rights. In her opinion, there is little space left for contentious politics in relation to women's rights. Turbine (ibid) says that in her research, women generally did not demand regime change or see themselves as activists. Moreover, they distanced themselves from discussing women's rights violations. However, at the same time, they recognised the daily experiences of gender inequality. They claimed their rights in the interviews in relation to their caring responsibilities or rights at the workplace. Their claims may have appeared "non-political"; however, making complaints can be seen as a form of political protest, especially in the context of Russia, where formal spaces of politics are closed for women (Ibid).

Turbine (2015) states that women she interviewed did not usually support more “contentious” forms of women’s rights claims (e.g., Pussy Riot’s protests). They stated that the protest “was about “getting maximum exposure” and “attention” (ibid 335). In a parallel manner, the study participants shared the concerns expressed by Pussy Riot. While they rejected these "contentious" forms

of protest, they still were active and engaged in rights claims not only "offline" but "online", through internet as well. Turbine concluded that even if women in Russia do not have the possibility of engaging in contentious politics, there are other spaces where they can express their agency. There are opportunity structures for them to state their interests and positions covertly. However, it should be researched which opportunity structures exist for them and where they exist (except the online space, examined in the article).

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the theoretical underpinnings of my research. Interconnections between space, place and gender set the scene to unfold complicated gendered relationships in Georgia. The theories I reviewed about these interconnections reveal that power structures of gender are reproduced in spaces. It means that spaces oppress women since they reproduce gender relationships that already exist in society. At the same time, spaces leave potential for subversions.

These subversions in the patriarchal contexts are possible using both formal and informal politics. However, 'informal' forms of politics are more accessible for women since it does not require them to enter organisations or parties. I illustrated above that everyday activism, infrapolitics/everyday resistance, and 'consentful' contentions give women space to challenge or uphold dominant gender structures that exist in Georgia.

Space and gender are related to the binary categories of public/private. The gendering of public/private spaces also reproduces and are reproduced by the broader economic and political changes. On the one hand, it is visible from the gendering of public/private in Western contexts and, on the other, in the Soviet Union. State interventions in public/private spaces, the existence of both production and reproduction in the domestic space and the broader gender politics shaped different conceptualisations of the public/private divide. At the same time, this specific form of public/private divide influenced the current gendering of spaces in Georgia.

Chapter 4. Research Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the processes of designing the study methodology and undertaking the research, which led to the study findings. Through a reflexive approach to the research and discussions about my positionality as a researcher, I will show how the research process influenced the data findings.

This research explored women's everyday lived experiences of gender inequality in Georgia; it aimed to grasp the participants' interpretations of gender inequality and the meaning they ascribed to it; it examined the participants' responses to these inequalities as well. However, these are not the initial aims that I had in mind when I started my PhD studies. The research focus changed during the process of collecting data and consequently, research questions were refined. The fieldwork was conducted from October 2018 to February 2019.

This chapter, consisting of six main sections, discusses every step of the research. The first section of the chapter reviews the philosophical underpinnings of this study. The second section examines my positionality as a researcher and the participants' power and agency in the study. The third section then moves to discuss the specific methods involved and gives an account of the fieldwork. It presents an overview of the processes undertaken including conducting the interviews/participant observations and recording of the data. The next section focuses on the ethical dilemmas and barriers encountered during the fieldwork. The last section examines the importance of language for this research, as it was conducted in Georgian. Along with the language and translation issues, I review my approaches to transcription as well. Ethical considerations are present in every section of the chapter, since they are important throughout the entire research project.

4.1. Research paradigm and research design

Although the initial research questions developed out of my interest in the current situation in Georgia in relation to gender inequality and women's rights activism, they were also shaped and refined during the fieldwork by the participants' accounts and narratives. As I outlined in the first chapter of the thesis, these were the aims of the thesis:

1. Exploring how women living in the urban areas of Georgia experience gender inequality in public spaces.
2. Exploring how women living in the urban areas of Georgia experience gender inequality in private spaces.
3. Understanding how these inequalities influenced by the socialist past of Georgia and the current gender ideology.
4. Looking at how do women respond to gender inequalities in everyday life.

My research aims were influenced by my political and theoretical set of beliefs and values. I will begin this subsection by clarifying these values, which are rooted in a feminist perspective. I should also clarify here that there is no single epistemological position that is feminist; however, it is distinct to the extent that "it is shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics and grounded in women's experience" (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002: 16).

4.1.1. Situated knowledge epistemology

I was inspired by ideas around situated knowledge (Haraway, 1991), which developed out of two traditional feminist epistemologies – feminist standpoint epistemology and postmodern feminist epistemology (Harding, 1986). Both traditions emerged in response to the positivist paradigm, which claimed that researchers should study an already existing objective 'reality' using a number of scientific methods. Positivists assumed that the applied methodology should be value-free. Consequently, research should be neutral and objective. Anything else was deemed 'unscientific' (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2011). Academic researchers were required to produce rational, valid and value-free knowledge

(Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002). Some authors, e.g. feminist empiricists such as Milkman (1987) or Longino (1999) remained committed to the positivistic principles and used traditional scientific methods more ‘appropriately’ without challenging the essence of the methods themselves (Letherby, 2003).

Feminist scholars, who proposed “alternative ways of thinking” (Smith, 1990), challenged positivist claims to universal knowledge and the value neutrality of social science. They argued that such methods failed “to take women’s lives and experiences into account” (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002. p. 9). Under the pretence of neutrality, this positivist approach often failed to acknowledge the male/masculinist perspectives underpinning much scientific knowledge (e.g., on women’s bodies). Specifically, standpoint theory builds knowledge from women’s lives, “as they themselves experience them” (Brooks, 2011: 55). This paradigm implies that women, as members of an oppressed group, have awareness of both their own lives and the lives of the dominant group (men), i.e., they have double consciousness (ibid). Such a perspective implies that women (or any other oppressed groups) can produce knowledge that is “less partial and distorted” (Haraway, 1991) and more “objective and unbiased” (Jaggar, 2004: 62) than the knowledge produced by the dominant groups, e.g., men (Brooks, 2011).

Standpoint theory was largely criticised because of its ‘strong objectivism’, primarily, from the poststructuralist positions. Standpoint theory, similarly to the positivist theory, assumed that ‘objective’ knowledge production, to some extent, is possible. In this sense, its principles were rooted in critical realism, meaning that there is a certain reality that can be analysed and detached from the researcher and discursive practices. It means that the researcher can reach a politically grounded and objective understanding of reality (Lykke, 2010). Postmodernist theory rejects such truth claims as it questions grand narratives in general. According to Lyotard, grand narratives are abstract ideas that should serve as an explanation of historical knowledge (1984). Instead of grand narratives, postmodernism “proposes an expansive study of difference and the inextricable relationship between power and knowledge” (Leavy, 2011: 86).

Both postmodern analysis and standpoint theory offer important insights to knowledge production. However, it can be beneficial to link together some concepts from each perspective, for instance, the idea of multiple standpoints with the postmodern 'small' stories, existing only in specific contexts (Lykke, 2010). Haraway's (1991) concept of situated knowledge is one of the examples of linking it and postmodern feminism together and a major revision of standpoint feminism. Haraway (ibid) argues that it is more beneficial to explore the notion of partial visions and situated knowledges, since knowledge is always partial. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002: 66) suggest, that: "there can be grounds for local, regional or global knowledge, but not for 'universalising discourse'". This way it is situated in intermediate positions between absolute truth (feminist empiricism) and absolute relativism (feminist postmodernism). In a sense, this perspective (which Lykke calls 'feminist postconstructionism') "move(s) both into and beyond "postmodern philosophy" (Lykke, 2010: 149).

Indeed, subjective situated knowledge is the only knowledge that we can explore. On the one hand, participants' perspectives are 'real' and represent 'reality' and it is the only 'reality' we can access (standpoint feminism). My approach to this research also assumes that any 'reality' itself ('experience', 'perspective', etc.) is constructed and its constructions vary according to time and space. In this research, I acknowledge that experiences, perspectives, practices are socially constructed. These constructions are specific in terms of time and space, and this is particularly important for this research since this study explores constructions of meanings in specific post-Soviet context.

4.1.2. 'Experience' as a source of knowledge

The emphasis on women's experiences in the research questions indicates that I situate 'experiences' in the centre of the knowledge production process. It is true that there has been a case against taking experience as a primary source of knowledge from a postmodern perspective. For instance, Scott (1992: 37) claims that experience is a discursive construct and one can only understand different interpretations of another's experience, not their experience as such.

Here I use ‘experience’ as it was understood from a feminist standpoint perspective, where both reality and knowledge of the reality are constituted through women’s “socially organized practices in the actual locations of their lives” (Smith, 1997: 393). It means that socially organised practices shape knowledge of everyday life, which can be told from experience. Here Smith links together the standpoint, everyday life and experience, and establishes that it can, in fact, serve as a basis for knowledge production. In this sense, Smith’s (ibid) theory has elements of Marxist historical materialism because of its central point that “knowledge develops in a complicated and contradictory way from lived experiences and social historical context” (Naples & Gurr, 2014: 25).

This conception is particularly interesting for my research, since the study focuses on women’s practices of responding to gender inequality. These practices may range from more formal policies and activities to daily forms of resistance. I assume that the participants’ everyday practices influence their experiences and interpretations of these experiences. Undoubtedly, experiences have complex effects on people’s lives, and therefore, they must be empirically investigated (Ramazanoglu & Holland, 2002) and also, are shaped by structural inequalities.

4.1.3. “Whose experiences?” “Which women?”

Initially, standpoint theory was criticised for its essentialist views about gender, since it treated women as a homogenous group and in doing so implied a universal notion of womanhood, which excluded or marginalised women who did not fit into this (implied) normative idea of womanhood (Leavy, 2011). In general, postmodernist thought rejected the binary systems such as mind and body, and male and female. Later, influenced by postmodernist traditions, feminist standpoint scholars began to develop new epistemological frameworks that stressed the existence of multiple standpoints and plurality of lived experiences. For instance, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) stressed connections between race, class and gender, what she calls a matrix of domination. Indeed, each group (within “women”) had been oppressed in different ways and each of them could bring distinctive knowledge (Harding, 2004). Smith (1997), when speaking about ‘experience’, states that different groups of women have

different experiences. In such circumstances, it is important to leave space for social change, which is possible through building communities and constructing spaces that are open to a multiplicity of women's voices (Brooks, 2011). Thus, social change is possible through challenging power structures that oppress women (and other oppressed groups).

Poststructuralist emphasis on multiple standpoints and plurality of experiences is important for this research. However, usually, not all 'experiences' are treated equally even within feminist perspectives. For instance, Smith (1997) and Harding (2004) argue that colonization marginalised the situated knowledges of the targets of colonialization and consequently, Western sociology favoured white, middle-class, heterosexual standpoints. It means that some groups of women had epistemic privilege (i.e. 'the right and ability to be heard') (Naples & Gurr, 2014) and some did not. There are a number of studies highlighting perspectives of women who did not have epistemic privilege, e.g. Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Chela Sandoval (2000), Barbara Sutton (2010), Roberta Villalon (2010) to name a few. In the context of this study, I should note that Georgian women can be viewed as lacking this epistemic privilege since feminist scholarship rarely represents their 'experiences'. Therefore, it is important to focus on their situated knowledges and everyday experiences.

4.2. Power, representation and agency

According to Haraway, situatedness of knowledge includes two aspects: 'siting', meaning that the researcher should reflect on their situatedness (position in time, space, history, context, power differentials, body); and 'sighting', meaning that research should make involved research technologies and research objects visible. I will address both in this chapter. Although the aim of this research is to represent women's voices, the central questions here are "how participants' voices are to be heard, with what authority and in what form" (Olesen, 2005: 252).

4.2.1. My position as a researcher

I will start by situating myself as a researcher since it is not possible to carry out the research separately from my biography and identity. Both my professional and academic background is connected to sociology and research. In terms of my professional experience, before beginning this PhD research, I had been working on several research projects connected to women's rights in Georgia (however, I was involved in research projects about different topics as well). The projects, funded by local or international organisations, varied from Attitudes of Youth towards Gender Equality to Access to Justice for Internally Displaced and National Minority women. I had never been involved in gender politics or formal activism (except attending demonstrations here and there). After that, I continued my studies in the UK.

I am a citizen of Georgia, i.e., had a common social and cultural context with the participants; my first language is Georgian, and I identify as a woman. In this sense, I shared these characteristics with my participants. In terms of socio-demographic background, I had commonalities with some participants in terms of age and employment. From this perspective, perhaps, I was an 'insider' as well in this research. In fact, being an insider can be helpful at some stages of the research: before conducting interviews/observations (establishing connections and recruiting participants), during the interviews/observations (talking about the common experiences) and even when transcribing and analysing the data (because of the shared mother tongue). However, in some cases, it may have been a barrier as well, for instance, when the participant would assume our shared knowledge about a certain topic ("do you remember [that particular] event?"). I was an 'insider' to this study in terms of the location of the fieldwork as well – I lived in Tbilisi, Georgia before coming to the UK and I had 'intimate connections' with it.

The 'insider' status may be linked to some difficulties. For example, if the study is conducted in a familiar research setting, the researcher may assume that they are aware of the specific culture they study (Asselin, 2003). Because of this, the researcher may overlook the important information (Ibid). Moreover, the participants can make assumptions of similarity as well and avoid elaborating on their individual experiences (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

In order to minimise such assumptions, I asked the participants additional questions even if I thought I understood their point without further elaboration. Moreover, I did not have prior knowledge of the particular subcultures, especially, those outside Tbilisi. Another risk is that past experiences and emotions can influence the researcher's detachment from the data (Ibid). Particularly, it might happen during the data analysis. In such cases, I separated my own experiences from the participants' narratives.

However, when I started to explore women's experiences in Georgia as a student at a Scottish University, I was perhaps also an 'outsider' who was curious about the study subject. This curiosity was extremely helpful sometimes, especially when the participants did not assume that I had similar experiences as them and I could ask for more clarification and recheck my findings, which sometimes led to a more insightful interview. Of course, there were interviews, when the participants assumed that I already had similar experiences as them and therefore, I had to ask additional questions. My 'outsider' status was particularly evident when I attended the first meeting of the Women's Movement (union of women's rights activists) and they knew that I was an 'outsider' there. For the first several minutes the members kindly familiarised me with the history of the movement, their strategy and policy. Having more information about this movement helped me to contextualise their meetings and activities.

I was an 'outsider' in terms of privilege as well – I was studying at Western University and have not been living in Georgia for years. This created a certain power difference between me and the participants and influenced their perception of the research process (Asselin, 2003). For example, several participants told me "you probably do not feel it there [in the United Kingdom]" when talking about gender inequality. Some participants asked me whether and how gender equality was achieved in Western countries. This made me reflect upon my privileged role in relation to the participants. Age as a social category also created different relations with the research participants. I had the feeling that the younger participants talked to me as to their peers, while older participants (50 years old and more) talked to me more formally, especially, at the beginning of the interview. However, as the interview progressed, this dynamic changed and the conversation became more open.

Being both ‘outsider’ and ‘insider’ situated me in “the space between” these statuses (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009: 60). It enabled me to take the strengths of both statuses, which made the research more flexible. However, as Merriam et al. put it, the insider-outsider dichotomy is “too simple” and requires additional parameters such as positionality, power and representation (2001).

4.2.2. Power and agency

The feminist perspectives about the ethics of research state that it is important to respect any oppressed groups’ knowledge and experiences (Jaggar, 2008). The central principle for me was to undertake research that is open to and led by the participants’ perspectives. Consequently, the study was inductive, “bottom-up” - it allowed the participants space to (re)define certain aspects of the study through data generation processes.

When designing the research, I wanted to explore how women challenged gender inequality in public settings; however, the more I spoke to the participants, the wider the range of issues emerged which were not pre-defined. The participants were talking about their relationships to their family members, everyday interactions between them; they discussed their sexuality and experiences related to body/body images. I want to stress that these topics were not included in the initial set of questions. Nonetheless, they have become important aspects of this study. Such a gradual shift of the research focus is an example of the how the participants influenced the data collection process.

The central point here is the assumption that the interview process (and consequently, any method that involves human participants) is a field of power relations (Kvale, 2006). It is important to recognise and minimise power differentials between the researcher and the researched (Bell, 2014). The hierarchies between the researcher and the researched should be broken down and every feminist researcher should strive to maintain trust and rapport during the research process.

I tried to mitigate power relations during interview/participant observation process as well. For instance, I developed a set of questions or topics that I

wanted to discuss with the participants during the interviews. However, the sequence of the questions varied according to each participant. There were times, when the participant started talking about one topic and covered other topics, which I had in mind (i.e., in the interview schedule). In such circumstances, I did not follow the sequence of questions step-by-step, I had to be flexible and follow the participant's narratives instead. Other times, I asked much more than I had initially planned, because the participants developed ideas that needed more additional questions and prompts. Quite often the participant suggested topics that were not included in the initial set of questions but were important for them. For example, I did not plan to ask question about body/body images, however, the participants introduced this topic themselves. At the end of the fieldwork the interview schedule had more topics in it than the initial version.

Moreover, I aimed to explore how women living in the urban areas of Georgia experienced gender inequality. However, I did not predefine the specific spaces and occasions where "gender inequality" could be experienced. I based this research question solely on the participants' interpretations and the meanings they ascribed to different events. In other words, they brought up topics that were important for them - there was space for new ideas and thoughts to arise.

4.3. Methods of data collection

> The qualitative researcher as *bricoleur*, or maker of quilts, uses the aesthetic and material tools of his or her craft, deploying whatever strategies, methods, and empirical materials are at hand
> *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 4*

In order to explore the research questions of the study, I used qualitative research methodology. This approach enables, on the one hand, the researcher to generate rich data and on the other hand, the participants to narrate their experiences. The qualitative researcher interprets phenomena "in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Ramazanoglu &

Holland (ibid) argue that feminists often employ qualitative enquiry because it allows women's voices to be heard; it can explore relationships, power and institutions (2002); it makes it possible to focus on women's interpretations and intersubjective meanings (Skeggs, 2001); it enables women to "speak for themselves" (Letherby, 2003: 85). For this purpose, I chose to use a combination of qualitative methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews, follow-up situated interviews and participant observation; however, most of the data I collected comes from the semi-structured interviews. I decided that exploring various aspects of women's lives (and perhaps, different kinds of perspectives) and getting a more rounded/contextualised knowledge of their experiences would be possible only by employing different qualitative methods: for instance, in-depth semi-structured interviews allowed me to understand the participants' experiences and their interpretations in depth; follow-up situated interviews allowed me to observe everyday practices of the participants *in situ*; participant observation enabled me to observe formal activist spaces and collective everyday practices of women involved in activism.

Despite using several qualitative methods, I did not envision the research as an ethnographic study. Ethnography aims to grasp people's understandings of their world, "since its inception the primary means of achieving this has been through empathetic and experiential understanding" (Kwame 2018: 21). Ethnographic study requires from the researcher to stay in "the field" much longer so that the participants would become accustomed to their presence (Kwame 2018). This research was not a long-term research, based on participant observation. Rather, it was an innovative approach to interviewing that involved talking to the participants more than once (and potentially seeing how their perspectives changed over time and as I built up more of a relationship with the interviewee) and in particular settings or locations (seeing how this spatial setting influenced what the participants told me).

4.3.1. Qualitative interviews

I decided to use semi-structured in-depth interviews because I wanted to explore women's experiences and the meanings the participants ascribed to their experiences in relation to my research questions. I wanted the data to

reflect the participants' interests and priorities. Overall, I conducted 42 in-depth interviews. The shortest interview lasted approximately 20 minutes and the longest more than two hours. In general, the interview format worked well. The participants were engaged in the process and talked about their experiences openly.

After the initial contact with the participants, I sent them the Participant Information Sheet (*See Appendix 2 and 3*) and Consent Form (*See Appendix 4 and 5*) in Georgian. Before the participants signed the consent form, I verbally explained to them what was written in the information sheet. I tried to cover the most important parts of it. My aim was to make sure that their consent was not only informed but also meaningful. In this thesis, the participants are given pseudonyms.

Prior to the interviews, I asked the participants about the most comfortable places for them and usually held the interviews in the places suggested by them. The interviews were held in public settings, mostly in cafes. After entering a café, I chose the most convenient place to sit with minimal background noise, which would not be very close to other tables. I was especially conscious of other people who were sitting close to us, and I gave special attention to where would we sit in public settings. There were several inconveniences when the interviews were held in public spaces: one participant felt that our table at the café was close to another table, and she communicated this problem with me. Of course, we then changed the table and found a more comfortable place for the participant. Naturally, there were some unforeseen circumstances, for example, when a venue was too noisy or when there was no place in a certain café. In such situations, we changed the location of the interview and moved to another place soon enough.

However, there were interviews, which I conducted elsewhere – at the participants' apartments or workplaces, due to the participants' choice. I conducted three interviews at the participants' flats while they were alone, and nobody interrupted the interview process. I felt that mostly the places we chose were comfortable for the interviewees - they were talking openly and were engaged in the conversation. Especially, I was worried when conducting

interviews at the participants' workplaces. I was conscious that there were other people in the office (not in the same room, of course) and tried to speak quietly, I was worried that somebody could hear our conversation; however, the participant did not seem to mind – they did not seem particularly worried and did not speak in a quieter manner.

In some cases, I met the participants at their workplace, and we walked together to the place where we had the interview. I felt that the time between meeting the participant and starting the interview was very important in relation to establishing rapport. We exchanged some questions. Usually, the participants were interested in where and what was I studying, how was my experience of living abroad, etc. This 'pre-interview' element was very informal and helpful in relation to 'setting a scene' for the interviews. However, if such 'pre-interviews' did not happen, the interviews started formally and rapport was established later, when the actual interviews began.

During the interviews, I wanted to record some socio-demographic information about the participants. In addition to the standard questions such as age, education level, and occupation I decided to let them talk about their biographies in brief. I asked them to tell me about some key episodes/moment from their lives (I did not specify whether I meant childhood or adulthood). Some of them started talking about their childhood; others about the first employment or applying to the University. I feel that this general question was also particularly helpful in establishing rapport with the participants.

There were times when the participants assumed that I also had similar personal experience (usually, negative, i.e., connected to the gender inequality) to what they were talking about; and most of the times I had to decide between answering them or not. As I wanted our interviews to be more like conversations, my strategy was not fixed at all. In certain situations, I included my own stories in the conversation – it is not that I decided to do so, but I felt it would be more natural, as I felt the participant and I were having an open conversation. I feel that reciprocating when appropriate helped me to achieve the relevant level of intimacy and closeness between my participants and me. However, I tried to stay neutral and not disclose any ideological and value-based

perspectives, especially when the participants asked direct questions (I can recall one such occasion), when they wanted to know my position about the discussed topic. In such situations, I told the participant that I preferred to discuss my perspective later, as we did after the interview - I did not want to impose my views on participants.

4.3.2. Follow-up situated interviews

The use of situated interviews in this project draws on ideas from both participant observation and interviews. I employed this method as a go-along interview. The go-along interview is a technique when researchers accompany individual informants in the environments that are familiar to them, such as neighbourhood or other local areas (Carpiano, 2008: 264).

> By responding and reacting 'in the moment,' the go-along allows a natural conversation to emerge that is informed not only by the memory and sentiment of the participant but also by observations and reactions of both the researcher and participant.
>
> *Burns, et al., 2019: 2*

In general, go-along interviews have been used in relation to a wide variety of research topics, as it allows, "moving through physical space with the participant acting as a guide that allowed the area to be experienced physically and emotionally by the participant and the researcher." (Burns, et al., 2019: 2). In this project, I call my approach 'follow-up situated interviews' and the reason behind this is twofold: firstly, I would like to distinguish it from both the walk and talk interviews and the participant observation; secondly, I would like to stress the setting of the interviews – they were situated in spaces that the participants selected.

After the initial qualitative interviews, I told the participants about the second step of my research and explained to them as plainly as possible what this method implied. I asked them to think of a problematic/empowering space for them (drawn largely on their initial interviews) - the spaces they liked, they felt comfortable in, or which they used for their everyday activities. Some of them

took the initiative instantly and suggested a place. Others said that they would think about such spaces. I took permission from them to contact them once again about this matter. There were only a few participants who told me immediately that they probably would not be able to take part in the second stage of the research. However, when I contacted them again, only a small number of participants replied. I can only assume why this happened – it may be related to the method itself and the fact that it required more time and effort from them.

I conducted situated interviews with only 14 participants (out of 42). The participants selected 'problematic' spaces, where they experienced gender inequality. I conducted two follow-up interviews in a private vehicle of the participant, one interview in a car repair centre, four of them in public transport (one in a bus, one in a microbus and two in a subway), three interviews on the streets (city centres), four interviews in cafes (on two occasions participants' friends were present). It is true that walking interviews can have the risk of emotional harm from the participants recalling and recounting negative experiences; however, I negotiated with the participants beforehand that we would not visit the space that was traumatic for them. For this reason, there were minimal potential risks to participants' mental well-being.

The rationale for using the follow-up situated interviews was to build up the relationship with the participants and potentially see how their perspectives changed over time. The aim of using this method was to allow the participants to think about the 'location-specific' experiences and reflect upon their behaviour in specific settings. This method is a "natural fusion of interviewing and participant observation", which engages with space and place and the meanings the individuals ascribe to them (King and Woodroffe 2017: nd). The method moves the "art of conversation" outside the interview rooms (ibid). Compared to the more traditional interviewing, follow-up situated interviews do not strictly follow the methodological rules, such as the duration and content of the interview or the exact route (ibid). However, it does not mean that such interviews are not planned or "managed". Walking interviews relate to the fundamental activity of everyday life – walking with others (Lee and Ingold

2006). Follow-up situated interviews are well suited to this research since it relates to the everyday spaces that women use and the everyday experiences they have in those spaces.

The procedure was the following: we would agree on a date and a place the participant suggested, e.g., the bus that the participant took every morning from their home to their workplace. We would both take that bus from the participant's chosen place to the participant's chosen destination. While being on the bus we would talk about the situations on the bus regarding gender inequality (i.e., focusing on the location). Sometimes the participant would share their own observations with me about gender dynamics in that location. Thus, the situated interviews mainly concerned the location we visited - the participant's experiences with the specific place. However, very often the follow-up situated interviews "continued" the topics of the initial interviews. I felt that the participants were adding some information or expanding our previous conversation. Since these spaces served as examples of the 'natural' situations for the participants, I observed their daily practices and actively listened to their interpretations of their experiences.

I found this approach beneficial since the relationship with the participants during the second interview was more informal. In this sense, it "loosened up" the interview experience (King and Woodroffe 2017: nd). Follow-up interviews were important in the sense that they helped minimise the researcher-researched hierarchy. The participants often suggested new topics for the discussion or added important inquiries to their previous interviews. For example, in one case, at the beginning of the second meeting (almost immediately after greeting her), the participant told me that she wanted to tell me a story that would probably interest me. She told me that she witnessed the incident of harassment at one of the events she attended, where two men were harassing a woman who was wearing a short skirt. She said that she was "keeping the story for our next meeting". Thus, the dynamic of the follow-up interviews was different from the initial interviews – the participants were more relaxed, open, and flexible since we did not have a specific timeline or set of questions. I was inspired by informal communication during these encounters – not only I asked questions, but they asked them as well, we had a conversation

and it helped to build rapport with the participants. However, all interactive research encounters involve a power of imbalance and the power differential between the participants and me did not disappear, since I still was producing knowledge about their experiences for my research project.

Another important area is that it might be more uncomfortable for a participant to stop an interview (King and Woodroffe 2017) if they do not wish to continue. As they are ‘walking’ or ‘travelling’ with the researcher, they might feel discomfort to withdraw from the research. To mitigate this risk, I took field notes immediately after each interview and reflected upon the power imbalance during the interview.

This method has some potential risks and ethical challenges. Most ethical considerations in relation to follow-up situated interviews are similar to those of the sit-down interview. However, there are specific ethical issues as well, for example, when the participant and the researcher visit insecure places, paths or neighbourhoods (King and Woodroffe 2017). During the fieldwork, we did not visit any unsafe spaces. Moreover, we did not have any encounters with the participants’ (or my) friends or neighbours and the participant’s confidentiality was not compromised.

4.3.3. Participant observation

Participant observation offers the researcher an opportunity to observe and be engaged in spontaneous interactions between people. Consequently, there are two different processes involved in this method – participation and observation. There are different degrees to both observation and participation; however, it is always a combination of these two components and is never reduced to pure observation or full participation only (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011: 18). While pure observation removes the researcher from the actions and behaviours, full participation makes them share the identity of a full participant in the culture (ibid). Despite the different degrees to the participation/observation, the method implies “living, working, laughing and crying with the people that one is trying to understand” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011: 10).

During my period of fieldwork, I attended four women's rights activists' (the Women's Movement) meetings. The Women's Movement is a union of women's rights activists having different demographic background; it is not a registered organisation and they do not have a formal management or administration; women who are involved in this movement are volunteers. Formally, there are nearly 3000 members in this union. Their meetings are not planned or structured; there is a small core group which makes decisions, even if not formally constituted as such. They meet when the members (a small core group) decide there is something important to discuss. They communicate their policy mainly by two means: either in the closed Facebook group called '25 November[5] and more' or during meetings planned beforehand for every occasion. This means that they do not have the planned meeting schedule for the year; the meetings are mainly spontaneous. However, they are trying to plan yearly events for 25 November and 8 March[6]. The process is the following: the administrators of the group write in the Facebook group that they are planning a meeting for the specific occasion. The members are choosing a date (via Facebook poll). However, as one of the participants told me, she was frustrated that usually a small number of activists attends these meetings.

Before starting my fieldwork, I contacted one of the representatives of women's activist group and asked her for the permission to attend the meetings of the activists (she is a moderator of the group). I attended all the meetings held while I was on the fieldwork. Usually, 10-20 activists attended the meetings. I told everyone at the meetings that I was a researcher, and I would like to observe and actively participate in the discussions. I observed approximately 10 hours of meetings on four occasions. First meeting in early November was held because Women's Movement wanted to set their strategy for 25 November event. Another meeting was held in February in relation to planning a demonstration for March 8. I attended the second and third meetings in December in relation to planning a demonstration, which I visited as well.

[5] 25 November - International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
[6] International Women's Day

4.3.4. Recording data

When recording data, I used two approaches. Firstly, I audio-recorded all the semi-structured interviews. I told the participants about the audio-recorder and explained in detail the reasons and ethics behind it. The participants did not object to this, and I recorded all the interviews on the audio-recorder. There were situations when some participants thought that I was a journalist because of the audio-recorders, despite having already received the PLS and given consent to the interview. I explained to the participant the interview process and made sure that we negotiated the terms of the conversation before I proceeded with the interview.

I was worried that audio-recordings made in public venues such as cafes would be difficult to transcribe due to the background noise. That is why it was the first thing I checked after the first interview – the quality of the recording. All the recordings were of good quality and easy to hear the participants' voices. The only drawback here is that it is impossible to grasp non-verbal cues of the event. In this regard, it was very important that I was keeping fieldwork notes, as they can 'fill in' the missing elements from the audio-recordings. I did not tape-record any of the participant observations or follow-up situated interviews, as I thought it would be better in terms of building rapport with the participants. I recorded the detailed notes instead after each follow-up interviews. These fieldnotes were in a way different from the fieldnotes about my own impressions of the fieldwork (I will talk about this is the following paragraph). These fieldnotes were focused on the content of our conversation and the details of our routes.

I would like to address the question of fieldnotes produced during the fieldwork. The fieldnotes were made about my impressions, feelings and overall observations on the fieldwork. I kept a small notebook for the fieldwork and recorded my impressions in Georgian; I made notes before and after the interviews (both initial and follow-up)/observations and during participant observation. It added a lot of richness and extra information to the data. Particularly interesting was to read the reflections and thoughts afterwards. I

also elaborated on the brief notes I was able to take immediately after the research process by writing them up in more detail.

4.4. Sampling strategy and recruitment

4.4.1. Selecting locations

I initially planned to interview women living in the urban areas of Georgia, specifically three cities: Tbilisi, Kutaisi and Batumi. I intended to focus on urban locations in Georgia. My aim here was to grasp different types of experiences that women have in Georgia. The focus of the study is not to produce a precise comparison between these settings; nonetheless, the choice of multi-sited fieldwork brings additional insight and richness to the data findings. I will demonstrate this in the empirical chapters - I will show comparative elements or similarities where appropriate. I have decided to focus on three cities while keeping in mind some practicalities - selecting a small number of cities made it possible to conduct the research in a limited time period. I was based in Tbilisi and major part of the research (both interviews and participant observation) was conducted there. However, I travelled to the other two cities as well and stayed there for a minimum of two weeks. I conducted 22 in-depth and 8 follow-up situated interviews in Tbilisi, 12 in-depth and 4 follow-up situated interviews in Batumi and 8 in-depth and 2 follow-up situated interviews in Kutaisi.

Image 4.1. Cities in which the interviews were conducted

These cities are the largest cities in Georgia in terms of population and there are more women's rights organisations than in other locations. Tbilisi is the capital of Georgia with a population of 1 171 100 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2018), Tbilisi is located on the banks of the river Mtkvari, in the Eastern part of Georgia. Surrounded by mountains on three sides, the city was founded in the 5th century and has 10 districts including some historic neighbourhoods (e.g., 'old Tbilisi'). Tbilisi is the economic centre of the country, generating more than 50 percent of Georgia's GDP (ibid). The dominating sector in Tbilisi is the service sector, including governmental services. The average gross salary – approximately 379 Euros – is higher than the national average, which is approximately 305 Euros per month[7]. However, the unemployment rate in Tbilisi is much higher (18.8%) than the national average (12.7%). Tbilisi is the cultural centre of the country in terms of live performances and events available there. During the last several years, it has become the centre of nightlife and club culture in the region. I would say that it is also a centre of political protests since the 1990s. Protests about women's rights are usually located in Tbilisi as well ('Women's March', '8 March Actions', etc.).

Batumi is the second largest city (but still much smaller than Tbilisi) with population of 166 000 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2018). The capital of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, it is located in the Western part of Georgia, 374.4 kilometres west of Tbilisi. It is a very popular tourist destination because of the sea and warm weather. Even Georgians tend to go there for a holiday during summer. Consequently, much of its economy is built around tourism and gambling. However, it is also a sea-port city where shipbuilding is an important sector and a large part of the population are sailors. Since 2010, Batumi has been transformed drastically by the construction of modern high-rise buildings, such as hotels, casinos, and residential buildings. Tourists rent most of the flats in these residential buildings during the summer; however, during other seasons these buildings and frankly, the streets as well, are almost empty.

The third largest city in Georgia is Kutaisi with population of 138 200 (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2018). It is also located in Western Georgia,

[7] According to the data of 2017.

between Tbilisi (221 kilometres west of Tbilisi) and Batumi (139 kilometres east of Batumi) on the Rioni River. In the Middle Ages, it served as the capital of the Kingdom of Imereti (Western Georgia). In the 19-20th centuries, it was an important cultural city, a hometown of many Georgian writers, poets, composers and musicians. Kutaisi was the seat of the Parliament of Georgia between 2012-2018 years.

These three cities are very much different from each other. The major difference though is that Kutaisi and Batumi, despite being urban areas, are smaller cities and people maintain ties to more traditional social networks than in Tbilisi. I can recall one participant's words from Batumi: "everything here is as if you are living in an environment where everybody knows who you are and what you do". Batumi and Kutaisi are also different from each other, most importantly, for their economic basis. Batumi is a seasonal tourist destination that has changed drastically during the last period.

4.4.2. Selecting participants

All of my participants were 18 years or over and lived in one of the cities (Tbilisi, Kutaisi, and Batumi) in Georgia. In terms of selecting criteria, my aim was to interview a variety of women: women of different age, occupations, family structures and other characteristics, in order to ensure that 'women' were not treated as a homogenous category. I strived to explore how the experiences of women varied according to their socio-demographic characteristics and how these influenced their perspectives. I tried to explore the participants' social positioning by asking them about their brief biographies, occupations, education level, employment status and income. I wanted to include as many voices as possible. I did not ask the participants specifically about their gender or sexual identity or disability status and religion/ethnicity. They disclosed this information only if they actively chose to do so. Some of the participants mentioned the above stated identities during the conversation.

The participants' ages varied from 22-62 years *(see Appendix 1.)*. I was not able to achieve a balance between women with higher education levels and women with High School Diplomas. According to 2014 census, 42.6% of Georgian

population (20 years old or older) had higher education and 19.8% had vocational/technical education. In my sample most of the participants have higher education status. This can be attributed to the fact that I recruited using online methods and snowballing, which usually has the risk of attracting specific participants because of computer literacy and access to internet. Most of my participants were employed either in Governmental, NGO or private sectors. More than half of the participants were single; however, there were married, separated, or widowed participants as well.

This is what guided me when I started thinking about the sampling techniques. I used a large variety of sampling techniques, since I wanted to reach as many diverse groups of people as possible. During the fieldwork I periodically reflected upon what kind of participants needed to be included in the research. The recruitment process was ongoing: I was recruiting the participants during whole fieldwork period.

I began the fieldwork with the contact details of people who had previously taken part in my MRes study, I contacted them, told them about my research and asked if they knew anyone willing to take part in the study. I met some of the study participants at the activist meetings I observed. In addition to these, I used online recruitment methods through posting in Facebook groups. Before moving forward, I would like to describe these groups briefly. One group is '25 November and more' that I already described above. The second group is 'Georgian Moms', which is a women-only space with more than 41 000 members. This is the largest women-only group in Georgian online space. I decided to reach out to them because I wanted to diversify the profiles of women involved and it was helpful in terms of employment status, but not educational background. I think this was because they all had some level of computer literacy and access to internet. I contacted administrators of these Facebook groups and asked them for the permission to post information about the research for recruitment purposes. From the first sets of the participants recruited either through Facebook Groups or through activist meetings, I continued snowballing. Snowballing techniques enabled me to establish trust and reach women who would not be otherwise accessible for me.

4.5. Ethical dilemmas and moral responsibility

There are different approaches to feminist ethics, similarly to feminist epistemologies and methodologies. For Collins (2000), for example, a ‘correct’ analysis of the world is possible through evaluation based on an ethics of care, which derives from marginalised lives of black women. Feminist standpoint approach goes beyond postmodern philosophy in relation to ethics as well (postmodernism rejects ethics as normative and universal system of concepts about what is morally correct conduct and what is not (Lykke, 2010). It stresses the researcher’s moral responsibility (‘accountability’) in the process of interpreting reality. It must be noted that the researcher is part of the reality under investigation. According to both Haraway (1991) and Barad (2007), research produces realities that have real effects on the world and the researcher should take moral co-responsibility for these effects. Barad (2007) notes that researchers’ position should involve taking moral responsibility for the processes during the research.

Moral responsibility can have multiple meanings – it includes direct effects (whether long-term or short-term) the research may have on the participants and political impacts as well. I can recall several moments during the research when I had to decide what would be ethically ‘correct’ and ‘responsible’ action. Besides, the fieldwork was an emotially charged experience for me even though the topic of the research was not ‘sensitive’ and the target group was not ‘vulnerable’, per se.

There was an example when the participant disclosed a case of injustice from her manager against her and her co-workers. For instance, she said she was refused to take breaks. The manager also sexually assaulted her co-workers. She said they were trying to build a legal case against him, but she was worried they might eventually drop it, since the co-workers think they will lose jobs (the participant had already lost hers). I gave her contact information of the worker’s rights organisation.

The emotional influence was even stronger, when the participants disclosed their past experiences of violence. It happened several times during the

fieldwork with several women. During such encounters, I felt I was using the information for my own academic purposes, though I was able to offer some specific help, when needed. The most challenging for me was one women's narrative, who said that she was a victim of domestic violence by her husband. As soon as we started the interview, she mentioned it and I felt it was a cry for help. She disclosed that she felt threatened and scared and only her friend knew about it. After listening to her narrative, I asked her whether she wanted to file a complaint with the police? She answered she did not want to do that. Afterwards, I gave her numbers of women's rights organisations and advised her to call them. I have decided not to report the crime, because the participant did not want me to; because I was not sure whether the actions of the police would have been fair, there have been many examples when they were not helpful when investigating a case about domestic violence in Georgia[8]. Until now I do not know whether my actions were sufficient or not; in this sense, I indeed brought "my whole self to research" (Hordge-Freeman, 2018).

4.6. Language and translation

The fieldwork was conducted in Georgian. The interviews, participant observation and taking fieldnotes were all in Georgian - I was a linguistic insider for the study. The only thing that was done in English during fieldwork was a fieldwork diary. I have decided to write a diary in English because of practical reasons – I wanted to write down ideas I had in mind in the language I would use during data analysis. All ideas that the participants articulated were originally in Georgian. In this sense, it was multilingual research, where the data was generated in Georgian and presented in English. As it is rightfully argued, being a linguistic insider still does not mean that you are an insider for all the communities (Berger, 2015).

Translation from English to Georgian and vice versa was quite a difficult process, since it implies decoding cultural meanings (Wong & Poon, 2010). In some cases,

[8] According to the Public Defender of Georgia, there are cases, where the victims state, that in the police stations they were forced to verbally confront the abuser. Some cases indicate that insensitive attitudes toward the issue persists. Sometimes police officers insult or mock the victims of abuse (2018).

it was challenging to translate English concepts to the participants in Georgian during the interviews, especially those participants who did not speak English at all. There are some concepts, like ‘gender’, which do not have any Georgian equivalent. In this process, I tried to use as few English-derived words as possible; rather, I talked with less ‘academic’ language – I used the same terms as they used, i.e. if participant employed ‘gender’ in her communication, I used ‘gender’ as well, however, if that was not the case, then instead I used ‘sex’.

Translation difficulties arose not only during the fieldwork but afterwards as well. I transcribed data verbatim in Georgian. I decided to transcribe not only the spoken words, but any pauses or emotions I could hear from the recordings. After finishing the fieldwork, I listened to the transcriptions one more time and made sure that there was no interpretation or ‘tidying up’ of the data. Another decision I have made was not to ‘correct’ any errors in the speech of the participants. For example, most of the participants used incomplete words such as “არი” (‘*Ari’*) instead of “არის” *(‘Aris’-means ‘is’)*, as we all Georgian-speakers do. I have decided to leave it as close to the original as possible. This created additional translation problems. Probably, it was inevitable to lose some level of informality and some of the cultural meanings in the English version; however, I tried to keep the translation as close to the original as possible. In this sense, I took the ‘naturalism’ stance and refused to correct the grammar and standardise the accents (Oliver, et al., 2005).

The only risk here was to overcome the difficulties when translating the data, as the translations can give its own interpretation of the words and concepts. In order to reduce this risk, I only translated the quotes that I would use in the thesis, rather than translating the whole data. This was due to the time constraints and the desire to analyse the data in Georgian. Like transcription, translation also involves the researcher subjectivity and positionality (Kim, 2012) and influences the knowledge production process. Firstly, accuracy of the translation is limited because of my language skills; secondly, there is a risk to lose the voices of the participants (Temple & Young, 2004).

During the transcription and data analysis there were certain difficulties: it was important to protect the original meaning of the concepts while at the same

time representing the participants' narratives in academic writing. There had been cases when the words the participants used in Georgian did not have English equivalents. I have decided to take the following strategy when analysing the data: generally, I translated the cultural meanings in non-academic English. In some cases, where I could not grant to translate the words as close to the original as possible, I decided to preserve the terms in original language and used untranslated Georgian words/expressions with explanations and contextual information where required. This was particularly relevant for this study because the topic has been researched usually in a Western context. Consequently, it is always challenging to apply feminist concepts that are developed in the West to the non-Western contexts.

4.7. Data analysis

During the fieldwork, I continuously analysed the data by taking field notes and writing regular reports to the supervisors. These processes helped me to map the topics the participants talked about from the early stage. After I returned to the UK from the fieldwork, the fieldnotes and the reports were an important tool for me to 'reconnect' with the data (Strathern, 1985).

I used the method of thematic data analysis to analyse the participants' accounts. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is flexible and able to provide rich data. This method enabled me to map the topics on which the participants focused and to identify patterns within the data. The process of analysis and the ways I interpreted the data were influenced by my standpoint feminist approach.

I took an inductive approach to coding: I used 'open coding' and broke down the text into broad themes (Welsh, 2002). I coded the texts (interview transcripts, observation and the fieldnotes) under nodes that were covered in the given section. For example, 'inequalities at home' or 'silence as a response'. Then I reread the paragraphs and codes multiple times. As a result, I created themes (nodes) and sub-themes (child nodes). In this way, I identified the main themes and their subthemes. In terms of interpretation, the main themes were topics on

which the participants mostly focused. After that, I reread the data to make sure that themes and subthemes were identified 'correctly'. The final themes are the ones presented in the empirical chapters.

I experimented with the two ways of analysing the data. On the one hand, I used NVivo, in which I organised the transcripts and the fieldnotes. I created nodes in this programme, and it helped me to see the data in detail. Because of the pandemic, I had to undertake some work from home and use alternative tools, such as MS Word, for analysing the data. MS Word was an interesting tool since it made me examine the data from a different perspective: if using NVivo resulted in separated chunks of data, in MS Word, I was able to see the bigger picture and effectively link the data to their contexts. When I reread the data in MS Word, I looked at some parts differently. On some occasions, I went back to the initial transcripts and read them to see the broader context of the accounts that the participants provided. In this process, fieldnotes were also quite effective. Constantly rereading the data and codes was helpful in identifying the themes and subthemes.

I was in the process of analysis when the Covid-19 pandemic started. In April 2020, I had to go back to Georgia and continue my work there. It was difficult to adjust to a new working style and circumstances. As a result, finalising the analysis took more time than I expected.

Summary

This chapter has described how the research developed and how it changed during the process from initial planning until the writing up stage. By discussing the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings or the study, the methods employed and ethical issues, the chapter offers a transparent account of the process of data collection. It was possible because of several reasons: firstly, through the qualitative, inductive direction of the research; secondly, using feminist principles; thirdly, because of commitment to the reflexive approaches to the research. Overall, this chapter has explained and defended my chosen methodological approach and the decisions I made during the research process. I

believe that I can represent the voices of women who trusted me with their narratives and experiences.

Chapter 5. Home as a Site of Gendered Experiences

"[House images] are in us as much as we are in them."
The Poetics of Space, Gaston Bachelard, 1996

Introduction

This is the first of the three empirical chapters. It focuses on the multidimensionality of domestic space and women's experiences of home, whether positive or negative. In this chapter, based on the participants' accounts, I show that women have various experiences of home: on the one hand, it can be a site of fulfilment, love and positive personal relationships (though I do not specifically focus on this, since the participants did not talk extensively about this); on the other hand, it can be a site which constantly controls women and regulates their behaviour and ways of expressing themselves; finally, it can be a space of expressing and forming new femininities and contesting traditional gender roles. In this chapter, I argue that even when the participants' have negative experiences of home, the home still is the place for alternative femininities in Georgia.

This chapter is split into four main sections. The first section focuses on how domestic space reinforces and reproduces gender power relations that exist in society. It examines how neotraditionalist gender order sees women as 'natural' caregivers. The second section focuses on women's negative experiences – how their behaviours are subject to restriction, control, and policing in domestic spaces. The third section specifically targets experiences of domestic violence. The last section, home as a site of learning resistance, argues that domestic space can be something more than a source of suffering and/or fulfilment. By focusing on everyday socio-spatial relations and experiences of home, I will discuss the participants' meaning-making process of 'home'.

5.1. Home as a site of reproducing power relations

As mentioned above, home is fluid and is a site of various practices. This section will focus on 'home' as a site of the reproduction of gender relations. Mack-Canty and Wright argue that homes are ‘gender mills’, reproducing hierarchical gender relations (2004). Home represents and reproduces patriarchal gender relations that exists ‘outside’ the domestic space (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). This section looks at how existing gender relations are reproduced in domestic space through enforcing essentialist gender roles.

5.1.1. Women as primary caretakers

If home represents and reproduces gender power relations, then in the Georgian context it is influenced by neotraditional gender ideology and by Soviet and post-Soviet gender regimes: primarily, gender essentialism (which envisions women to be “natural” caretakers) and limited personal agency to negotiate gender (Johnson & Robinson, 2007), as I explained above. The link between post-Soviet and Soviet gender regimes are sometimes visible from the interviews as well. What I mean here is that women sometimes talk about their experiences of home in the Soviet Union. For example, 52-year-old Sesili from Tbilisi notes:

> Everything was prohibited during the Soviet Union; For both girls and for boys, there were rules of sitting, standing, behaving, talking [...] but girls, in addition to these rules, were not allowed to leave home after 10 pm. [...] It was due to our order [*tsyoba*]. My mother and grandmother had the same values. [...] Men were favoured, generally. This had much influence on me, on us, on government. Even now, we [women] feel we are oppressed [*dachagruli*].
>
> *Sesili, 52 years old, Tbilisi*

When Sesili talks about 'our order', she refers to the Soviet order existing in Georgia when she was a child. She remembers that she had a different set of rules she had to follow as a girl, specifically, rules connected to the domestic

space (e.g. 'we were not allowed to leave home after 10 pm.'). Another participant, 54-year-old Baia from Kutaisi, adds that what was permitted for a man was not permitted for a woman. These accounts resonate with Johnson & Robinson's claim that even though the Soviet regime claimed gender equality between men and women, inequality still existed, especially in Georgia's traditional culture. Many younger participants say that their parents (who lived in the Soviet Union) had similar attitudes towards gender equality. For example, 26-year-old Sopho from Tbilisi told me that in her family it was considered that men had to have more rights than women, and women were obliged to "comply with this". She says she wanted to study in a School of Physics and Mathematics, but her family considered that women were not meant to study there. Women had to have their own place in the family. "They did not believe in my knowledge of math", she says. These accounts are examples of how the participants experienced oppression at home from their childhood. However, we cannot say that only the older generation (i.e., generation living in the Soviet Union) had such attitudes. As we will see in other sections, such attitudes are continuing across generations. This is the essence of neotraditional gender ideology: alongside other elements (revival of nationalism and religion), it incorporates soviet and post-Soviet gender regimes.

At the beginning of this section, I stated that one of the elements of gender neotraditionalisation is gender essentialism, where women are seen as primary caretakers. In order for women to be able to fulfil their primary duty, it is important for them to have a family (be married and have their children). Many of the participants say that for them, getting married is a cultural requirement. For example, Elene notes that she is constantly reminded that she has to get married [*gatkhoveba*[9]], especially now that she is "29 years old already". Darejan, who is also 29 years old and lives in Kutaisi, jokingly notes that she is now considered an old maid [*shinabera*] because she is not married. Mostly, the participants say that they cannot ignore such cultural demands at once; however, what they can do is that they can either ignore such comments or joke about them. Although, it is, in some way, temporary resisting these cultural

[9] In Georgian, this word has an interesting etymology. It means "lend someone something", in this context, "lend your daughter to someone" [fathers were the ones who had to 'lend' their daughters to a man].

demands. Neither of the participants stated that they married because of such cultural demand or stayed single because they did not want to comply with it.

However, even when the participants are not married and do not have children, they are still required to be caretakers. 30-year-old Nino from Tbilisi who is a women's rights activist in Georgia tells me that women are not only required to take care of their children and elderly (as this is the primary responsibility of a woman in Georgia); A woman, whether she is married or not, has a moral obligation to take care of other family members as well:

> I am not married, but people continuously require from me to take care of everyone, and I mean both physical and financial care; that I had to take care of my parents, my sister, my aunts and so on. This always was a requirement for me. I think, if I were a man, I would be free of such things. [...] This requirement is so deeply rooted in my consciousness, that I am doing it for years. Most of my life is this – taking care of somebody. And it has a significant influence on me [...] I would like to have more freedom. [...] I realised it when I turned 30. [...] Nobody ever told me it was unjust. Everyone thought I was required to do this. Nobody will say to you this is because you are a woman, but it is because of that.
>
> *Nino, 30 years old, Tbilisi*

Nino here talks about having caring responsibilities as an unmarried woman with no children. The same narrative can be seen in some other participants' accounts, who are not married and do not have children. They complain that they still have a caring responsibility to one or another family member(s), whether it is an aunt, uncle or a cousin.

In feminist literature, home is where "caring" takes place and it is how 'home' is different from the 'uncaring' world of the labour market (Bowlby, et al., 1997). If home is identified with women (as argued in the first section of the chapter), then caring is identified as "women's work" (ibid). Furthermore, if 'home' reproduces hierarchical gender relations that exist in a certain context

(Mack-Canty & Wright, 2004), then neotraditionalist gender roles are reproduced in the participants’ homes, in Georgian context. Such gender roles see women as caretakers in the family. The participants’ accounts reveal that they have caring responsibilities in relation to their family members.

5.1.2. Women sacrificing themselves to their families

Women have more caring responsibilities when they are married and have children. In such cases, women are expected to always prioritise family and caretaking duties. 49-year-old Irma, for instance, told me that during her student years she wanted to do many things, especially, to get a proper education; however, she already had a family and had to prioritise it. Khatuna (56 years old from Batumi) says she has a constant feeling that she 'sacrificed' herself to her family:

> They [her children] maybe do not recognise it, but I did not leave them, I did not go somewhere else to work, do you understand? Sometimes I think they should be more grateful and take care of me.
>
> *Khatuna, 56 years old, Batumi*

In these accounts, the participants talk about how they 'sacrificed' their careers and education to their families. They were unable to do other things alongside caring responsibilities. Irma elsewhere talks about how she was not permitted to work or get more education and how her family (husband and parents) believed that she needed to be home all the time. Khatuna, on the other hand, does not say this explicitly; however, she said that she did not have time to do anything else – she had to take care of her home. This shows not only that women are confined to domestic spaces, but their home serves as an obstacle for them which does not let them be fully involved in the other spaces, as stressed by Friedan (1963).

Such ‘sacrifice’ in some participants generates feelings of regret. This regret is mostly expressed by the older participants, though sometimes younger interviewees mentioned it as well. Tea, who is 58 years old and lives in Kutaisi, despite that she tells me she is a leader in her family, says that she regrets that

she did not do more in terms of her professional achievements. She says that if she was not raised in such a low-income family, or if the 1990s did not happen; she could have been a scientist like she always wanted (now she works as a doctor).

Sometimes a feeling of regret is accompanied by the feeling of guilt. Unlike Tea, several participants who list 'structural' reasons (poverty and political situation in 1990's Georgia) behind their regret, state that it was their fault they could not lead the lives they wanted to lead. Baia is a 54 years old married woman from Kutaisi, and she regretfully noted:

> I am a nurse. I do not have a higher education. I have two children, that's why. I married too early and… I could not… Then there were such… Probably, it is a bit my fault. […] My husband married me by abduction[10] […] I was 18 […] My family did not support me, but it is my fault, I did not try hard enough. I surrendered. I should not have… They told me women needed nothing more. My mother-in-law, for example. My mother did not interfere, because once a woman got married (this is how it was then), she should have behaved as her new family wanted her to behave. I was a child, did not have much courage. […] I think I should have fought.
>
> *Baia, 54 years old, Kutaisi*

In this account, Baia says that she married too early and her family did not support her to get higher education. Despite such structural reasons, she still blames herself and notes that she did not try hard enough. When she says 'they told me women needed nothing more', she recognises she needed something more. This quote also shows that not only men want to control women in domestic spaces, but control also can be between women as well. This can be connected to achieved (legitimated) form of power, when the violence is perceived as acceptable "correction" (Emery, et al., 2017). In this account we

[10] It was a common practice in Georgia. I will speak about this in more depth in Chapter 7.

see that such discrimination was acceptable for Baia's mother-in-law and she repeated the patriarchal forms of control.

These accounts of married and unmarried women show that the participants always have caring responsibilities (whether they are married or not) and are required to prioritise their family. In this sense, they are 'confined' with domestic spaces, which do not let them be fully engaged in public realms.

The participants' narratives show that home is a site of reproducing power relations, in this case, patriarchal power relations. The home, which is traditionally associated with the feminine, is often a subject of the patriarchal authority (Duncan, 1996). Patriarchy here refers to systems of male domination and female subordination. I use the concept of patriarchy as a theoretical tool since it emphasises the importance of various forms of gender hierarchy; it also focuses on social systems that reinforce domination. Here I use 'patriarchy' as defined in Hunnicutt's (2009: 557) article: it is a system which privileges men, where men as a group dominate women as a group "both structurally and ideologically - hierarchical arrangements that manifest in varieties across history and social space". Patriarchal systems are "terrains of power" (Flax, 1993, cited in Hunnicutt, 2009), where men have power over women; however, it does not mean that power relations cannot be altered. It also does not mean that patriarchy is a uniform concept; rather, it takes various ideological and structural forms. That is why Hunnicutt refers to it as "varieties of patriarchy" - it means that patriarchy consists of interconnected structures of domination and differs across cultures. In this chapter I employ the same approach – I focus on the varieties of patriarchy manifested in different ways.

Patriarchal relations can be examined either at the macro-level (government, law, religion, etc.) or at the micro-level (interactions, families, etc.). Women can be subordinated (Gerda Lerner (1989) refers to it as "subordination of women", which means that in certain social situations women are under the control of men) both at the macro and micro levels through many ways, including discrimination, control, and exploitation. The examples of this can be multiple – whether it is a lack of educational opportunities for women or male control over women's bodies. In the micro-level patriarchy, or, as Walby (1990)

puts it, in "private patriarchy", fathers and husbands often regulate or negate rights or autonomy of women.

5.2. Home as a site of restrictions

In this section, I examine how women's everyday lives are controlled by their family members. As Edwards puts it, "patriarchy [...] concerned with the control of women has at its disposal a whole range of technique and mechanisms of control" (1987: 24). Here I discuss how women's everyday lives are micro-regulated (Stark, 2012) through mechanisms of control such as control over their sexual lives, control over their appearance and demanding from women to ask permissions about their everyday activities.

Here I refer to coercive control (Stark, 2012), which is a social entrapment that is both psychological and physical; it has various forms, such as social isolation, fear, and the micro-regulation of women's everyday lives. Such regulation may negatively influence women's sense of self and security. Coercive control examines various levels of violence "from setting arbitrary rules about whom women can see and when they can go out, to ostensibly mundane acts such as belittling comments and hair-pulling." (Black, et al., 2020: 530). Studies that use 'coercive control' frame mostly focus on intimate partner violence (IPV); however, it can be exercised by other members of the family as well. Coercive control can be a part of everyday life for some women. It may even be routinised in some women's lives. However, it does not mean that women are passive in this process, and they have limited agency to respond to such control. They can either repeat or reproduce such abusive practices, or they can challenge them (ibid). Chapter 7 of this dissertation will review how women can challenge or respond to such control. However, what can be said now is that women have control and agency even in such situations.

5.2.1. Controling the sexual lives of women

Shaping and constraining female sexuality is one of the central elements in patriarchy, as it shows how men use their power over women (Edwards, 1987).

When talking about constraining female sexuality, I predominantly mean controlling women's sexual behaviour, i.e. restricting women's sexual liberation and favouring marriage and the family, as the only legitimate expression of women's sexuality. Monogamy, motherhood and in this case, the necessity of having sexual relationships only inside marriage, "contribute to the maintenance of male dominance” (Ibid. p. 23).

Many young participants stress that their relationships are frequently observed and controlled by their family members. Here it can be both nuclear and extended families. Usually, these are family members whom these women live with (extended families are not unusual in the Georgian context). The participants mentioned that their family members sometimes talk about their relationships with the future partners, and they feel they should negotiate with their parents whom they have relationships with. If the participants' behaviour is sometimes inconsistent with their family members' beliefs and values, then it is a source of either conflict or distress. It is also vital to note that having sexual relationships outside marriage is considered to be unacceptable. As 22-year-old Khatia from Batumi told me:

> You know what? Sometimes it seems that things are getting better, that movies and other things [sources of media] should help them understand that a person has their own life, but in the end, they still think that this [their reality] is different and such things are not relevant. In their world, you must get married, and that's it. At least, it is a matter of discussion even in the most liberal families. And I do not know. Even people my age think that way.
>
> *Khatia, 22 years old, Batumi*

Khatia's narrative is quite common in other interviews as well. As mentioned before, differences between a woman's behaviour and her family's expectations sometimes are a source of tension in the family, especially if these young women live in their parental homes. In such cases, women are expected to conform to the rules of their parents. If they are not 'conforming' to them, they will have to develop strategies that will help them minimise conflict in the

family. In such circumstances, some of the younger participants choose not to disclose this information to parents at all. Khatia, for example, admitted that she was hiding the information about her relationship with her boyfriend: "My lifestyle is unacceptable for them", and she was not the only participant who made this kind of decision.

28-year-old Inola from Kutaisi had a similar experience. She said she was not hiding from her parents that she had a boyfriend; however, it still caused some distress in her family. One of the first things she told me when I introduced her to the study topic, was that she used to travel around the country with her boyfriend which led to uncomfortable situations – the relatives called her parents and told them she was spending nights with her boyfriend. The parents already knew it and did not have any negative reactions, but Inola said, “it felt wrong that they would discuss it in such a manner and not even with me, but with my mother.”

The participants, who had a child outside of marriage (i.e. could not hide that they had relationships) reported even more obstacles from their families. Lika is a 29-year-old doctor from Tbilisi; she is wearing a white coat when I enter her office. Her working hours are over, and our conversation goes on for more than two hours. She gives a detailed account of how she felt when she discovered she was pregnant, and her partner would not support her. It is important to note that she is still living in her parental home with seven other members of her big family.

- I thought they [parents] would turn me out of the house because it was against their beliefs. I really thought so. I really started to think about renting; it is not a big deal; I used to tell myself that people live like that and have no problems. […] I told my family members only after I was 12 weeks pregnant. […] I was afraid they would tell me to go get an abortion. I even did not tell it to my friends, because I knew they would say the same. Not everyone, though. […] When I said it at home, it led to crying, weeping and mourning, [they said] that I ruined everything. […] For example, my brother did not even ask me what the father’s name was (until

now). […] My friends had the same reaction; they did not even believe it.

- *Why didn't they?*
- I will tell you why. Around me, people think that if you are 'normal', 'normal' means that you are honourable. Honourable means that you do not have sex until marriage; sex means marriage. I was seen to be an ordinary girl, who was 'normal', 'honourable'; they could not imagine I could have a relationship outside marriage. In fact, it was a first partner for me, so their image of me was not that different from reality. […]
- *What about your image now?*
- My image is different now. My father called me several days ago and asked me where I was. I told him, and he did not believe me. He thought I was somewhere else and asked me where I was having fun. […] I felt that the fact that I had a child outside marriage changed everything; that I disappointed him. It does not matter what I do next; he will never be able to trust me again.

Lika, 29 years old, Tbilisi

Her family's reaction to her pregnancy was not as negative as she feared. They did not make her have an abortion, and they did not throw her out of her parental home. She still lives there with her child. However, their reaction was still undesirable for her: her parents do not trust her anymore. She does not have an image of an 'honourable' woman anymore. This account shows that the participant's sexual life is controlled indirectly through the traditional gender roles existing in the society, monogamy and marriage.

Not only single young women and mothers are required to practice sexual abstinence before marriage, but widows as well. 35-year-old Qristina from Batumi tells me that she as a widow is expected not to have any sexual relations after her husband's death, especially, because of her son - there should be no other man in her life except him. Moreover, she was expected to leave her apartment and move to her ex-husband's parents' apartment: "because as a single woman, I should not live alone". In her words, if she lived with her

parents-in-law and even more if she was financially dependent on them, they would control her sexual life completely, among other things. She gives me an example of her friend, whose husband passed away when she was 18 years old, and after that, she lives with her parents-in-law, and she is deprived of any 'private life'.

Not only Qristina talked about the importance of the issue of whom are you living with. As soon as I meet 41-year-old Salome from Tbilisi, she tells me she thinks she is interesting for this study. When I ask her why she tells me because she cannot live the way she wants to live:

> Hopefully, things are changing now, according to my observations. I bought a flat and moved out from my parental home in 2012, and everyone was… even in Vake[11] in a prestigious workplace, everybody was surprised that I wanted to live alone. […] The landlord was sure that my lover was paying my rent. […] Whole neighbourhood was observing who would visit me, how and why. […] My mother would sometimes visit me without any prior notice when I was waiting for my boyfriend to come, and she would not go away, and I could not tell her anything. […] When that boyfriend would come, I was in discomfort, I would prefer that neighbours would not see it, parents would not know about it. […] I was always afraid that somebody would know eventually. […] family is not able to control me by other means or restrict anything, I do not need anyone's money, but it still is forbidden for me.
>
> *Salome, 41 years old, Tbilisi*

She told me another recent story that her friend was going to let her live in his empty apartment, rent-free. Two months after she moved in, her friend, the apartment owner, told her she would not be able to "bring men home" anymore, so she had to move out. This account shows that there is a strong social expectation that women cannot live alone (outside of parental home or marriage). They must be under the protection of men. In Georgia, living alone is

[11] Prestigious district in Tbilisi

not encouraged for anybody (even not for men), it is expected that young people will only leave the parental home after they are married. However, such expectations are stronger for women.

The participants' narratives show that women are under the control of men (Lerner, 1989) through micro-regulation of women's everyday lives (Stark, 2012), namely, through regulation of their sexual lives. However, the participants' accounts show that not only men (i.e., fathers and brothers) control their sexual lives, but female family members as well. In this way, female family members reproduce abusive practices of coercive control (Black, et al., 2020). Micro-regulation of sexual lives of women takes place at home, which, as I said before, reproduces patriarchal power relations in a certain context (Blunt & Dowling). In Georgia, women's sexuality is restricted and they are expected to be modest and passive (Amashukeli & Japaridze, 2018). Moreover, they do not have any 'sexuality' outside 'motherhood' based on the nationalistic ideology (ibid). That is why, according to the patriarchal power relations, it is sexuality that needs to be controlled and micro-regulated.

5.2.2. Controlling women's everyday activities

Another area of restrictions that the participants spoke about was the requirement to ask for permission for certain behaviours. 26-year-old Lile from Tbilisi told me she does not remember when she stopped asking for permission to leave home, but she recalls a story when she asked for it and did not receive 'positive feedback'. Another story she tells me is a good example of the gender roles in the family.

> Once I remember, I was with my friends eating Khinkali[12], it is 1 am. My parents know my friends very well. They are my neighbours as well. Suddenly my father calls me tells me to call a cab and come home immediately. I told him I wanted to finish eating first. Then he called my friend, male friend and told him to 'send me home' as soon

[12] Georgian traditional dish

as possible. […] When I went home, the first thing my mother told me was: "now go to bed, before your father knows you're here".

Lile, 26 years old, Tbilisi

After getting home, her mother took her husband's side as well. In Lile's history, we see that her father demonstrated his actual power using several techniques (calling her male friend and asking him to control her daughter's behaviour) (Emery, et al., 2017). He even demonstrated his power by absence "[…] before your father knows you're here". It is as if he had power on her without even being in the room.

It should be noted that women who are not living in their parental home anymore are also subjects of restrictions but from their partners or husbands. During the interviews, some of the participants spoke about their relationships with their partners, that can reveal some issues of gender power relations between heterosexual couples. Some participants reported good relationships with their partners and could not identify any inequalities in their marriage. However, there were participants, who said that they used to feel that their husbands controlled their actions. I remember interviewing 49-year-old Irma from Tbilisi, who was shaking while speaking about her marriage and was on the verge of crying.

- When I was younger, I needed my family's permission for everything. I used to ask my husband if I could do something or not… Probably, because… Probably, I do not know… I think I did not want him to get angry, be offended or hurt, and I thought, he is the head of the family. I had a different point of view then. When he would say I could not go somewhere, I would submit because he told me so.
- *Do you have a different point of view now?*
- [long pause] Now I think that [pause], I just… I always want to speak my mind.
- *What about him being the head of the family?*

- I think he is the head of the family, of course, but I cannot agree with him in everything.

Irma, 49 years old, Tbilisi

In this account, Irma talks about how she was required to get permission from her husband to do certain things (even expressing her attitudes toward something). She says she did not want him “to get angry, to be offended or hurt". This shows that Irma felt fear – she did not want to see her husband angry, offended or hurt. She lived in an 'everyday terrorism' (Pain, 2014) and legitimised her husband's power over her. What changed over time is that she stopped 'legitimising' the power. Both accounts examined here (Irma's and Lile's accounts) show that 'asking permission' is one technique that men use to demonstrate control over the participants.

Thus, another way to micro-regulate women’s everyday lives (Stark, 2012) is to make them ask permissions about their own everyday lives. Requiring from women to ask permissions every time they make decisions about their everyday lives (e.g., speaking their mind or going out with their friends) is an example of regulating or negating their autonomy (Walby, 1990), which is characteristic to private patriarchy.

5.2.3. Controlling appearance

“‘Petty’ [*tsvrilmani*] restrictions always exist” - one of the participants told me, referring to controlling women’s appearance. The participants in this study spoke about how their appearance and clothing was controlled and modified by their family members. Controlling the appearance of women was one of the important topics that the participants discussed during the interviews. Some participants said that their family members (predominantly, fathers and brothers) control their clothes, tattoos, piercings and other elements of appearance. I want to stress here that I am not talking only about those participants who are living in their parents’ homes. 23-year-old Alexandra from Tbilisi says that her father is still angry because of her ear piercings and asks her to get rid of them. She even did not tell him she has tattoos:

> I try to dress up in the way that my tattoos are not visible. He [father] thinks differently about women with tattoos. […] When I asked my brother that I was going to make a tattoo, he told me not to do that. […] He could not explain, and so I made them. I had my mother's consent, that was enough.
>
> *Alexandra, 23 years old, Tbilisi*

Alexandra's account reveals that there are different authorities within the family – mother, father, and brother. In this case, her mother's position enabled her to challenge her brother's and father's restrictions. 25-year-old Megi from Batumi is also restricted in terms of her appearance. She has 6 ear piercings – she had to get rid of most of them: "every time I visit Tbilisi, I make a piercing, I come back [to Batumi], and they make me remove it." Megi also challenges the restrictions – she pierces her ears every time she visits Tbilisi. However, she has to compromise as well and remove piercings when she returns to Batumi.

32-year-old Natia from Batumi says that her parents live outside the city [*Raionshi*] and when she visited them once, her mother asked her to cover her body because of her tattoos. She said no and went to take a stroll. Soon she discovered she would not be able to continue walking because of people's reactions: "I called my father, asked him to pick me up. He was so hurt, asked me what happened […] I have difficulties working with them. I told them that these things happen in Tbilisi, I am adjusted to it already, but he is not. He is still struggling."

Again, Natia's account shows that sometimes women control other women's behaviour. It reveals the different scales at which gender operates – family, broader social contexts, rural/urban spaces and how they navigate across and between them. It shows that Natia negotiated her appearance with her family members; however, she could not negotiate it with her parent's community. Natia also focuses on the differences of urban/rural spaces when she emphasises that such things "[even] happen in Tbilisi"; they probably would happen more often in rural areas.

It should be noted that women who were somehow engaged in formal activism, rarely spoke about such restrictions towards them at all. The reasons behind it may be different. On the one hand, they may have more tools to protest such restrictions; On the other hand, they are more likely to live alone or with flatmates (according to their accounts).

The participants' narratives show that another way to micro-regulate women's everyday lives (Stark, 2012) is to control their appearance. It is interesting that those elements of the appearance are controlled that are indirectly linked to women's sexual liberation. In this sense, controlling women's appearance is in fact controlling women's sexual lives. Moreover, it is favouring such manifestation of femininity that is dominant in the cultural context, i.e., modest, passive, traditional femininity.

5.3. Home as a site of violence

During the interviews, some of the participants spoke either about their own experiences of violence or similar experiences of their friends or women they knew. The experiences ranged from psychological to physical manifestations of violence. However, not only married women reported such cases, but single women as well. For example, Alexandra told me she experienced sexual violence from her partner – "he psychologically forced me to have sex with him", she said. Lile had an experience of stalking from her ex-boyfriend. She said he was constantly calling her and blackmailing her that he would hurt either himself or her. She got help from a professional to overcome the stress. She spoke about how afraid she was for her safety. Experiences of violence were more common than I expected it to be. In this section, I will concentrate on domestic violence the participants reported.

5.3.2. Domestic violence

Several women had an experience of domestic violence. Other participants told me about their friends'/acquaintances' experiences of violence. I gave them the contact information of several NGO's they could contact in such circumstances. I

reminded them that they could call the police; however, none of them wanted to report their cases to the police. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, domestic violence is often underreported in Georgia.

Sopho (26 years old), for example, tells me a story about her friend who is a young widow and is illegally deprived of liberty by her ex-husband's family. If she leaves the house, she is afraid they will take away her child. Keso (42 years old, Batumi) tells me about her sister, who was the victim of domestic violence for years and now her ex-husband is stalking and blackmailing her. After I asked her if she would like to report it to police, she says: "what will the police do? I do not want them to imprison a father of 5 children. [Reporting it to] police is not the way out. But I will do something." Keso's narrative is not a single case: women sometimes do not report cases of domestic violence. Public defender reports that "the low number of applications about domestic violence and violence against women in the regions remains problematic" (Public Defender of Georgia, 2018: 115). This report underlines a lack of sensitivity on the part of the law-enforcement officials and sometimes, offensive and ridiculing attitude of police officers towards the victims (ibid).

There were two women who spoke about their own experiences of domestic violence, and in the case of one participant disputes are already resolved. Tina is a young activist working in Batumi. At the beginning of the interview, I ask her for some demographic information about her marital status, and she tells me: "I do not have a family… Any kind of family". It turned out, she was a victim of violence every day, and not only her, "everyone was abusing everybody else".

> I was very shy […] I felt like an outcast. I could not get friends, I always thought I did not deserve anybody's kind attitude. […] violence from my family members lasted until I went to study in Tbilisi [she was living elsewhere]. […] I was living in poverty in a small room in my relative's house. […] I even applied to Social Service Agency[13] and asked them to support me financially, […] but they said no. Then I became a student and started another unhappy period in my life – my

[13] Social Service Agency offers social assistance to families who are registered in the unified database of socially vulnerable families. The agency examines and rates each family's needs for financial assistance and offers an allowance of approximately 20 pounds per person per month.

brother came to live in Tbilisi as well. […] Then we moved to live together […] He is also an abuser. He was controlling every part of my life – where I was going, how I was behaving, why I was out at night [she was working]. […] He was beating me most of the days. I called the police twice […] They came, but then went away and left me there… I had to move out of the flat.

Tina, 25 years old, Batumi

Tamta's problems are not yet resolved. She is a 29-year-old woman. She has two children and works in the service sector.

- I have a chronic illness, epilepsy. […] My mother-in-law used to provoke my husband, and he was hitting me. My husband is now in his own home, but we are back together already. He says he has improved, and everything will be different now. But now, I feel worse. I did not have epileptic episodes for seven years, and I have them now. […] My mother-in-law did not like me. But I did not bother her – never had an [epileptic] episode in front of her. I was working and everything, making money. […] She used to have fights with my husband. To tell you the truth, he was miserable and then he was hitting me [*khelit modioda*] because he did not know what to do. Then my older son saw it, and he was very stressed. […]
- *Do you want to go back to him?*
- I want my children to feel better.
- *What if you did not have children?*
- I do not know. I cannot say I do not love him. […] He is always with me when I do not feel good [in terms of health]. […] I do not know. Probably, I would go back with him. But I would live alone with him [without her mother-in-law].
- […]
- During one of the fights he hit my head; he pushed me. […] He is very aggressive sometimes. I do not know; sometimes I do not believe he changed. And his aggressive behaviour… It is like I am

> afraid of him. Sometimes I will do anything just to stop him from shouting.
>
> *Tamta, 29 years old, Batumi*

Manu notes that when violent behaviour happens, women sometimes cannot walk out of a violent relationship either due to economic dependence on the spouse, emotional motives, fear or religious beliefs (2014). Many of these reasons are important to Tamta, such as emotional motives (loving her husband and caring for her children), fear and economic dependence (this is not obvious from the above-given quote, but she told me that her family had financial difficulties). Victimisation of women relates to the victim's feelings of self-blame, that is reinforced by patriarchy.

In the patriarchal system, which I am referring to in this section, power is a central concept. Above I talked about women's subordination and men's dominance. It is crucial to establish that violence (in general) is a tool that men use to subordinate and control women. According to Emery (2011), there are three ways of establishing power: the attempted power, where the perpetrator tries to get power over the victim; the actual power, where the perpetrator has power over the victim; the achieved power, where the victim legitimates the perpetrator's power over her. Here Emery refers to the power concerning domestic violence (Emery, et al., 2017). In this theorisation, the perpetrator's motive to get power (i.e., the attempted power) is essential.

Two dominant views are trying to explain patriarchal relations in the family. Exchange theory explains that men exercise power over women, "because they can" (Gelles, 1983: 157 cited in Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2020), since the resources between men and women are unequally distributed. In this theory, violence is one of the expressions of gender power (Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2020). If women bring more resources to the relationship, they will be less likely to be the victims of violence. Another theory, the status incompatibility theory, perceives violence as the source of patriarchy and "as an instrument for its restoration when its operation is threatened." (Ibid 3). It means that women's emancipation in public domains disrupted traditional roles

within the household, leading to more violent behaviours. In this understanding, men use domestic violence to restore men's power over women when their superior position is threatened (ibid). For both of these approaches, violence is the most visible expression of such power. Also, both approaches see fear as one of the most important tools through which men are controlling women's behaviour – not every man is violent; knowing that some women are victims is itself a powerful way to control women's behaviour and such "creation of a culture of fear" enforces men's power over women (Yodanis, 2004: 658). Focusing on security and fear, Pain (2014) understands domestic violence as 'everyday terrorism' or 'intimate war' – Pain identifies that fear is a crucial component of both domestic violence and global terrorism.

As I already stated, men often subordinate women through violence, which is a source of patriarchy (Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff, 2020). Rodriguez-Menes & Safranoff (ibid) argue that violence happens when patriarchy's operation is threatened. The participants' accounts presented in this section show that men (either participants' captors, husbands or ex-husband) want to either establish or restore their power over women.

5.4. Home as a site of learning resistance

Generally, the participants are trying to create their own 'comfort zones' outside their home. 29-year-old Masho from Tbilisi says she finds it difficult to be in a situation when people joke about sexist or homophobic topics and found alternative space among her friends where she feels comfortable. When she wants to refer to a certain circle of friends, who are closer to her own beliefs, she uses the word "bubble"[14]. As many of the younger participants, she uses English terms because they are quite popular amongst the youth. They know English, and social media has its influences on them. She explains that "her bubble" is the most comfortable space for her:

> My 'bubble' comprises of people whose values are very close to mine. I am almost always in my 'bubble'. When I have to go outside my

[14] They use the English word without any Georgian equivalent.

> 'bubble', it is like a slap in the face; I suddenly remember what kind of country I am living in. I remember what happened on 13th of May, […] 17th of May[15].
>
> *Masho, 29 years old, Tbilisi*

Like Masho, other participants also seek for alternative social ties. However, there are many participants for whom domestic space is quite comfortable. Many of them note that they feel relaxed with her family. More importantly, they said that they never obeyed the dominant perspectives of femininity. 37-year-old Salome from Tbilisi, for example, says that she could never fit the standards of society (e.g. marrying young, having children at a young age):

> I could never fit into society's norms. "You have to marry when you're 25", "you have to have children", and "you have to work all day", and that is how your life ends. I never wanted this. […] Everyone who lived according to these norms around me was not a happy person. I wanted to travel, and I did everything for this.
>
> *Salome, 37 years old, Tbilisi*

Her account reveals that 'home' can sometimes be a space of alternative femininities which go beyond existing gender relations. Salome's account addresses Rezeanu's (2015) assumption that alternative domestic femininities are emerging, and that home can be a stage of displaying agency. It also speaks to Johnson & Robinson's (2007) theory that women in post-Soviet countries can have and manoeuvre alternative femininities.

Moreover, 'home' can serve as a site where cultures of resistance can be learned in two ways, as seen from the data. First is having examples of resistance at home. Several participants noted that in their family, they had the model of

[15] On the 17th of May 2013, religious (including clerics) and neo-Nazi groups attacked the representatives of the LGBT community who were marking International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia in Tbilisi.

strong women (either their grandmothers or mothers) and they learned how to be like them. 29-year-old Shorena from Kutaisi says:

> I was always a 'bad' granddaughter. I always protested something. I did not know anything about gender or feminism, but we are humans, and we understand, when we are mistreated. […] My grandmother was a matriarch; she was so strong. But she did not like me when I was going against something.
>
> *Shorena, 29 years old, Kutaisi*

She says that despite the fact that her grandmother did not like her to be disobedient, she still took example from her and 'went against something'. In this case, she went against the gender role of obedient, passive women and presented alternative gender role of a strong and disobedient woman. The second way that the participants focused on was through having opposite examples at home. For instance, 26-year-old Nato from Tbilisi realised that women and men were unequal to each other when she saw how equally the wife and the husband divided their domestic labour elsewhere: "I realised that this would never happen in my family. […] Such contrasts made me realise that gender inequality exists".

As Collins (2000) claimed, women could learn racial resistance strategies at home. Similarly, it can be said that some participants 'learned' at home how to negotiate or resist gender inequalities on the negative or positive examples of their family members. Moreover, it is a space where gender relations can be contested, challenged and negotiated (Blunt, 2005). The participants also talked about how they challenged and contested neotraditionalist gender roles that saw them as modest and passive (Amashukeli and Japaridze, 2018). In this sense, 'home' for the participants leaves space for their agency to develop alternative gender roles (Rezeanu, 2015).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted how 'home' can present and reproduce dominant gender relations that exist in certain context. The data shows that home presents and reproduces neotraditionalist gender relations that exist in Georgia. According to the participants' narratives, home reproduces neotraditionalist gender relations that perceives women as primarily caretakers. Some participants said that they were required to prioritise their domestic duties over other responsibilities, which is also characteristic of neotraditionalist gender order.

Home is not only loaded with positive feelings such as belonging, intimacy and safety; it is also loaded with negative experiences of oppression for women. As claimed in the first section of the chapter, in private patriarchy, men use different ways to regulate autonomy of women. The participants' narratives show that one way to do this is domestic violence. Another way to establish power over women is coercive control, namely, micro-regulation of women's everyday lives. The participants name three such micro-regulations: control over their sexual lives, control over their appearance and control over their everyday activities. The first two types of control are directly or indirectly linked to women's sexual lives and sexuality. Women's sexuality is restricted in Georgia, they are expected to be traditional and modest, and, consequently, at home, this gender role of women is reproduced.

However, home is not only a space that is loaded with positive or negative experiences. Some participants' accounts show that it is also a space where they can learn how to negotiate, contest or resist gender inequalities. Moreover, it also is a space where they can negotiate, contest, or resist dominant gender relations. If the dominant gender order in Georgia requires women to be obedient, passive and modest, then any different expressions of 'womanhood' means that they are developing alternative femininities. In this sense, 'home' for the participants leaves space for them to express agency.

Chapter 6. Gendered Experiences in Public Spaces

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I talked about how women experience 'home'. I stated that 'home' played an essential role in the formation of gender inequalities. It is true in the case of urban public spaces as well. In the chapter, I explore a range of activities women do in public places and multiple ways women inhabit them. Based on the participants' accounts, I show how women perceive and experience urban public space, and how their gendered identities influence or are influenced by the space. I argue that public spaces are paradoxical spaces – they both trap and exclude women; however, they also have the potential to be liberating.

This chapter is split into three main sections, which talk about women's experiences in urban public spaces such as the street, public/private transport and leisure spaces. I discuss these places because the participants focused on them, and I believe they are significant locations for gender construction and reconstruction.

There are many mechanisms that exclude or marginalise women in public space (e.g., violence, men 'taking up' space, the idea that women need to be protected (by men) in public, sexual harassment, etc.). These mechanisms reinforce gender inequality and emphasise women's subordinate position in other areas of social life (Pain, 1997). When employing these mechanisms, men demonstrate their power over women (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). Also, in this way, they refuse any agency or authority to women.

In this chapter, I will focus on gender microaggressions as one example of such mechanisms. Microaggressions are defined as “everyday verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities that communicate slights or insults to a targeted group” (Gartner & Sterszing, 2016: 494). Gender microaggressions comprise three subtypes, such as microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Ibid). Microassault refers to a microaggression that is sexual in nature, while microinsults and microinvalidations are not sexual in nature. Microinsults are rude and insensitive verbal or nonverbal communications that demean a person’s identity, while microinvalidations are communications that “exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person” (Sue, et al., 2007: 274). What is characteristic of microaggressions is that they can operate covertly, i.e., without "conscious awareness of the perpetrator, the victim, or both" (Ibid. p. 495). In this way, gender microaggressions mainly refer to gender role expectations and stereotypes. Like sexual harassment, they have a negative impact on women. The power of gender microaggression derives from the systems of influence and oppression.

6.1. Experiencing the street

As everyday spaces, streets are part of urban experiences for women. Since they are open spaces, they offer freedom of movement for women. Simultaneously, the streets are also dangerous places since they are connected to feelings of fear and danger.

6.1.1. Women’s presence on the street

The participants’ narratives sometimes showed that they were perceived by men in terms of their sexuality when walking in the city. The most radical illustration of this was men exposing themselves in the streets (mainly in underground passages and near the main entrances of the residential buildings). Other examples were catcalling and unwanted staring from men. 27 years old Barbare from Tbilisi says that she often feels men’s insistent look in the streets: “I make them understand I disapprove, but their looks do not change. [...] If I were with a boy, no one would do that.” Barbare implies that if she were with a man, he

would protect her, and the perpetrators would be afraid of that man (even if he did not intervene).

A more indirect illustration of this was the accounts of the participants who spoke about how their physical appearance was controlled on the streets. If the participants had tattoos, piercings, or other distinctive features on their bodies, they had distinct experiences of the streets. 32-year-old Natia from Tbilisi has many tattoos, and she says she is tired of strangers staring at her tattoos and commenting on them. It should be noted that such comments do not always come from men. This experience is also gendered – in Georgia, tattoos are considered to be inappropriate for women. The reason behind this is that women who have tattoos are not ‘modest’ enough. Similarly, 22-year-old Khatia from Batumi has been judged in the street because she smokes cigarettes in public. She says that if a woman smokes, she should hide it – they would never smoke in places where their family members would see them. As in the case of tattoos, smoking cigarettes is considered to be inappropriate for women, not for men though - having tattoos or smoking cigarettes is not per se considered inappropriate. Again, it is believed that women who smoke are not ‘modest’ enough.

The emphasis on modesty also derives from perceiving women in terms of their sexuality. The participants’ accounts show that by controlling women’s behaviour on the streets, men try to demonstrate their power over them and their use of public space (DelGreco, et al., 2020). However, as I said before, it is not only men who do this. The control is gendered but more by gendered understandings of what is appropriate to men and women and what certain appearances and behaviours indicate about sexuality and modesty.

28-year-old Shorena from Kutaisi expresses another type of experiences. She focuses on the experience of negative remarks in the streets because of her weight:

> I always thought that if I felt uncomfortable in public, either someone ridiculed me or stared at me, or something due to my weight and not because I am a woman. […] I remember it was summer and I was

> wearing a white top. I have pretty big breasts, and when I was walking, […] a group of boys started singing "do not hide your tits" [Georgian rock song].
>
> *Shorena, 28 years old, Kutaisi*

Shorena's account shows that she experienced microaggressions because of her weight. Her account also shows the above-mentioned control over women in public spaces. All three participants' experiences show that they are being looked at in urban spaces and the idea of 'male gaze' and gendered double standards are central to women's experiences. Comments about their appearance indicate that other people (both male and female) are making sexualised assumptions about women (being modest/being overly sexualised).

The participants' accounts show that, as Walby (1997) stated, men collectively control women's appearance and sexuality. This is linked to Tuncer's (2014) concept of domesticity. This conceptualisation claims that in the public space, female body and sexuality need to be domesticated (ibid) by the notion of modesty. Domesticity, she notes, is not only concerned with the private realm and does not solely keep women at home. The placement of women at home is only one element of domestication. Ideologies of domesticity define appropriate and inappropriate gender roles for both men and women. Thus, it is a system for the regulation of gender. Tuncer (2014) notes, to "domesticate" means to bring someone or something under control (and "at home", unsurprisingly). Domesticated women would be the carriers of culture and would reproduce the nation biologically and ideologically. However, even in such circumstances, the participants still 'smoked' in the streets or wore tattoos and piercings. It means that they still had possibilities to appropriate public space (Wilson, 1990).

6.1.2. Fear and (in)security on the street

It turned out that the participants felt fear and danger quite often when they were in the streets. According to the data, five main factors influence the existence of fear in the participants. The first element is moving across the city alone. The participants' accounts show that their fear is much stronger when

they are travelling alone. Younger interviewees, who enjoy a stroll once in a while, say they avoid doing it alone, and even if they have to go home by foot at night, they often look back to check if someone is following them. So, fear is about moving across public space alone.

Another element that influences women's feelings of fear is the location. It is not unexpected that women feel safer in their neighbourhoods – they feel more vulnerable in unknown places. 24-years-old Nato from Tbilisi tells me that if the uncomfortable situation arose in her block, she would count on other people living there, "I know many people there", she says, "I was born there, I was raised there." The literature on home shows that people's perception of home often extends beyond the boundaries of the flat/house where they live. Blunt and Dowling (2006) note that we must recognise the multi-scalarity of home. According to them, home is a social construct that extends beyond the household. It may include other areas such as neighbourhoods and suburbs. Moreover, domesticity, intimacy and belonging also extend beyond home (Ibid). However, fear is not only minimised in the participants' neighbourhoods. It is also minimised when they are in the city centre or in well-lit places (in addition to their neighbourhoods and housing blocks); in contrast, e.g., underground passages[16] are seen to be dangerous.

The third element that influences women's fear is the time component. It is considered to be vital in many studies by feminist geographers (Valentine, 1992b) as it is related to a much higher risk of danger. Darkness can provoke a sense of danger in women - poorly lit places may be a source of anxiety (Condon, 2007). However, Condon (ibid 104) notes that it is not only "lack of light that causes women to be apprehensive, but the social dimension of night". As Koskela (1999) puts it, people are afraid of 'the social night'.

The fourth element that influences women's fear is the existence of previous experiences of gendered microaggressions in such settings. For instance, 29 years old Dea from Kutaisi says that after an incident in the street when she was 19 years old (a man followed her from the University to her mother's workplace,

[16] Many participants talked about Heroes Square underground passage in Tbilisi, which has been considered dangerous for years now.

where she was heading; approached her, grabbed her arm, and told her he just got out of prison, and wanted to live with her), she was so afraid she was not able to walk home alone for a long time. Condon (2007) argues that women do not need to have such experiences to be afraid; fear is something that exists even in women who did not have such past experiences. This is because they know and have been taught that dangerous things can happen to women in public spaces. However, the data shows that previous experiences of sexism or gender-based violence are quite important.

The last element that influences women's fear is other women's experiences of gender inequality in such settings. Valentine (1992a) says that fear is likely to increase once the participants know a close friend, a family member, neighbour, or co-worker who has similar experiences of violence. 23-year-old Alexandra from Tbilisi says that she remembers when she was a teenager, her female family members were continually warning her about the possibility of violence if a girl was outside late. She assumes that these ideas in her family (in other families too) may have influenced her and other women’s feelings of fear. Several younger women showed similar attitudes towards being outside late. This illustrates how public space is learned and constructed. Valentine (1989) argues that every institution, the media, and even family and friends aim to persuade women that they are at risk of violent behaviour predominantly in public spaces, and if they want to stay safe, they should be in a private space instead.

6.1.3. Negotiating fear

However, as it is seen from the data, the participants want to stay safe and still use urban spaces such as the streets. One more time, I should mention that women's experiences are not homogenous, and they respond to feelings of fear differently. Some of them use ‘defensive’ strategies; others use ‘avoidance’ strategies - they avoid the places (where they experience fear) at once. The research revealed that even when the feeling of fear exists, it usually is not that strong to force the participants to refrain from moving across the city at night, which means that the participants hardly ever avoid the places associated with danger. Indeed, no participant told me that they stayed home all day; however,

some participants said they tried to avoid 'dangerous' places, especially at night and alone.

More often than that (i.e., using ‘avoidance’), the participants use ‘defensive’ strategies. Most of them told me they felt the need to take extra care when moving across the city alone, and they worked out specific techniques to feel safer. 23-years-old Alexandra from Tbilisi discusses some of her ‘defensive’ strategies. For example, she says that if she sees a man walking behind her in the street, she will stop and let him walk in front of her. Moreover, if she sees a man entering an elevator before her, she will try to hide to take the elevator alone after the stranger is gone. Alexandra even suggested that she tried to work out a ‘system of alarm’ – generally, using a GPS function or messaging someone on the phone. She explained this as follows:

> When I want to return home at night, more often, using a Taxi, all my friends, or the person who is with me, know the vehicle registration plate number. Even when I am already in the Taxi, I talk with them by phone, and in the end, I tell them I am already at home. It is vital for me that they know my route to have at least some degree of security.
>
> *Alexandra, 23 years old, Tbilisi*

Other participants also talked about such strategies. They did not explain their own ‘systems of alarm’ in such detail; however, many of them talked about ‘strategies’ such as having a charged mobile phone with them all the time; asking their friends to memorise the Taxi number that they use; telling their friend when and where they are going. Several such strategies were identified by the younger participants of the study.

While most participants talked about their feelings of fear while moving across the city, some of them said that they did not feel fear at all. Forty-one years old Salome from Tbilisi told me: “People have different experiences, and this one is not mine – I do not have any fear; this is not in my personality… I can protect myself”. Salome's account suggests that she, unlike other women, can protect herself, and that is why she does not have feelings of fear.

The younger participants talked about the feelings of fear and danger more often than older participants. In their accounts, older participants did not focus on this issue. This is because older women are not sexually assaulted as often as younger women (the same findings were in other research about sexual harassment (Janashia, 2018), and they tend to be less afraid. Older women are more 'invisible' to male gaze because not seen as sexually attractive. 62-years-old Lali from Kutaisi told me: "I am not in that age [that young] anymore to be afraid in my own city". Lali's account reveals two important aspects: Firstly, she suggests that young women tend to feel fear in the streets. With this sentence, she may be addressing sexual harassment only (though she did not say that) and implying that younger women are more often harassed in the streets. Secondly, she focuses on her 'own city'. With these words, Lali claims ownership of her city. She seems to feel that she has a right to feel safe in her city.

The participant's accounts about the streets show that they feel fear and insecurity in the streets, especially if they are alone at night on the unfamiliar streets. There is a link between women's fear of violence and their behaviour - Women have to "adjust their behaviour to their fear" (Condon, 2007: 103) to protect themselves (May, et al., 2010). That is why sometimes women take precautionary steps and use constrained behaviours. Generally speaking, constrained behaviours are either avoidant or defensive behaviours. Avoidance behaviour means avoiding certain places, events or activities (May, et al., 2010). Defensive behaviours refer to the tactics women use to reconcile their fears and moving about in public spaces, "i.e., taking precautions to avoid acts of violence or harassment in public places" (e.g. women carrying pepper spray) (Condon, 2007: 103). This means that routes that they take in the public space are not their autonomous choice; women negotiate fear and notions of social legitimacy and only then enter the public space (Raju & Lahiri-Dutt, 2011). Such decisions made by women "generate a different type of urban space" (Ibid 251).

The data shows that the participants use both avoidance behaviours and defensive behaviours as well in order to avoid acts of microaggressions in public spaces (Condon, 2007). However, it does not mean that the participants do not have positive experiences of the streets at all. Lali claims ownership of her city,

and it is an example that the city (and the streets) is charged with positive meanings for her.

6.2. Experiencing public/private means of transport

To understand how women access space(s) and move between them, it is important to see how they experience public and private means of transport. As in the case of the streets, they offer freedom of movement for women. However, at the same time, public/private means of transport can be connected with feelings of fear. For example, in Chapter 2 I mentioned that according to the study conducted in 2014 in Georgia, women often experience sexual harassment in public transports (Women's Information Center, 2014).

6.2.1. Public transport

Generally, using public transport is something that the participants do not enjoy because of its poorly arranged infrastructure, i.e., irregular schedule, unrepaired machines, and overcrowding. Nato (24 years old, Tbilisi) offers an insight into her experience of this:

> There is only one [means of public] transport that goes from my district to my workplace. […] [In order for me] to have a sitting place in the transport, either I have to get up very early or walk to the last stop. If I do not do this, I will be a victim of extreme crowding […] I always say that the morning is the time of the day which can psychologically destroy you and significantly impact your mood. Because you may encounter several problems: you have to explain to the bus driver every day that they cannot […] [overcrowd] the buses that much […]; Or maybe someone, I am talking about boys, sexually harasses you and gets too close to you […].
>
> *Nato, 24 years old, Tbilisi*

Here we see that Nato shares her general observation about public transport and stresses the general discomfort she experiences there. The worst situation in this regard, in her words, is in buses. Nato tries to explain this:

> It can be explained [differently], one of which is that in the district that I live in […] economic and social conditions are much lower than in the city centre and a larger population that live in the area use buses rather than [other types of public transports] because buses are cheaper. […] I just want to emphasise that the people are much more diverse here, in buses […], there are many people, and the environment is quite unpleasant, in terms of hygiene and crowdedness as well.
>
> *Nato, 24 years old, Tbilisi*

It should be noted that, like Nato, most of the participants seem to have some negative experiences in public/private means of transport. Here class also comes into perception: they talk about their experiences and sometimes recall gender microaggressions or other types of gender discrimination. Thus, if the participants have a choice, they usually choose to travel using private transport.

Most participants have some negative experiences when moving across the city – either by public transport or on foot. This section will focus on the participants' experiences of sexual microassaults in public and private transport. The fact that many participants called out certain behaviours but did not name them as sexual harassment is likely to reflect the fact that this is not a term commonly used in Georgia.

The participants talk about different manifestations of sexual microassaults. Some of them consider unwelcome touching to be one example of sexual microassaults, "I have experienced it a million times", notes Nino (30 years old, Tbilisi). Similarly, another participant says:

> It was three months ago in a subway. […] When I was getting off the train, someone slapped me on my bottom. When I turned around, I could not even see the face of the one who did it because this group

> of men standing nearby turned their backs on me, and then the door closed. […] I have another story from my school years, when a grown man touched me on my knee in a bus […] I was so humiliated, frightened, offended. When he got off the bus, I had a feeling that I survived a major incident".

Nato, 24 years old, Tbilisi

Nato adds that she does not like to tell this story; it gives her feelings of disgust (*zizghi*) and insecurity (*umtseoba*). Her account can be linked to other participants' accounts, where such feelings are pretty common. Another couple of examples of sexual microassaults, according to the accounts of the participants, are when a man is looking at them insistently; or when a man is following them from one place to another. Even if the participants do not have such experiences themselves, they still remember the stories about their acquaintances' experiences, and the knowledge of such stories make them take extra care when using public transport.

Moreover, their negative experiences somehow determine their current behaviour in evaluating situations before they use certain kinds of public transport. It implies that when the participants have such experiences, they usually are quite traumatised. In addition to that, the participants develop strategies to avoid future microaggressions.

As Nato explained during our follow-up situated interview (i.e. the second interview), when she gets on the bus or subway, she chooses a single seat near the window; when the single seat is not available, she prefers to sit next to a woman; when the seats are not available at all, she chooses a space where she wants to stand. Nato tells me in detail how she makes her choice and says that she feels safer when she knows how to avoid traumatic experiences. I visited one of the buses with her, the one she usually uses daily. The bus was crowded, and I asked Nato where she would stand if she were alone. She said she would stand by the window (so she could keep an eye on the situation on the bus). On another occasion, I took public transport with Alexandra – a subway, since she uses the subway more frequently than other modes of transport.

> We looked at the people standing in the subway – I asked her if she thought that women in this subway were taking extra care to minimise the chances of sexual harassment. She indicated one of the women sitting in the corner. She said that probably she would also sit in the corner with her headphones on and avoid sitting between two people.

Fieldnotes (the follow-up situated interview[17] *with Alexandra), 16.01.2018*

What Alexandra says here is an example of 'confidence in her social competence' (Koskela, 2004). She interprets who and what is dangerous. She 'acts as an expert in urban semiotics', and her expertise is intuitive (ibid). Both Alexandra and Nato take extra care when entering public transport and evaluate the situation to avoid unwanted touching. Fifty-three years old Tekla from Tbilisi told me that women always had such techniques; however, not all were productive. She explained that women are traditionally expected to take a back seat in a Taxi or public transport. If they take a front seat near the driver, it is interpreted as if they give 'sexual signals' to the driver: "It is an old, very old way to defend yourself. Furthermore, it is quite an insulting practice." Although Tekla did not elaborate further on what specifically she found insulting, she was angry that this practice implied that women are either modest or 'sexually available'; furthermore, they are categorised based on where they sit. Tekla's account shows that women could try to minimise the risk of sexual microassaults by using the back seats instead, but, at the same time, they would reinforce gender stereotypes and gender inequality. Such practice would reproduce gender regimes and ideologies that are already in society. It would establish that 'modest' women take the back seats. Although taking the front seat would be a risky but transgressive practice of (re)claiming the space.

In contrast to such practices, she proposes another one, which applies to travel using a Taxi – she says she uses the Taxi companies 'Taxify'[18] to be sure her

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[17] The quotes that are parts of follow-up situated interviews are indicated throughout the empirical chapters. If the quotes do not have this indication, it means that they are from the initial interviews.
[18] Taxify is like Uber. It should be noted that, unlike Uber that has been involved in several cases of sexual harassment, 'Taxify' does not have such reputation.

safety is guaranteed, and she can complain to the company in case of any disturbances. Tekla is talking about a mode of transport which is, usually, a more expensive mean of transportation than buses, subways and other Taxi companies in Georgia (e.g., Yandex). The strategy she uses here cannot be used on public transport. These practices show that women need to spend time and energy working out how to navigate public spaces safely. Their freedom to use specific modes of transport is constrained. Sometimes they prefer to choose more expensive options to feel safe if they have the financial means for that.

The participants' accounts indicate that in public transport, through gender microaggressions men demonstrate their power over women (Chaudoir & Quinn, 2010). In this sense, Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi are cities that control the participants and emphasise their subordinate position in other areas of life as well (Pain, 1997).

6.2.2. Private transport

In this subsection, I am moving on from public transport. As illustrated in the previous subsection, one way to avoid many challenges public transport poses for women is to drive a car if they can afford it. This brings new experiences of gender discrimination, which may not be about sexual microassaults but still produce difficult and negative experiences that women have to navigate and respond to.

In the context of moving between spaces, women talk about their experiences of driving a car and using auto centres. The undertone of women drivers' conversation with me was that they were trying to challenge the notion that 'women are bad drivers'. Salome has been driving for 18 years, and she says she heard insulting comments many times. She tells me that every time she is parking, someone (usually a man) always comes and tries to help her. She feels the inequality in small details, such as honking at her car or staring at her. Another participant, who has been driving for 15 years, recalls similar cases when men suggested to her that she should put a sticker on a car saying, "Beware, woman driver."

The participants who have private vehicles often complain about inequality and gender stereotyping in Auto Service Centres. They have an experience when the staff in such centres either will lie to them or make them pay more than they should. Ia says she sometimes feels that the mechanic is looking at her with irony, implying a woman would not know what is wrong with a car. The participants say that in such cases, they feel offended and try to avoid such situations. Several participants told me they stopped taking their cars to Auto Service Centres, and either their husbands or other male members of their family do it. Ia found another solution – she took out a contract with one particular Auto-service, and she feels it will help her feel respected. Another participant, Elene, who is 29 years old and lives in Tbilisi, also talked about her negative experiences in Auto Service Centres during our follow-up situated interview. I spent some time with her in one of such centres and wrote in my diary:

> During our small conversation [in her car], she told me with laughter that she did not have any expectations and did not know whether her experience would be as bad as in the previous times. I must say it was not that bad; however, certain things caught our attention (primarily, hers, to be fair). When she stopped the car, the driver of another car was afraid she would hit his car and started shouting from a distance. Fortunately, we did not hit him (and honestly, I did not see any risk).
>
> *Fieldnotes (the follow-up situated interview with Elene), 10.12.2018*

This example shows how much discomfort women can have in such situations and how spaces can be gendered, even when talking about a specific place such as Auto service centres. Here, as in other examples above, power relations between women and men are manifested in social interactions. The participants' accounts show that in private transport, similarly to the public transport, through gender microaggressions men demonstrate their power over women.

6.3. Experiencing leisure spaces

Before describing and analysing women's experiences in each leisure space in detail, I will briefly talk about the everyday leisure spaces for the participants. When I asked them about their regular day, their responses varied considerably according to their age. Younger participants tend to have more leisure time and time for themselves – after their working day was over. Older participants had entirely different schedules than younger participants – if employed, after work, they would usually return home; if not, they would spend more time at home. The variation exists between married and single participants as well. The participants who had partners and/or children had less free time and opportunities to do leisure activities.

The participants from Tbilisi tend to be less critical about the leisure spaces in the city. However, the participants from Batumi and Kutaisi have difficulties in finding the leisure activities that are interesting for them. These cities are smaller and have few opportunities in comparison to Tbilisi. The participants from Kutaisi were able to identify several places (Including McDonald's' café and cinema and theatre in Kutaisi) where they can spend their free time. What is typical for Batumi, though, is that there are a lot of green spaces. Because of its small scale, the participants often go for a walk and spend their free time in parks.

6.3.1. Experiencing indoor leisure spaces

When talking about indoor leisure spaces, I mean commercial places that can be used for leisure purposes, specifically, cafes, restaurants, bars, and clubs. Cafes are quite comfortable places for the participants. Almost all younger participants talk about visiting cafes with their friends regularly. Even in the case of married women, 22-year-old Khatia from Batumi notes, it is an important place – they meet their friends, drink coffee and smoke cigarettes in secret (since they cannot let their families know that they smoke) and forget about their families for a while. Almost all participants note that they enjoy being in the cafes with their friends. Khatia’s and other women’s accounts show that cafes can be liberating for them. What is seen from Khatia’s account is that she

'escapes' domestic space (Wilson, 1990). Moreover, Batumi offers Khatia anonymity as well (McDowell, 1999), i.e., a chance to smoke cigarettes, since she cannot do so at home. It is interesting that the participants spoke positively most often about cafes. Some of them (especially younger participants) spoke positively of bars and clubs as well.

However, bars, for example, are disturbing for Khatia. She says that she does not like when men flirt with them in bars (especially if they are drunk). On such occasions, she says, she is not having a good time. Some other participants had the same attitudes towards bars. Clubs became popular in Georgia in the last decade; however, as it turns out, some younger participants are not fond of them at all, as they say, they prefer cosier places than clubs:

> I do not like noisy clubs; sometimes I go there because my friends *[she did not specify the gender of her friends]* like to be there […] I like different kind of relaxation, more *salon*-like relaxation […] in cafes with good music, smiling people, interesting people.
>
> *Inga, 35 years old, Tbilisi*

35-year-old Tekla from Tbilisi speaks about the practice when the waiting staff gives a receipt to a man when friends are meeting each other or when there is a couple at the table. This practice exists in both cafes and restaurants, as Tekla observes. This practice is quite common in Georgia; however, people do not pay much attention to it. Tekla's account reveals that women encounter assumptions about their economic (and later physical) dependence on men in these leisure spaces. The assumption behind this is that men have more economic capital, and by paying the check, they should take care of their female friends.

Now, certain places are not that comfortable for several participants, and these are restaurants. Some of the participants use avoidant behaviours in relation to them – they themselves restrict their mobility in such spaces (Stanko, 1990). Restaurant in Georgia can be of two types – either its meaning is the same as in the rest of Europe, or it may signify a more traditional ['*Qalaqur*i *restorani'*][19]

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[19] Both traditional and non-traditional restaurants are called 'restorani' in Georgian.

establishment, where Georgians celebrate different things such as family celebrations, birthdays, etc. In such traditional restaurants, usually, Georgian feasts *[Supra]* take place. It is a traditionalised feast characterised by ritualised drinking and eating (Kevin, 2005, and Manning, 2007). Supra's gendered nature is well documented (Linderman, 2011), where the supra reproduces and challenges gender divisions. Linderman (ibidL 33) argues that a man on the supra is in control of public discourse: "thus only their speech is heard and reproduced; only the men have the right to speak". Linderman admits that on the informal level, everyone can speak; however, only men are allowed to speak on the formal level: Supra usually has a *Tamada* (usually a man), who is the head of the supra. He makes toasts, and others listen. The Supra is usually held either in *Qalaquri* restaurants or in private settings (at home).

When the participants started mentioning that they would not visit *Qalaquri* restaurants, they did not only mention its general characteristics (e.g., noisiness). They emphasised its gendered nature; however, they did not speak about the gendered nature of Supra discussed in the literature. They underlined another characteristic of it: how every feast would result in conflict between men. This is also because of the gendered nature of supra, specifically, because of men's control of public discourse not only in terms of speech but in terms of behaviour as well.

There is another characteristic of Supra that the participants talk about. Sopho, for example, remembers a time when she was in a restaurant with her friends (including her male friends); on the nearby table, several men were drinking and being very loud. In this case, she could not say something to them because it would be disrespectful of her male friends who were also present in a restaurant. She implies that if someone wanted to say anything to strangers, it should have been her male friends and not her: it would be a cultural expectation. Similarly, Tekla mentions that her male friends always feel responsible for standing by her whenever she is dancing to protect her if something happens (i.e., if someone flirts with her). Tekla says they feel the need to protect all their female friends, and it makes her feel unequal to men: "it is not that they think ill of me, they do it because they care. However, it makes me feel strange".

To understand the two accounts above, it is significant to note that fathers, brothers, and other male members of the family are authoritative figures in Georgia. They can police the behaviours of female family members. If male family members are not around, then the responsibility of policing women's behaviour lies on male friends. One of the crucial findings of this study is that men are often the 'protectors' of women. Young (2003) argues that the logic of masculinist protection is associated with ideas of chivalry – when a "good" man watches over the safety of the family. The protector man should be alert all the time and be ready to protect their loved ones. Young (ibid) claims that it may seem that the 'protector man' is qualitatively different from the 'dominant man', i.e., a man who wants to master women sexually for their own pleasure (in this case, they bond with other men and exclude women). However, masculinist protection also derives from "the subordinate relation of those in the protected position" (Ibid.: 4). In return for protection, women give up their decision-making autonomy and all the important decisions are made by the head of the household (i.e., a man). Moreover, the protector can control the lives of those he protects. In this model, Young suggests, the woman "happily defers to his judgment" (Ibid.: 5) and adores him since he grants her protection. Both these models (i.e., 'the dominant man' and 'the protector man') illustrate that in patriarchal gender relations, women and men have unequal power relations. However, Young suggests that in the first example ('the dominant man'), patriarchal power is obvious, and in the other ('the protector man') "it is more masked by virtue and love" (Ibid.: 5). Here the power is more 'gentle' and 'caring'.

Consequently, if a man is a 'protector', he should protect not only his family but also people who need protection (in their perception), i.e., women. The participants talked a lot about how their male friends/acquaintances are trying to protect them in different contexts. That is why sometimes the participants talk about how men tried to 'protect' them from other men. It should also be noted that the participants often did not like the 'protector' status of their friends and acquaintances.

The vision of man as a protector aligns with the wider social norms about gender in contemporary Georgia. As I mentioned several times, neotraditional gender

ideology favours traditional gender roles when women are subordinate and associated with private space. In this predisposition, men are responsible for controlling women's access and use of the public space using various means, including 'protection' of women's bodies, behaviour and honour.

The participants' accounts show that, despite microaggressions, women have more liberating experiences of spaces such as cafes, bars, and clubs. It does not mean that they "escape from male dominance" (McDowell, 1999: 259), but these places are enjoyable for them. On the other hand, the participants experience quite formally gendered spaces (i.e., *Qalaquri* restaurants) differently. However, even in this case, women do not speak about feelings of fear and insecurity. Usually, the participants go there in groups (usually with friends), and it is less common for women to experience microaggressions when in a group.

Linda McDowell (1999) argues that semi-public spaces, such as department stores (in the Anglo-American context), created a place where women would be able to escape from domesticity and male control. This trend was observed from the 19th century, and it was linked to the rise of institutions of consumption (Preston & Ustundag, 2004). If we look at the history of capitalism and consumerism in Western cultures, this development becomes easy to explain. There was no similar trend in Georgia. The country had a post-socialist past, where only the socialised space was free of control (Oswald & Voronkov, 2004). Perhaps, positive experiences of cafes mirror this past socio-political context of Georgia, just like the positive experiences of department stores in the West mirror the socio-political context of the Western countries.

6.3.2. Experiencing outdoor leisure spaces

This subsection focuses on outdoor leisure spaces or green spaces, specifically, parks and squares. There are several large parks in Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi. As already mentioned above, women sometimes go there with their children or their friends. However, the younger generation also meets up in parks. Mostly, they have positive experiences in parks. Especially if they live close to the green spaces, they often go there.

However, everything changes if a participant is outside at night and her behaviour is unacceptable (i.e., she is drinking, smoking, etc.). For example, Barbare (27 years old, Tbilisi) visits outdoor leisure spaces quite often. She says that sometimes when it is late night, and she is with her friends and drinks wine, boys or men almost always invades the space and asks if he can participate in the conversation:

> Once I was out in a park at night with my friend. […] We were drinking wine. […] Several boys were hanging around nearby. When they saw fewer and fewer people around, they came and told us they wanted to take part in our conversation. We refused. Then they brought a chair and put it in front of us […] they were trying to be polite. […] They said they were living nearby and just wanted to become acquainted with us. […] But they did not leave. When we told them they were disturbing us, they […] said it was their park and their block. […] In the end, we had to leave the space. We felt helpless and frustrated that we had to leave.
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> *Barbare, 27 years old, Tbilisi*

Another significant element that can be seen in Barbare's story is that she tells how the perpetrators tried to establish control on 'their park and their block.' It is a case of men not accepting rejection and claiming a greater right to the park so they can force their presence on Barbare and her friends.

Another example of how men express their power is through language and, as it was mentioned earlier, through gender microaggressions. For example, there is Vaso Godziashvili's Red Garden (which is called 'bliadskii parki' in slang, in Russian, meaning 'the park of the prostitutes') in the central part of Tbilisi. Tekla says that if a girl is in that park, she is automatically ridiculed by men because they assume she is a sex worker or 'up for it' because of where she is. She remembers a case when she was walking in the park, and several cars stopped and called her. In this example, the gender microaggression derives from the activation of a cultural stereotype that 'bliadskii parki' is occupied by women whose behaviour is not socially acceptable.

The participants' accounts show that they do not envision outside leisure spaces as 'liberating' as they used to see inside leisure spaces. They still are quite cautious of their surroundings: they think about the time of the day and who is with them. Barbare’s account shows us that the participants still try to ‘control’ the public space. I.e., the fact that Barbare was drinking wine in the park at night with her friend shows that she was (re)making the urban space through this strategy and appropriating it. However, it did not end well – men established control over the space and excluded them.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have highlighted how gendered relations are manifested in different public and semi-public spaces. I have singled out different spaces – the street, the public and private transport, and leisure spaces. The data revealed that the participants experience the urban public space in terms of both control and liberation.

Valentine (1989) establishes that women are not able to enjoy independence and freedom in public space because they do not feel safe. As a result, women have restrictions while use public space, especially at night or in the circumstances when they feel unsafe. Consequently, they are encouraged to stay at home. Patriarchy is maintained by this cycle of fear; Thus, “women’s inhibited use and occupation of public space is […] a spatial expression of patriarchy” (Valentine, 1989: 389).

I stressed the significance of patriarchy in the previous chapter when talking about home and patriarchal relations at home. It should be noted that patriarchy plays an important role when talking about public spaces as well. McDowell (1999: 38) says that in feminist scholarship, patriarchy is understood as a system where men as a group are superior to women as a group and "assumed to have authority over them". She argues that patriarchy is enforced through several ways, such as through the legal system or everyday attitudes and behaviours (ibid). Public space (or what Walby calls a public regime) is dominated by public patriarchal relations (Walby, 1997). In Walby’s (ibid) definition, public

patriarchy does not exclude women from public space but segregates and subordinates them within the structures of paid employment, the state, culture, sexuality and violence. She continues that in domestic space, men individually (husbands, fathers, brothers, etc.) control women, but in public space - collectively (Ibid). However, it does not mean that in this process women do not have agency - they still are able to subvert patriarchal relations to some extent (McDowell, 1999).

The participants experienced control in urban public spaces through gender microaggressions. Men used verbal and non-verbal cues to demonstrate their power over women. This was visible in the participants' experiences on the street and public/private transport. Moreover, some participants experienced fear and insecurity in urban public spaces (namely, the streets). In such cases, they had to "adjust their behaviour to their fear" (Condon, 2007: 103) and take steps to avoid acts of microaggressions. This illustrate that women need to spend time and energy to work out how to navigate public spaces safely. They need to come up with strategies to minimise danger. They have to interpret the social environment and establish which situations are dangerous and which are not. In this way, women are 'experts in urban semiotics' since they know how to read the urban scene (Koskela, 2004). As Koskela (ibid 261) states, "women read signals from the eyes and looks of other people, from their gesture, from the movements of their bodies, and from their fashion and style". Koskela (ibid) interprets this semiotic expertise of women as their spatial confidence. The participants of this study illustrated this 'semiotic expertise' on multiple occasions, specifically, when they talked about their use of 'defensive' and 'avoidance' strategies.

The participants' experiences were not only negative. They had more liberating experiences of spaces such as cafes, bars, and clubs. This illustrates that urban public spaces are paradoxical spaces (Rose, 1993): women are trapped within oppressive spaces and excluded from them. However, they have the potential to challenge these spaces, i.e., they have emancipatory potential for them. How the emancipatory potential of spaces are used by the participants will be examined in the next chapter.

Chapter 7. Responding to Gender Inequalities

Introduction

The current chapter examines how women respond to gender inequalities in their everyday lives in Georgia. Mainly, it looks at how women explicitly or implicitly react to the behaviours they previously identified as discriminatory. The previous chapters focused on the investigation of experiences of gender inequality in different spaces such as home and urban public spaces. They illustrated the ways in which such spaces, on the one hand, reproduce existing power relations and, on the other hand, serve as a site of expressing women's femininities and agency.

This chapter will continue to explore debates around agency and power. I will look at how women exercise their agency when they respond to gender inequalities in their everyday lives and how it relates to dominant power relations. I will argue that the participants in their everyday acts of resistance exercise some degree of agency, even when their behaviour would appear passive. Even when the participants do not use acts of resistance, they still exercise agency and try to negotiate gender inequalities. These arguments will be rooted in my analysis of the participants' accounts.

In the previous chapters, I discussed how patriarchal power relations dominated both domestic and non-domestic spaces. I established that patriarchy often subordinates women through discrimination, control, and exploitation. According to McDowell (1999), patriarchy is enforced through everyday attitudes and behaviours; women usually respond to such attitudes and behaviours. It means that women have agency in this process, and they have the possibilities to negotiate or subvert patriarchal relations (ibid). If there is power, there is “the possibility of struggle, resistance, recalcitrance, negotiation, and renegotiation” (Wearing, 1990: 42). In this chapter, I will focus on the range of acts that show that women negotiate, manage, or even conform to gender inequality. The

chapter comprises of two parts. The first part explores women's repertoires of everyday resistance in domestic settings, i.e., at home. The second part explores their strategies in urban public spaces.

7.1. Responding to gender inequality at home

In this section, I will address women's responses to gender inequality in domestic space. Here I will examine how women responded to gender inequality at home when interacting with their family members. In Chapter 5, I illustrated that home can be a comfortable place for women to express their agency; but it can also be a space that restricts and controls their behaviour. I focused on the participants' perception of gender inequality and explored their experiences. In this section, I will talk about how women respond to patriarchal attitudes and behaviours.

The participants mainly focused on the three strategies that they employ to respond to gender inequality in domestic spaces: responding with silence, raising objections, and asserting agency over their bodies. It should be noted here that these techniques are not mutually exclusive; they can be employed simultaneously. These are everyday repertoires that women deploy when they respond to gender inequality. In the second part of the section, I will discuss how women respond to gender-based violence.

7.1.1. Responding with silence

The role and meaning of 'silence' in terms of resistance are part of debates about everyday resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). To some extent, it can be a form of resistance; e.g., Pickering (2000) argues that women were resistant in Northern Ireland when they remained silent during police raids. In this example women refused to answer police questions. However, in other cases, not silence, but breaking silence is a form of resistance, and silence is considered a form of conformity, where the actors do not exercise a degree of agency. This shows that the contexts of silence and and the dominant behaviours and demands it confronts are very important.

Only a few participants talked about their inability to respond to the experiences of gender inequality in domestic spaces. In most cases, the participants were able to resist using various repertoires. When using the word 'silence' here, I mean the situation in which the participants did not respond to gender microaggressions – they disagreed with it but did not explicitly challenge it.

37-year-old Sesili from Tbilisi, for example, says that both her brothers inherited property from their parents, and she did not inherit anything:

> I did not resist it; I thought it would bring shame on my family. […] How could I confront my own brothers? Probably, they should have said something themselves. […] This is a widespread problem. That is why women cannot divorce their husbands; that is why they stay in a violent relationship. Because they do not have anything, where will they go?
>
> *Sesili, 37 years old, Tbilisi*

Sesili says that women often do not inherit money or property from their parents and are economically dependent on their husbands. This touches on the broader issue of women being financially dependent on men in a patriarchal society. As it was mentioned in Chapter 2, women are economically unequal to men in contemporary Georgia. However, not all families have property to pass on through inheritance to their (male) children. This shows that not only gender but class inequalities are also at play here. When I interviewed Sesili, she was living alone in a rented apartment in Tbilisi. She told me she wanted to live alone and had enough income to make it possible. What is important here is that Sesili herself was not able to confront such inequality. She thought confrontation with her siblings would be inappropriate; it would "bring shame on her family". With this point, she implied that it is not acceptable for a woman to have disputes with her brothers about property not only because of internal family relations but also because of public appearances of the family.

Other participants had similar experiences. 30-year-old Gvantsa from Tbilisi says that her brother inherited the family property, and she does not have any rights

in relation to the apartment. She does not live in that apartment anymore; she lives separately with her husband and a child in a rented apartment.

> I can go and take this case to court, but I won't do it because he is my brother, and he was raised knowing that it was his home. He did not do anything to secure himself another apartment. […] If I decide to live there, no one will kick me out, but I won't. Do you see what I mean? It is some kind of unspoken cultural phenomenon.
>
> *Gvantsa, 30 years old, Tbilisi*

40-year-old Tamar, for example, says that her neighbour is often violent towards his wife. She adds that she tried to threaten him and tell him she will call the police if such a thing happens again, but she did not: "I am not able to do that, because he will guess that I did it and I will have problems. And I feel powerless [..], and I am always afraid what if something worse will happen and I will blame myself for not calling the police." Tamar is concerned that if she calls the police, her social well-being will be at risk. It can be seen that the participants do not only make decisions of reporting the cases to the police based on whether they trust the institution or not. They also make decisions based on the potential consequences it might have on their lives.

Gvantsa's, Sesili's and Tamar's responses are similar to each other. It is as if they have a choice between maintaining good relations with their family members and pressing for a share of family property, and they choose good relationships with their family members. Sesili's and Gvantsa's accounts show that other types of responses than silence for them were not available – if they had chosen other types of response, they would have suffered consequences ('bringing shame on her family'). Consequently, they 'made their life more liveable' by staying silent. In this sense, they both exercised some degree of agency. However, according to Johansson and Vinthagen (2019), everyday acts of resistance destabilise the gendered norms. In this case, Sesili's and Gvantsa's silence did not destabilise them, and because of this their silence cannot be considered a resistance.

7.1.2. Raising objections

It is essential that the participants mainly talk about two kinds of behaviour in relation to responding to gender microaggressions: ‘raising objections’ [*gaprotesteba*] and entering into conflict [*konfliqtshi shesvla*]. In their narratives, 'raising objections’, unlike 'entering into conflict', is a relatively positive trait for the participants. It should be noted that the participants felt safer to 'raise objections' in domestic spaces and among their friends, not with strangers. However, this does not apply to all participants.

Inga, who is 35 years old and lives in Tbilisi, says that her father was always against her working at the Ministries of Defence, Security, or Internal Affairs of Georgia since he considered it was inappropriate for a woman to work in such places. These spaces were too ‘masculine’ for him. She raised her objections and told him that he did not have the right to tell her what to do and accepted the job. Inga says their argument had a positive outcome as her father stopped pressuring her not to take the job. Later, Inga started working at one of these Ministries of Georgia.

Inga's account shows that she resisted the gender norms that her father articulated. She destabilised power by 'talking back' to her father. Moreover, her act of resistance had a positive outcome. However, resistance does not have to have a particular effect or outcome. It is sufficient for it to have the potential to undermine power (Johansson and Vinthagen, 2019).

As I said before, ‘raising objection’ can sometimes be considered an empowering act. Some participants underlined that they were trying to be extra cautious when 'raising objections' about something to their family members: "I do not want to hurt them", 29-year-old Elene from Tbilisi says, "I know they do not mean to do any harm and I understand they are themselves victims of the society. I am therefore more tolerant with them." Similarly, Khatia (22 years old, Batumi) says that when her father says that women cannot drive or her grandmother says women cannot be politicians, she always tries to challenge them; however, she adds: "I do not want to be too aggressive. I acknowledge

that it is complicated to change their mentality now. I always try to 'convert' them, though."

Raising objection is not always considered a positive act. Many participants, as noted above, distinguish between 'raising objections' and 'entering into conflict'. While they talk about 'raising objections', they often note that it does not mean they would enter into an argument. It is as if they are clarifying that raising objections does not mean being ‘too aggressive’. It means that women are permitted to 'raise objections' to some extent; however, 'radical objections' are still considered inappropriate for women. This is interlinked with the gendered expectations about women’s role in the family in Georgia. According to Sumbadze (2006), women can express power in families; however, the power should not be openly manifested.

26-years-old Sopho from Tbilisi, for instance, says her brothers did not let her wear skinny trousers: "I still pay attention to what I wear. It is not because I am afraid. […] I just do not want to enter into conflict and have arguments. […] It does not mean I cannot start a fight; I can." A similar trend can be seen in 25-year-old Megi's account, who lives in Batumi. She says that she is not an argumentative person and prefers to avoid conflicts:

> It is not that I do not resist anything; I just avoid conflicts. When I understand that someone does not like what I say, I cannot argue with strangers. I argue only with people who are close to me and whom I care about. […] I do not know why I have such a strategy. I do not think I am a coward. Maybe I am afraid of things… I don't know. Batumi is such a small city; everyone knows each other. I avoid conflicts; that is what I do.
>
> *Megi, 25 years old, Batumi*

With her account, Megi illustrates that she uses different strategies to challenge gender inequality in different spaces. Another critical point Megi makes is that her choice of techniques is also determined by her living conditions – when she talks about Batumi, she notes that she cannot afford to have conflicts with other

people because it is a small city where everyone knows each other. This shows that different aspects of women's lives (their experiences and the context in which they experience microaggressions) shape their responses.

36-year-old Tatia had been abducted twice by the same person when she was 18 years old. Marriage by abduction was quite common in Georgia until the 2000s. The man abducted her so she would be forced to marry him because, according to the 'honour' code, she would be considered no longer sexually pure[20]. This practice is now illegal (it was illegal during the Soviet Union as well) and does not happen that often anymore[21]. When Tatia was abducted the first time, she escaped easily. The second time, she said, neighbours were involved in her abduction, and it was more difficult to escape: the perpetrator locked her in a room and did not let her out for a day. She was begging and crying for help. She says with laughter that they even gave her jewellery for a wedding and prepared a *supra* to celebrate the wedding. Her family attended the *supra* (except her mother, who was so stressed, she did not attend). It means that her father considered her a married woman (i.e., he pressurised her to stay married after the abduction).

> He [the perpetrator] assumed he was not doing anything wrong; he just wanted to get married. [...] When they [her family members] came, nobody asked me if I wanted to stay and be his wife. It was the biggest frustration in my life. [...] I always thought that my father would protect and support me. I always loved him more than my mother [...], but he did not [protect me]. Everything collapsed around me that day. [...] If he just once shouted at them and took me with him, I would not be forced to come up with [her plan to escape] [...] I told my father I would stay there and get married. [...] Then next morning I told him [the perpetrator], I wanted to see my mom. [...] When I visited her, I told

[20] It was practised in the following way: men either alone or with their friends abducted a woman and took her to their parental homes. After that, it was considered that they were married. In most of the cases, women were raped that night. It is difficult to say how many women were victims of this practice in Georgia because there are no official statistics regarding this.

[21] According to the Annual Report of the Public Defender of Georgia, the problem of marriage by abduction is still unsolved in the regions populated by ethnic minorities (Public Defender of Georgia, 2018).

her I did not want to stay there [at her perpetrator's house]. I said, "I came here, mom, and I will not leave anymore". […]

Tatia, 36 years old, Batumi

She stayed at her parents' home; however, nobody approved of her behaviour. Tatia had to come up with a plan to escape her perpetrator and return home. Escaping was a resistant act she used; moreover, it was probably the one available option she had. Her mother did not attend the formal 'engagement event', and with this behaviour, she also expressed her disapproval of the abduction and resisted the gender-based violence.

Tatia did not report this crime to the police. As I mentioned in the previous chapters, women rarely report violent or illegal behaviour to the police. Some participants of the study were victims of gender-based violence, and they refused to report crimes to the police. The critical point here is that some participants distinguish family and private matters (i.e., the private space) from public matters (i.e., the justice system in this case). For example, 42-year-old Keso from Batumi shared her family's history of violence with me. She said her brother-in-law was violent towards her sister.

- I am a strong woman. Maybe not that strong physically, but my mind and tongue are pretty sharp. I became ruthless when I realised, he was physically violent [towards my sister]. […] I do not let him enter our house [the participant and her sister are living together], they are separated for several days now, but he comes every day near our apartment.
- Did you call the police?
- We do not have any protection from them. […] We did not get any support from anyone who could support us, not even from the church. […] not from the relatives, they refused to intervene in the family matters. When I talked to the police, I understood they just wanted to arrest the guy – arresting him is not a solution; this guy is ill. […] I will not protect my family from him through the police. […]

> in Georgia, the human being is not protected […] my sister is not protected […], but I'll think of something.
>
> *Keso, 42 years old, Batumi*

I asked Keso what could have been done instead of calling the police, and she was not sure. Keso's narrative shows that women balance various experiences, values, and relationships before making decisions about their resistance strategies. In this sense, women have to get 'creative' as suggested by de Certeau (1984) and come up with resistance strategies that will, on the one hand, effectively oppose the existing power relations and, on the other hand, make women's lives more liveable.

This one more time shows that the participants choose their repertoires from the available options they have in relation to the type of power they are resisting. The participants are balancing in domestic settings a variety of values and consequences of their choices. They can, to some extent, 'raise objections,' but they still are not 'talking back' to their family members (at least not as bell hooks uses this concept). The main difference between these two concepts is that 'talking back' implies speaking to someone *as if* they are your equal when, in fact, they are authority figures; 'raising objections' does not have the same connotation; it implies that you oppose the authority figure while staying in an unequal situation. However, 'raising objections' still challenges gender norms and expectations.

In some accounts of the participants, 'raising objections' is framed as 'expressing their opinions', especially in older participants. When the participants recalled their experiences of gender inequality in the domestic space, most of them said that they expressed their views. 49-year-old Irma, who lives in Tbilisi, and about whom I talked in the Chapter 5, said that she used to 'obey' her husband and her family members. However, now she feels she can 'express her opinions':

> [Now] sometimes I disagree with him [her husband]. I used to be silent in the past and kept my opinions to myself, locked. […] Now I say

> everything that comes to my mind. […] Now that I am 49 years old, I can express my opinion or dissatisfaction with something.
>
> *Irma, 49 years old, Tbilisi*

When I asked her the reason behind the changes in her behaviour, she told me maybe she is not that vulnerable anymore. What she means here is that she is not that economically and emotionally dependent on her husband anymore, on the contrary, family members depend on her, and she feels she has more of a voice. Nevertheless, it also should be noted that she is the only member of the family who has a job and, consequently, monthly income. She says that it played a significant role in her transformation: "now that I have an income and I can manage it, my voice is louder – "I can express my dissatisfaction with my family member's behaviours." Her responses to gender inequality are conditioned by her own past experiences and her current circumstances. This illustrates the importance of analytical lenses that Johansson and Vinthagen (2019) offer, one of which is temporality. Irma's account shows that everyday resistance is temporally organised and practised through time.

7.1.3. Asserting agency over their bodies

Several participants spoke about how they subvert gender inequality by asserting agency over their own bodies. Qristine, who is a 35-year-old widow from Batumi, says that she wanted to stop wearing black clothes after 40 days from her husband's funeral and everyone was against this.[22] She still managed to take off the black clothes, but she was criticised. She says that her friend, who also lost her husband, was criticised because she dyed her hair several weeks after the funeral. Qristine and her friend challenged gender inequality by subverting the current gender norms.

Pitts-Taylor (2003) suggests that non-mainstream modifications of the body (e.g., tattoos and piercings) might also be considered as acts of resistance to beauty norms or gender norms. It is because the body is a space of power, and

[22] In Georgia, women are expected to wear black clothes for a year after their family member dies. Men are not expected to do the same.

consequently, it is a space of everyday resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). For example, Orbach (1998) argues that becoming fat might be an act of resistance to women's objectification. The non-mainstream body can create new forms of resistance. When women modify their body, they "reclaim" power over their bodies: "in creating scarred, branded, pierced and heavily tattooed bodies, they aim to reject the pressures of beauty norms and roles of 'proper' femininity" (Pitts-Taylor, 2003: 3).

The participants' accounts show that their actions (not conforming to gender norms) have negative consequences on them – they are criticised because of them. Despite this, they still assert agency over their bodies and, in this sense, destabilise the gendered norms and 'undermine patriarchal power relations'. In this sense, Qristine's repertoires are everyday acts of resistance.

7.2. Responding to gender inequality in urban public spaces

In this section, I will address women's responses to gender inequality outside their domestic space. I will examine the places such as the street, public/private means of transport and leisure spaces. In the previous chapter, I illustrated that women took extra care when entering a public space, and they had to modify their behaviour in such spaces. I explored the participants' experiences of gender inequality in various spaces and discussed them. This section will talk about how women respond to manifestations of gender inequality in non-domestic spaces.

Four key strategies emerged from the participants accounts that they use to cope with gender inequality: leaving the space, responding with silence, responding with gestures and facial expressions, responding with verbal arguments. It should be noted that these everyday acts of resistance are not mutually exclusive; they can be employed simultaneously. I consider how these everyday repertoires make it evident that women have to choose from a range of available cultural tools to negotiate their safety in specific spaces. It is important to note that such techniques mainly address gender microaggressions from strangers.

7.2.1. Leaving the space

The first strategy that the participants talked about is leaving the space. They employed this strategy when they felt threatened to such a degree that they had to leave the space. In such situations, the participants could not use other strategies. One participant noted that she felt so uncomfortable when she felt unwanted staring in public transport; she got off the transport as soon as it stopped. Another participant recalled that she had to run away from the perpetrator in the street who tried to assault her sexually; she had to get on the first bus or stop the nearest car available in order to run from the perpetrator and feel safe. Such experiences are common in public transports or outdoor leisure spaces. These examples are not resistance; in this case, women are trying to negotiate inequalities.

Nevertheless, what is particularly interesting is that sometimes women had to leave the space after directly confronting the microaggressions. What I mean here is that leaving the space was not the only strategy they employed. The first step was something else – either direct or indirect confrontation. In this example, the resistance failed, and women had to look for alternative techniques. 27-year-old Barbare's account illustrates this well. She told me that she was in a park with her friend (I examined her experience in detail in the previous chapter) at night when strangers interrupted their conversation. They said they wanted to participate in the conversation and sat next to them. At first, they were polite, but when Barbare and her friend asked them to leave, they became more aggressive:

> My friend is more aggressive in such situations; I am more diplomatic. […] My friend got very angry, and in the end, they both were insulting each other. We tried not to leave the space for a long time. Then I understood that if we did not leave… You know, I would risk more if my friend was not that angry… If I were alone, probably… I don't know, but I felt vulnerable then and frustrated that we had to leave. In other situations, too, I always choose to leave.
>
> *Barbare, 27 years old, Tbilisi*

What Barbare's account shows us here is that she and her friend tried to confront the strangers. However, their initial strategy did not have the desired outcome, so they had to leave the park instead. We can see from this account that she understands leaving the space as losing since she felt frustrated that they had to leave. In the previous chapter, I underlined how women feel vulnerable when negotiating public space. These feelings of vulnerability and fear sometimes shape women's actions (Ahmed, 2004: 70).

I have established earlier that outcomes or effects do not determine whether some act is resistant or not. Another practice is escaping or, in this particular case, leaving the space. As in the case of domestic spaces, Barbare had to choose from various available options of resistance. At first, she decided to raise an objection and 'talk back' to the men. Afterwards, she understood that she needed another strategy.

7.2.2. Responding with silence

When talking about urban public spaces, responding with silence, as a strategy, has a different meaning than the one it had in the previous section. In the previous section about home, this strategy addressed the situation when the participants were unable to respond to gender inequality – they disagreed with it but did not explicitly challenge it. It was due to avoiding further developments of the conflict or believing that using other techniques would not have any outcome. As argued in the previous chapter, women's fear continuously modifies women's perceptions of space (Koskela, 1999). The feeling of fear constantly reminds them of their powerless position in society (ibid). Women negotiate their fear and autonomous choices and use many defensive strategies to feel more secure.

I do not mean that fear does not exist in domestic spaces. When talking about their responses to gender inequality in domestic spaces, the participants did not focus on the feelings of fear (unless talking about domestic violence). However, fear was an important topic when speaking about responding to gender inequality in non-domestic spaces. Alexandra, who is 24 years old and lives in Tbilisi, told me:

> I had terrible experiences, e.g., someone touched me, or something like this… I am a coward [*mshishara* in Georgian] in such situations because I cannot protect myself. Some people can argue with them [offenders], shout at them; I am not that kind of person, I freeze. […] When […] a man touched my butt, you know how numb I became? I started to shiver, and I could not do anything else. My friend made me move [away from him]. If she did not, I would not be able to protest. […] If I seem like a fighter to someone, in such situations, I have zero ability.
>
> *Alexandra, 24 years old, Tbilisi*

This account is significant because she describes the numbing effect the fear has on her. She underlines that she might look 'tough', but she is afraid. Other participants also described similar reactions – both younger and older. For instance, Nino, who lives in Tbilisi and is 30 years old, says that when she experienced a sexual microassault on public transport (a man touched her), she was too young and too afraid to confront him; she preferred to move away from that man. She said that today, as a feminist activist (she is involved in activism about women's rights), she can identify and frame the problem and can respond to it: "I am not saying that I had such an experience [of responding to gender inequality in non-domestic spaces]. I am saying that theoretically, now I can do it. I could not do it in the past." Nino adds that even though she often stays silent when she experiences inequality, she still feels that her activism encourages her more.

What was common in the accounts of the participants who were more likely to stay silent was self-blame and negative assessment of their actions. I will illustrate this with the quote from Alexandra's interview once again:

> I am not able to confront them [men, who treated her unequally in public settings. Here she talks about men in public transport or the streets who sexually assaulted her]. It is not that I do not confront them; it is that I cannot. I do not know why. Maybe unconsciously, I think that a man is superior to me because of their strength, and I am

> afraid? I don't know. […] I know that the proper way would be to confront them, but I can’t.
>
> *Alexandra, 24 years old, Tbilisi*

Alexandra is looking for the reasons behind her behaviour. It means that she negatively assesses her reaction to the experiences of gender inequality.

Such a negative assessment of their strategies occurred in other interviews as well. For instance, Eka (25 years old, Batumi) said that once she saw a woman and a man arguing in the street and she could not intervene because she was afraid. She adds that it happened several years ago, and if it happened today, she would have intervened since she regrets that she did not intervene in the past. The participants who stayed silent said they felt angry and frustrated because of their actions, i.e., staying silent, for weeks. As Tatia stated (36 years old, Batumi), "if I said something, I would feel stressed at that moment, but at the end of the day, I would be calmer because I know I resisted." The accounts of Alexandra and Eka illustrate how the strategies they use in such circumstances influence their self-perception. These accounts relate to a change in attitudes over time. It means that their acts of resistance are practised in and through time, i.e., resistance has the dimension of temporality (Johansson and Vinthagen, 2019).

According to Johansson and Vinthagen (2019: n. p.), repertoires of coping under repression or violent threats might also be a resistance. Such scattered resistance acts might have “cumulative” consequences in certain circumstances (not always). The same applies to ‘silence’ as a practice. However, In the case of these participants, their silence does not undermine power. Instead, they use the strategy of coping with gender inequality. In contrast, in the domestic sphere which I talked about in the previous section, silence is not a form of resistance, but an expression of powerlessness.

21-year-old Nato from Tbilisi offers an entirely different perspective on silence. She establishes that silence for her was a strategy of 'ignoring' the offender, not

giving men power over her, since, in Nato's words, "the politics of ignoring them" is the best strategy to show them they were unable to achieve their goals:

> When a man stares at me continuously [in the public transport], what can I do? He looks at me because he wants to provoke me with this, if I pay attention to him, it means he achieved his goal. I think the best way is the politics of ignoring him. It will mean he failed [achieving his goals].
>
> *Nato, 21 years old, Tbilisi*

In this case, Nato challenges power by staying silent. Because, according to Nato's interpretation, offender's aim was to provoke her. From Nato's narrative, it can be seen that she is trying to reclaim power through her strategy. By refusing to react or be provoked, she gains agency. As I explained it in relation to domestic space, 'silence' can, in fact, be a form of resistance, especially when silence undermines patriarchal power.

Furthermore, Nato's account shows that she had a clear intention to resist microassault. However, it does not mean that she 'resists' because of this intention and others do not. Everyday resistance is practice irrespective of intent (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). The authors argue that a particular intention is not vital for resistance. Johansson and Vinthagen illustrate this with an example: if people take long breaks and steal time in the workplace, they might do it for several reasons such as being tired or angry, i.e., they might have either 'personal' or 'political' reasons. However, primary importance is not the intent but the act itself, or "the agency itself" (2019, n. p.).

7.2.3. Responding with gestures and facial expressions

In this subsection, I will discuss how women react to gender inequality through gestures and facial expressions. Such strategies are often used in non-domestic spaces. When talking about the experiences of gender discrimination in urban public spaces, the participants often said they stared at the person who was microassaulting them to show them their disapproval. 32-year-old Natia from Tbilisi says that she always uses gestures: "I cannot hide my emotions, and I

always show that I don't like somebody's behaviour. Whenever I can cause any discomfort to that person, I do." Natia's account illustrates that she responds to the microaggression because she wants to express her disapproval.

Ia, who is 38 years old and lives in Tbilisi, recalls that she was driving a car, and the driver of another vehicle behind her was asking her to let him overtake and violate traffic rules. She refused, but he still overtook her vehicle:

> I showed him the middle finger. He was outraged. He stopped the car, and he came to my car. I was frightened then. "I am listening", I said. I tried to look calm. When he saw that I was not afraid, he said: "Never do such a thing again, or somebody else won't forgive you." I said, "You learn how to drive a car and how to be polite first". I am always like this. When I am not right, I can admit, I can say I'm sorry. However, when I am right, I do not want them to win because of their gender. Such things empower me. I become stronger, especially now that I am alone [she is divorced].
>
> *Ia, 38 years old, Tbilisi*

Here Ia explains that she feels 'empowered' when she resists microaggressions. However, other participants did not always feel the same. Some of them felt frustrated or anxious instead. Natia’s and Ia’s accounts show that using non-verbal cues is tactically necessary for these situations. They do not use other acts of resistance since they think these are more appropriate tools in a given context. In this way, they destabilise power.

7.2.4. Responding with verbal arguments

In the previous subsections, I was referring to women’s responses to strangers. In this subsection, I will primarily address women's responses to friends, acquaintances, and relatives. Interestingly, the participants find it easier to have verbal arguments when they are among their friends than when they are among their family members or strangers. 40-year-old Tamar says she constantly argues when people around her are expressing sexist opinions, for example, to say that women should be quiet and know their place. She says

that people around her started to restrain themselves from making discriminatory comments when she is around: "they know that I will argue, and I won't forgive them", Tamar says. However, the participants tried to avoid discussing gender-related issues with acquaintances or relatives, especially if they did not see positive changes that could have followed it. Eka, who is 25 years old and lives in Batumi, says that she and her sisters are trying to express their position every time their relatives use discriminatory comments towards women. She says they are trying to present supporting arguments and examples.

> They [her relatives] represent an older generation. I think your age should not be an obstacle to be open-minded. However, they are not like that; they think a woman and a man won't ever be equal. They say, can you lift a barbell? […] I argue, but I do not see any positive outcome.
>
> *Eka, 25 years old, Batumi*

However, having verbal arguments is not always encouraged and supported. Many participants who talked about their experiences of opposing gender microaggressions also mentioned how their behaviour was considered inappropriate. Maia, who is 34 years old and lives in Tbilisi, said her family members disapprove of her behaviour when she objects to something or has verbal arguments with her peers:

> They say I shouldn't talk about such things because people will think I am a 'loose' [*Tavisufali*] girl […] My relatives told my parents that I have a very modern way of thinking, and they [her parents] need to pay more attention to me.
>
> *Maia, 34 years old, Tbilisi*

Maia's account shows that her relatives think there is a correlation between her positive attitude towards gender equality (moreover, she is involved in women's rights activism) and sexual behaviour. Moreover, 'pay more attention to her' signals that her parents should restrict her behaviour in public spaces. Maia adds

that she has to argue not only with her relatives but with her parents as well (especially her mother, she says), since they agree with the relatives. 26-year-old Lile from Tbilisi has the same experience - she says her mother prohibits her from talking about gender equality in the presence of her sister-in-law. She is fearful that Lile will provoke a sense of resistance in her sister-in-law, negatively affecting her brother. Furthermore, she says her family members think she should be punished for her inclination to express her opinions: "once when my mother was angry with me, she told me that one day my future husband would beat me for my constant complaints [about gender inequality], and she would be happy if that happened." This quote is an example of how some women subscribe to gender inequalities and accept the logic of dominant power. Lile's mother repeats hegemonic discourses and 'act like' the dominant subjects (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019).

Having verbal arguments is an overt act of resistance. In such cases, the person who resists has an intention to challenge dominant gender norms. The participants sometimes have verbal arguments with strangers as well. It must be noted that such experiences are relatively rare. For instance, 34-year-old Tekla from Tbilisi says that when a taxi driver said that every woman who was a good driver had a hormonal imbalance, she became angry and had an argument with him. She said she always tried to argue about such topics; she feels that this is her "feminist duty" since she is involved in formal activism about gender inequality.

Lali is a 62-year-old woman living in Kutaisi. She is also actively engaged with feminist activism in her city. She remembers how she saved a woman from abduction using verbal argument, although at the time, unlike Tekla, she did not perceive this as her "feminist duty" because she was not engaged in activism then:

> I know I saved that girl. I had nightmares for 2-3 months after that. It left a heavy mark on me. Maybe this is because… My husband and I […] have a happy family, we have good kids, and I thank God that I have such a good husband, but he tricked me and abducted me. […] I

> sometimes tell him if someone does that to my daughter, I will go crazy.
>
> *Lali, 62 years old, Kutaisi*

Lali’s experience took place after she was already married with children. It can be assumed that her past experiences of abduction played a significant role when she confronted the offender in the street. It means that when women choose strategies to act, their decisions are shaped by their own experiences and their current circumstances. When I interviewed her, she was relatively secure in her personal life.

Not only their past or current experiences are essential when women choose relevant repertoires of resistance. As seen from the data, their self-image is also quite important. It is essential to establish that the participants often spoke about themselves as women who are able to challenge gender inequality. Many of them underlined that they are one of those women who can challenge gender inequality or injustice, in general. Masho (29 years old, Tbilisi) says that she does not have difficulties expressing it whenever she is confident about her position. She adds, it is impossible at that moment to make her silent. 38-year-old Ia says she is a woman who can fight and challenge any unjust behaviour to her, and that is how she is different from other women. She means here that her willingness to challenge runs counter to accepted/dominant ideas of femininity in Georgia. That is why, for example, Darejan, who is 29 years old and lives in Kutaisi, says, her behaviour is problematic in Kutaisi, "I argue too much. I am considered to be an intriguer. […] That is why I want to leave this city". She talks about leaving Kutaisi because she feels that it is "too small and everyone knows everything" – she wants to move to another place that will offer some degree of anonymity.

Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted how women respond to gender microaggressions in urban public spaces and at home. There are three strategies that women use in

domestic spaces (responding with silence, raising objections, and asserting agency over their bodies) and four strategies they use in urban public spaces (leaving the space, responding with silence, responding with gestures and facial expressions; responding with verbal arguments). All these acts are practised in and through space and time. The dimension of time was quite important for the participants. They often said that their actions in past were different from their present actions. It means that, as Johansson and Vinthagen suggest (2019), everyday acts of resistance are temporally organised.

'Silence' is a strategy that is used both in domestic spaces and in urban public spaces; however, it has distinct meanings in these spaces. In urban public spaces, 'silence' is often determined by fear. Most of the times (especially in domestic settings), 'silence' cannot be considered a repertoire of resistance: when the participants stay silent, they still exercise some degree of agency; however, they do not challenge the dominant gender order. The same is true in relation to 'leaving the space'. When the participants 'leave the space', they think their escape is tactically necessary. It means that in future, all these repertoires can lead to everyday resistance. ‘Asserting agency over their bodies’ and ‘responding with gestures and facial expressions’ are also small acts of everyday resistance. However, both aim to reject or challenge dominant patriarchal power. The most overt forms of resistance are ‘raising objections’ and ‘responding with verbal argument’.

The first finding illustrated in this chapter is that the participants choose the relevant repertoires of resistance from “available options”. These options are determined by the repertoires of power, as argued by Scott (1985). The participants do not accidentally choose these options. Instead, the repertoires are culturally learned (de Certeau, 1984).

Choosing the repertoires of resistance also depends on the consequences each strategy would have in a given situation. Some repertoires would have consequences that would be too risky for the participants. In such cases, the participants choose to minimise this risk and employ a strategy that would make their life more liveable. It should be noted that this is the case when the participants use silence, leaving the space or escaping. This shows that the

participants have to constantly balance (both in domestic or in non-domestic spaces) a variety of values, consequences and experiences when they are choosing from the available options.

Different aspects of their lives also shape women's decisions about choosing relevant strategies to act. Primarily, their experiences of gender microaggressions (or other forms of gender inequality), their current circumstances, and resources shape women's responses to gender microaggressions.

From these main findings derives my main argument of the chapter, that the participants in their strategies of responding to gender microaggressions, still exercise some degree of agency, even when they withdraw from the space or stay 'silent'. The fact that they constantly have to balance certain values, relationships and experiences, once again underlines the importance of their agency.

Chapter 8. Conclusion

The data showed that both home and urban public spaces reproduce gender relations that exist in Georgia. In these spaces men establish power over women using coercive control and violence (at home) and gender microaggressions (in urban public space). The participants' narratives revealed that women (re)negotiate, contest or sometimes even resist dominant gender ideologies. The final chapter brings together the key themes that have emerged from the analysis of the data. It links these findings to theoretical concepts underpinning my research (reviewed in chapter 3) and neotraditionalist gender ideology in Georgia.

8.1. Revisiting the research context and research aims

The second and third chapters of the thesis aimed to provide the background for the thesis. Chapter 2 explored gender equality in Georgia. It started by reviewing the historical context of the country. Firstly, it looked at how gender relations were constructed during the Soviet Union. It established that in the Soviet Union, gender regimes changed several times. For example, during the Bolsheviks, new policies were introduced to grant women's 'equality' to men. During the Stalinist period, "a cult of motherhood was established" (Turbine, 2007: 62). Generally speaking, during the Soviet Union, women's duties were not significantly changed in the domestic realm; they were responsible for domestic tasks and caretaking. However, to some extent, they were incorporated into the labour force (Ziemer, 2020). After the Soviet Union, Georgia experienced poverty and a decline in economic and food production. The economic changes influenced gender relations in the country. Women's economic importance rose since they found a way to secure their families' livelihoods (Sumbadze, 2018). From 2003, the process of "modernisation" of the state once again transformed gender relations because new "progressive versus reactionary" discourses emerged. At the same time, religious nationalism became dominant in Georgia, which once again influenced gender relations. Women became responsible for reproducing the nation biologically and culturally. In contemporary Georgia, the

debates about women's rights are intertwined with "modernity" and "traditional" debates. On the one hand, there are strict traditional norms in Georgia, i.e., neotraditionalist gender ideology is dominant, but on the other hand, modern approaches to gender also exist in the country. Women are expected to be both – modern and traditional. Therefore, women are trying to reconcile the 'traditional' with the 'modern' and offer a bricolage of the two (Gavashelishvili, 2017).

The third chapter, the literature review, outlined the theoretical underpinnings of my research. I discussed key concepts around women's experiences in public and private domains. The first is the concept of everyday life. It was explored to establish that this study looks at the everyday experiences of women that reflect complex structures of power (Scott, 2009). The second concept was space, place, and gender. These concepts were explored using the works of Massey (1994) and Rose (1993) and explained how space and place were gendered. The third was public/private spaces and how they were gendered. I argued that the gendering of public/private was influenced by broader social, political and economic changes in society. In the case of Georgia, it was influenced by the gender regimes in the Soviet Union and the contemporary neotraditionalisation of gender roles. 'Home' and 'urban public space' were also crucial concepts for this thesis. I established that both spaces could control and liberate women at the same time (Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Domosh, 1998). The last debates that I looked at were how informal politics could help construct alternative identities, femininities and spaces. This section examined everyday activism, everyday resistance/infrapolitics and 'consentful contentions' or acts that do not appear overtly oppositional.

Guided by the context of Georgia and the literature review, this research aimed to explore women's everyday experiences of gender inequality in public and private spaces in Georgia. In order to achieve this overarching aim, I conducted 42 in-depth interviews and used other complementary methods such as participant observation and follow-up situated interviews. Chapter 4 presented a detailed explanation of the methodological choices and decisions. It established that the feminist standpoint paradigm guided the research.

8.2. Overview of the thesis findings

The first empirical chapter talks about the role of 'home' in reproducing gender power relations. The theoretical framework I propose establishes that 'home' is a space that constantly produces and reproduces existing gender structures (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). This means that home in the Georgian context reproduces gender structures that are characteristic of Georgia. In this context, gender structures are influenced by the Soviet and post-Soviet gender regimes, neotraditional gender ideology and 'modern' approaches to women's gender roles.

The post-Soviet gender regimes are based on neotraditional gender ideology (Johnson & Robinson, 2007). It refers to the retraditionalisation of gender structures, i.e., (re)appearance of traditional gender norms (Ashwin, 2000). These gender structures see women in essentialistic terms, where they are associated with home and caretaking (Johnson & Robinson, 2007). However, "modern" approaches to gender also exist in Georgia, which are based on pro-West liberal values (Mestvirishvili & Mestvirishvili, 2014). These approaches require women to be employed or to trust institutions such as modern medical technologies (Gavashelishvili, 2017).

Based on the framework suggested by Blunt & Dowling (2006), 'home' reproduces these gender relations – neotraditional and 'modern' at the same time. Neotraditional tendencies were visible from the participants' accounts, where they stressed that they were required to take care of not only their family members but their relatives as well. In their case, caring was "women's work" (Bowlby, et al., 1997). Moreover, the participants mentioned that they were required to 'fulfil their duty' and create their own families (be married and have children). This once again underlined the importance of motherhood in Georgia. As I showed in the second chapter, mothers are more respected than women who do not have or do not plan to have children (Javakhadze, 2006). In this sense, womanhood is connected to motherhood (Gagoshashvili, 2008). The participants who were mothers said that they often 'sacrificed' their lives to their families, i.e., they were selfless mothers who devoted their lives to family and homeland (Gavashelishvili, 2017).

At the same time, the participants' everyday lives were regulated (Stark, 2012). It was done through the strategies of coercive control and intimate partner violence. The participants talked about domestic violence and the influence the IPV experiences had on their lives. Their accounts relate to the conceptualisations by Rodrigues-Menes and Safranoff (2020), who claim that violence is a way for men to subordinate women, especially when patriarchy's operation is threatened (ibid). Through domestic violence, men restore or establish their power over women.

However, the participants mainly focused not on domestic violence but on other ways through which men established their power over women. These were strategies of micro-regulation of women's lives (Stark, 2012). Micro-regulation refers to acts that aim to control women's everyday lives (ibid). The participants talked about how their family members (mostly men, but also women) controlled their sexual lives, appearance and everyday activities. Often such micro-regulation took place in relation to the sexual lives of women. As I mentioned in the second chapter, In Georgia, women's sexuality is restricted, and their sexuality exists only in relation to motherhood (Amashukeli & Japaridze, 2018). The participants' accounts show that it is a major topic in contemporary Georgia.

However, the domestic space is not only connected to control and restrictions; It is also a space that can give women the opportunity to express their agency. They do this in different ways, such as refusing to live according to gender norms or talking about gender equality with their family members. By expressing their agency, the participants (re)construct existing gender relations and open possibilities for alternative expressions of gender roles. This aligns with Rezeanu's assumption that 'home' can be a space for alternative femininities (2015). Such (re)constructions can be learned at home as well. Collins claimed that black women learned how to resist racism at home; Similarly, some participants 'learned' how to negotiate or resist gender inequalities at home as well. The participants sometimes talked about how they 'learned' to challenge and contest dominant gender roles on the positive or negative examples of their family members. Consequently, in Chapter 5, I establish that home can be a space where women are controlled, and their activities are micro-regulated.

However, it leaves space for them to express their agency and sometimes develop alternative gender roles (Rezeanu, 2015).

The second empirical chapter shows that not only domestic spaces produce gender power relations but urban public spaces as well. Gender identities and relations are (re)produced by urban public spaces (Bondi & Rose, 2003). Consequently, gender relations in Georgia, namely, neotraditional attitudes towards gender and ‘modern’ approaches to women’s gender roles, are constantly (re)constructed in the public spaces. Neotraditional tendencies can be seen in the participants’ narratives, where they underline the ways their autonomy is controlled and regulated. There are many ways that can control or regulate women’s behaviour in the public space, such as violence or sexual harassment. In this chapter, the participants mainly focused on the everyday acts that aimed at insulting women. This is related to the concept of microaggressions (Gartner & Sterszing, 2016), i.e., small acts that communicate slights or insults to women (ibid).

The participants’ accounts revealed that in all types of urban public spaces that they singled out (the streets, the public/private transport, the leisure spaces), they had experienced such microaggressions. Some of them referred to their physical appearance, i.e., modifications of the bodies such as tattoos and piercings. Body modifications reject the ‘proper femininity’ (Pitts-Taylor, 2003), and in Georgia, it is not considered to be ‘modest’ enough. Like other types of control that I spoke about, this can also be connected to women’s sexuality in Georgia and how it is restricted, regulated and only seen in relation to motherhood (Amashukeli & Japaridze, 2018). This relates to the concept of domestication as well (Tuncer, 2014), which claims that the female body and sexuality should be domesticated.

There were microaggressions that were not connected to the participants’ physical appearance. Some of them were sexual microassaults or expressed stereotypes about women. The types of microaggressions the participants focused on are linked to men’s manifestation of power over women. The data reveals that by controlling women’s behaviour in the streets, the public/private transport and the leisure spaces, men control women’s everyday activities not

only in the domestic space but also in the urban public space (DelGreco, et al., 2020).

The participants often reported that they felt fear and insecurity in the public spaces. In such circumstances, women used 'defensive' and 'avoidance' strategies – they either avoided the places or tried to develop the mechanisms that would 'defend' them from gender microaggressions (including sexual harassment). However, the participants' experiences in the urban spaces were not only connected to control but to positive feelings as well. For example, the leisure spaces and the streets were often linked to enjoyment for the participants. Sometimes, the urban public spaces offered them an 'escape' from the gendered relations of 'home' (McDowell, 1999). It was particularly true in those cases when women talked about hanging out with their friends in those spaces. It is also important to note that women have the possibility to contest or negotiate dominant gender roles in the urban public space (Wilson, 1990), and it is especially evident from the third empirical chapter.

The third empirical chapter revealed that the participants were able to express their agency both at home and in public spaces. Despite the control and restrictions they experiences, they still could sometimes contest and negotiate dominant gender structures in both spaces. Based on their narratives, it was possible to identify several strategies they employed to respond to the manifestations of gender inequality (i.e., gender microaggressions and micro-regulations). Their everyday repertoires consisted of several strategies. The first was silence, which in most cases could not destabilise the dominant gender structures. It shows that silence can sometimes be considered a resistance, but not always (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019). The second strategy was raising objections, which was used in domestic spaces. The participants employed a similar strategy in public spaces - verbal arguments. These strategies could undermine power relations. In this regard, it was similar to 'talking back' in the works of bell hooks (1989). Another strategy women used in private spaces was asserting agency over their bodies, i.e., modifying their bodies (tattoos and piercings) even though their family members did not encourage this. In the urban public spaces, women use the additional strategy of expressing their dissatisfaction with gender microaggressions through gestures and facial

expressions. Most of these strategies were used by women to oppose dominant gender structures. As it could be seen from the data, the participants had the “available options” of strategies, from which they chose the ones they deemed relevant (Scott, 1985).

8.3. Discussion of key findings

The key themes that emerged through this research are analysed in this section. Here I focus on three key themes: 1. Contradictory everyday spaces; 2. Destabilising power relations; 3. Navigating spaces. I explore these findings in the light of Walby's (1990; 1997), Young's (2003), McDowell's (1999), bell hooks (1989) and Johansson and Vinthagen’s (2019) works.

8.3.1. Contradictory everyday spaces

Patriarchal relations are manifested in everyday life, which is localised in space (Sztompka, 2008). In my thesis, I have focused on spaces of home and the city (including the street, public/private means of transport, and leisure spaces). Women had diverse attitudes in relation to both types of spaces (i.e., the home and urban public spaces). Some of them focused on the negative experiences they had in these spaces (mostly, in the streets, in public/private means of transport and at home). By negative experiences, I mean experiences of gender microaggressions, coercive control, violence and fear and insecurity). However, they also had positive experiences in these spaces (mostly in leisure spaces, sometimes in the streets and at home), where they felt relaxed. Moreover, they sometimes managed to express themselves and contest traditional gender roles in these spaces. In this way, the key theme of my research was this contradictory nature of spaces which, on the one hand, constrain women and, on the other, enable and support them (McDowell, 1999) in Georgia as well, despite that Georgia has different experiences of gender ideologies than Western societies.

In the feminist scholarship, both home and urban public spaces are understood to be loaded with positive and negative emotions (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Bondi and Rose, 2003). On the one hand, these places can oppress women (Morgan, 2011 about home; Pain, 1991 about public spaces) or a place of refuge (Manzo, 2003; McDowell, 1999). They produce and reproduce hierarchical gender relations but also, the women can contest or negotiate these relations, i.e., not only display agency but go beyond the traditional gender asymmetries (Rezeanu, 2015).

Both these spaces are shaped through everyday practices (Bondi and Rose, 2003), and these practices were contradictory for the participants. Most participants focused on the oppressive properties of home in three main senses. The first is that home was a space that reproduced 'traditionalist' gender ideology and encouraged women to comply with the 'traditional' gender roles, e.g., to get married, have children, be caretakers of their family members and relatives. Moreover, it required them to prioritise their families, even if they had to 'sacrifice' their interest and their future for this. The second is that home was a site of restrictions for the participants. It was a place where family members controlled women's sexual lives. They also required the participants not to have sexual relationships before marriage (or after they were widowed). This once again shows how women's sexuality is restricted in Georgia (Dunn, 2018). The participants also complained that they had to ask for permission from their parents (and/or partners) in relation to many everyday activities such as going out (especially at night), even if they were adults. Their appearance and clothing were also controlled and modified by the family members. This control was exercised primarily by fathers and brothers, but also sometimes by mothers, since they also repeat hegemonic discourses in relation to gender roles (Johansson and Vinthagen, 2019). The third is that home was a place of violence as well. Several participants had a history of domestic violence. However, despite these negative experiences, there were women who had positive attitudes towards their homes. Some of them claimed that they felt relaxed at home and felt that they were loved and cared for. Several participants explained that they learned how to express 'alternative femininities' from the examples of their female family members. The participants' accounts illustrate that women experienced the contradictory properties of home in their everyday lives.

The women I talked to had similar experiences in urban public spaces. They felt fear and insecurity in the streets, in underground passages and public transport, especially at night and if they were alone. As well as fear, they experienced gender microaggressions, e.g., unwelcome touching or insistent looks from men. The same events occurred in outdoor leisure spaces – though, generally, parks and squares were associated with relaxation, sometimes they provoked feelings of fear. The outdoor leisure spaces that were connected to more positive experiences were cafes and/or spaces where the participants spent time with their friends. These spaces had liberating properties for them (McDowell, 1999: 259).

The participants' accounts reveal that women in Georgia are paradoxically positioned in spaces because of their gender (Bondi & Davidson, 2005). It means that they are oppressed in these spaces but also have space for alternative possibilities (Rose, 1993). This is important since it establishes that women in Georgia experience both sides (in terms of contradictions) of urban public spaces and home, and they both give them chances to transgress gendered power relations in them. I will explore how this transgression is possible in the next section.

8.3.2. Destabilising power relations

As I already argued, both urban public spaces and home produce and reproduce existing power relations but also give women a space for their potential subversion (McDowell, 1999). Another major topic that emerged from the interviews was how women were destabilising power relations.

The participants' narratives revealed that they were destabilising power relations using strategies of resistance (Scott, 1985). Some strategies were verbal. Verbal responses at home had a form of 'raising objections', as the participants themselves framed it [*gaprotesteba*]. The 'raised objections' in domestic spaces and among friends whenever they felt they were discriminated against. However, they specifically clarified that they did not want to 'enter into conflict' and start a long argument. In urban public spaces, too, some participants responded with verbal arguments to gender microaggressions. These

verbal arguments destabilised power relations as well. I argue that verbal arguments are overt acts of resistance when they are used in opposition to gender microaggressions and/or coercive control. The same practice is analysed by bell hooks (1989). She claims that in the southern black community 'talking back' to an authority figure was an act of resistance, where black women destabilised dominant power. 'Raising objections' is not the same as 'talking back'; however, it is close to that notion: 'raising objections' in response to manifestations of gender microaggressions, coercive control or violence, can still destabilise power relations and be considered as an everyday act of resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2019).

The second strategy the participants used to respond to acts of gender microaggressions, control and violence were non-verbal acts. Non-verbal acts, too, were used in both home and urban public spaces. The first non-verbal act that the participants stressed was to respond to gender microaggressions with gestures and facial expressions. Women used these acts usually in urban public spaces. These acts were overt since they were meant to be seen and signalled that the gender microaggressions were not approved. Another non-verbal act used by the participants was asserting agency over their bodies. This means that women were modifying their bodies in opposition to the dominant gender norms about how women should look. These modifications include tattoos, piercings and gaining weight; Also, what is significant to the Georgian context is taking off the mourning clothes and dying hair. As argued in Chapter 7, women are required to wear mourning clothes (usually long dresses) so that their mourning can be visible. These body modifications can also destabilise power relations in the sense that they oppose dominant gender norms that exist in Georgia. Here I base my argument on a claim made by Pitts-Taylor (2003), that these modifications mean that women reclaim power over their bodies and in this sense, they can also be considered everyday acts of resistance.

The strategies to destabilise power relations indicate that the participants chose their repertoires of actions from the available options they had in the Georgian context. They were determined by the repertoires of power existing in the same society. Consequently, their choice of repertoires was not accidental; they were culturally learned (de Certeau, 1984).

Other participants also stressed the importance of having conversations about gender issues with their parents, relatives, and friend. These actions resemble 'everyday activism' as conceptualised by Sarah Pink (2012). She argues that any practice that potentially can produce change can be considered everyday activism. In this sense, some participants noted that when having conversations about gender issues, they intended to raise awareness about them. These conversations potentially could, in fact, produce change.

8.3.3. Navigating spaces

The last key theme that emerged from the research is that the participants spent time and energy navigating both urban public spaces and domestic spaces safely, i.e., without encountering further manifestations of gender oppression. In the urban public space minimising danger was the main concern for most women I interviewed. They used various techniques. Among these tactics was avoiding places that seemed dangerous, especially if they were alone at night. Such places would be some parks in Tbilisi (which are associated with sex work) and some underground passages. If they did not avoid such places at once, they used 'defensive techniques' to minimise fear; for example, they had their 'systems of alarm': they called their friends and talked to them while walking alone in the streets or using Taxi, used GPS and charged mobile phones in advance. These techniques helped them minimise their fear and feel safe in the city. In these ways, they tried to 'adjust their behaviour to their fear' (Condon, 2007: 103) and get 'creative' to minimise the danger.

Koskela (2004) argues that women have to interpret their social environments and evaluate if they are in dangerous or safe situations. They have to know how to identify whether the environment is safe or not and become 'experts' of the urban scene (Ibid). Moreover, they have to evaluate other people's intentions toward them to identify who is dangerous to them and who is not (Ibid). The participants talked about the need to evaluate the environment as well. Some of them noted that they had to 'look back and see who was walking behind them when they were alone in the streets. If they felt they were in danger, they would pretend to call someone and talk on the phone. Thus, they were 'evaluating' the environment and people around them all the time. In her article,

Koskela (ibid) refers to the urban spaces specifically. However, I found that the participants engaged in the similar processes of navigation within private domestic space as well.

What has emerged from the data is that women have to decide what is dangerous and which techniques to use to avoid this danger. They have to interpret domestic space as well and evaluate family members' intentions. In the domestic space, it is most often expressed as avoiding confrontation, which may lead to further manifestations of coercive control, restrictions, or violence. For example, some participants did not tell their family members about their romantic relationships at all in order to avoid conflict in the family because they knew that having a boyfriend (especially if they had sexual relationships) would not be acceptable for them. In another example, the participant, who was a single mother, hid her pregnancy from her family members. When at last she told them, their trust towards her disappeared. She said that now she hides some information from her family and sometimes lies as well in order to avoid conflict about her actions.

8.4. Contributions, limitations and areas for future research

The previous section explored the key findings that emerged throughout this research. This section will focus on the contributions, limitations, and areas of future research.

8.4.1. Contributions

This thesis addresses the topic that is not widely discussed in Georgian academic debates - women's everyday experiences and everyday manifestations of gender inequalities. Therefore, it will contribute to the Georgian academic discussions in the social sciences. The social sciences in Georgia rarely explores themes like women's everyday lives and practices. The academic explorations of women in the urban public space are also limited. Thus, this thesis will be a valuable addition to the fields of feminist sociology and feminist geography in Georgia.

Moreover, Gender Studies in Georgia do not usually focus on women's everyday experiences, and the thesis will also contribute to the gender studies field.

The thesis will be a valuable addition to gender studies in general by offering a perspective from the region that has not attracted much attention in academia in the past. Here I do not mean only the region of post-communist and/or East European countries but also, more specifically, the Caucasus region. The thesis will contribute to East European studies by exploring gender-related issue in the Caucasus region.

This research also illustrated the importance of using different research methods when studying the everyday experiences of women. Women's everyday experiences were studied mainly through the interviews, but other methods were also used, such as participant observation and follow-up situated interviews. These methods helped me to make the familiar strange and ‘bracket out’ myself from the familiar phenomena (Scott, 2009). They also enabled me to observe how women experienced urban public spaces and listen to the participants’ interpretations of these spaces, which informed my study.

8.4.2. Limitations and future research

This research has some limitations. First of all, the limitations refer to the homogeneity of the participants’ backgrounds. As I described in Chapter 4, I tried to make sure that 'women' were not treated as a homogenous category, and I used different recruitment methods to ensure that I included women of different ages, occupations, family structures and other characteristics. However, because of the recruitment strategy, primarily because of online recruitment, the range of participants was not as diverse as they should have been. For example, most of my participants had higher education degrees. Moreover, most participants who agreed to participate in my study were more or less interested in gender-related issues, especially younger participants. Future research would benefit from the more varied backgrounds of the participants.

It would be interesting to explore intersections between class and gender as well. This research revealed that sometimes class plays a vital role in how women experience both urban public spaces and home. In this research, class came into perception in relation to experiences of women (1) in public/private means of transport and (2) about having private properties. Further investigation of the role class plays in women's experiences would open new possibilities for analysing this issue.

The themes explored in this research highlight the need for further research in many areas. Here I will illustrate some aspects that I thought required further investigation. The first area that would be interesting to investigate would be collective forms of responding to manifestations of gender inequalities. In this thesis, I mainly look at individual everyday practices; however, looking at collective practices would also be interesting. This would offer different perspective about how women collectively destabilise dominant gender structures. Collective practices are intertwined with NGO activism in Georgia and do not necessarily reflect the concerns of ordinary women and grassroots movements. Moreover, it would help to elaborate debates about "Western" and "traditional" gender roles that are briefly reviewed in Chapter 2.

Generally, more academic research is needed concerning gender in Georgia. As I mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, most studies about gender in Georgia are conducted by NGOs (both local and international) and usually have policy-related agenda. Nonetheless, gender in Georgia is influenced by the complicated past and present, and gender is probably performed and expressed in different ways than in Western countries. I hope this research can contribute to the debates about women's experiences in Georgia.

Conclusion

This thesis explored women’s everyday experiences of gender inequality in Georgia. Its aim was to grasp the participants’ interpretations of gender inequality from the feminist perspective. In this sense, the study was shaped by feminist theory, politics and ethics. Specifically, it was influenced by Haraway’s

concept of situated knowledge (1991), which assumes that knowledge is always partial. The methodological approach and decisions during the research process were influenced by the feminist postconstuctionist stance (Lykke, 2010), which situated the research between objectivist and relativist ontologies. My assumption here was that the constructions of the participants' experiences and perspectives were specific in terms of time and space, i.e., in the post-Soviet context. In this sense, women in Georgia lack epistemic privilege and social studies rarely represent their 'experiences'. Further research is needed from the feminist perspective on gender inequality, especially, in the post-Soviet context, where there is a lack of academic knowledge production about gender inequality.

Women's experiences were studied using three qualitative methods: in-depth interviews, follow-up situated interviews and participant observation. Using three methods enabled me to get a more contextualised knowledge of their perspectives from different angles. The thesis shows that using different methods can be beneficial when studying gender inequality. It enables the researcher to analyse more diverse data. Using different methods resulted in distinctive findings.

The participants' accounts revealed several important themes. The first key theme that emerged in this research is that women had both positive and negative everyday experiences in urban and home-spaces. Women experienced fear and insecurity and gender microaggressions in public settings and at home – coercive control and violence. At the same time, for some participants, the home was a place where they felt relaxed, and leisure spaces were places where they could meet up with friends. It means that these spaces constrained women and also supported them. Moreover, in these places, the participants could contest or negotiate hierarchical gender relations and go beyond the traditional gender asymmetries. The participants' accounts revealed that they experienced the contradictory properties of home and urban space in their everyday lives.

The second theme focused on how women could contest, negotiate or transgress the traditional gender asymmetries. The participants' accounts uncovered that sometimes they tried to destabilise existing gender relationships in urban spaces and at home. Sometimes they used words to 'raise objections' at home or used

verbal arguments in urban spaces. They also used non-verbal cues such as gestures or facial expressions to express their disapproval of gender microaggression in public spaces. They also asserted agency over their bodies by modifying them (tattoos, piercings, refusing to wear certain kinds of clothes). Using these techniques, women destabilised the dominant gender order because they challenged the underlying gender ideology and gender roles.

The last theme was concerned with how women tried to navigate both urban and domestic spaces safely to avoid gender microaggressions, coercive control, and violence. Women had to use different techniques to minimise the chances of such occurrences. In the urban spaces, they had their 'systems of alarm'. They usually kept some information (e.g., about their romantic relationships) from their family members at home. Both at home and in urban spaces, women had to evaluate and interpret environments and people's intentions to guarantee their safety in these everyday spaces.

These findings will contribute to the Georgian academic discussions in the social sciences. Moreover, it will offer a perspective from the post-Soviet region to academic fields of feminist sociology, feminist geography, gender studies and Central and East European studies. Also, the findings illustrate the relevant policy areas that need developing. The findings show that women need more support on the policy level both from the Government and local and international NGOs working on gender issues. The participants talked about their experiences of domestic violence, sexual harassment and fear and insecurity in urban public settings. The Georgian Government can use these findings and introduce policies that will try to minimise cases of violence and harassment and offer women more security in urban public settings. This would make women's lives better in relation to these topics. Moreover, local and international NGOs can also rely on these findings, especially, in relation to patriarchal power relations, hierarchical gender roles and fear and insecurity in urban public settings. They can develop projects that will address these issues and improve women's situation in Georgia.

I believe that the most important finding that NGOs can rely on is that home and urban public spaces can be spaces of contestation or transgression. These spaces have the potential to destabilise gender power relations. For example, when the

participants talk about home and how they learned resistance strategies there, it means they experienced this space as potentially emancipatory. This can lead to solidarity and potentially can serve as a basis for collective practices of responding to manifestations of gender inequalities (and maybe collective action as well). Exploring this topic further can be informative for NGOs and can determine their policies. Further academic or non-academic exploration of collective forms of responding to gender inequality would be beneficial to women living in Georgia.

Appendix 1: Participants of the Study

City	No.	Name	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Marital Status	Follow-up Interview Participation
Tbilisi	01.	Ia	38	Higher	Employed	Separated	Yes
	02.	Inga	35	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	03.	Sesili	52	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Married	No
	04.	Lile	26	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	05.	Natia	32	Higher	Freelance work	Separated	Yes
	06.	Gvantsa	30	Higher	Employed	Married	No
	07.	Irma	49	Higher	Employed	Married	No
	08.	Nato	24	Higher	Employed	Single	Yes
	09.	Barbare	27	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	10.	Salome	41	Higher	Freelance work	Single	No
	11.	Elene	29	Higher	Employed	Single	Yes
	12.	Lika	29	Higher	Employed	Single Mother	No
	13.	Mariam	32	Higher	Freelance work	Single	No
	14.	Tekla	53	High School Diploma	Employed	Single	No
	15.	Alexandra	23	Higher	Employed	Single	Yes
	16.	Nino	30	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	17.	Nutsa	28	Higher	Freelance work	Single	Yes
	18.	Qeto	29	Higher	Freelance work	Single	No
	19.	Sopho	26	Higher	Employed	Married	Yes
	20.	Masho	29	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	21.	Maia	34	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	22.	Ana	45	Higher	Employed	Married	Yes

City	No.	Name	Age	Education Level	Occupation	Marital Status	Follow-up Interview Participation
Batumi	23.	Tatia	36	Higher	Unemployed	Married	No
	24.	Megi	25	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	25.	Eka	25	Higher	Employed	Single	Yes
	26.	Khatia	22	Student	Unemployed	Single	No
	27.	Teona	34	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	28.	Lela	31	High School Diploma	Employed	Married	Yes
	29.	Tamta	29	High School Diploma	Employed	Married	No
	30.	Tamar	40	Vocational education	Unemployed	Married	Yes
	31.	Tina	25	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	32.	Keso	42	Higher	Employed	single	No
	33.	Khatuna	56	High School Diploma	Unemployed	Widow	Yes
	34.	Qristine	35	Higher	Employed	Widow	No
Kutaisi	35.	Lali	62	Higher	Employed	Married	No
	36.	Baia	54	Vocational education	Employed	Married	No
	37.	Dea	39	Higher	Employed	Married	No
	38.	Shorena	28	Higher	Employed	Single	Yes
	39.	Inola	28	Higher	Employed	Single	No
	40.	Darejan	29	Higher	Unemployed	Single	Yes
	41.	Tea	58	Higher	Employed	Married	No
	42.	Nestan	24	Higher	Employed	Single	No

Appendix 2: Participant Information Sheet (English)

College of Social Sciences

Participant Information Sheet

Gender Inequality and Women's Negotiation of Public and Private Spaces in Contemporary Georgia

(working title)

Researcher: Sopio Davituri, PhD in Sociology, email: s.davituri.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr Francesca Stella, email: Francesca.Stella@glasgow.ac.uk

Dr Robert Gibb, email: Robert.Gibb@glasgow.ac.uk

Professor Rebecca Kay, email: Rebecca.Kay@glasgow.ac.uk

Greetings!

I am Sopio, PhD researcher at the University of Glasgow and I am writing my PhD thesis about how women engage in the public spaces in Georgia. You are invited to take part in this research. Before you decide it is important to understand the goals and objectives of this research. Please take time to read the following information. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY:

The purpose of the research is to explore how women access and inhabit different aspects of public life in Georgia, what are the barriers they face and how do they challenge them. This study will be completed by 30 September 2020.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS:

I am interested in talking to women who are living in Tbilisi, Batumi or Kutaisi. You are being asked to take part in this research either because you have been recommended as someone who would be interested in this topic or you responded to the Facebook post or contacted me after reading the leaflet.

TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH:

Taking part in this research project is entirely voluntary. The research will give you the space to express your perspectives and discuss your experiences. You are free to withdraw the consent and your interview at any time without prejudice and without giving a reason. If you withdraw your data after the interview, the audio file will be destroyed, and consent form will be shredded.

THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

If you decide to take part in this research project, the interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes. Our conversation will be audio-recorded. Your consent will be obtained at the start of the interview in the written form. Interviews will be conducted in locations comfortable for you, preferably, in cafes. The interview will have the form of a conversation, there will be questions about general topics on which you can suggest your experiences. We will discuss your everyday life: places you go, your job or education; what challenges do you face as a woman; how do you feel about women’s rights. You are free to provide as much information as you want and if you do not want to respond to any particular question, it is your right not to do so.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

All information which is collected about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential. Any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be identified from it. I will change names, remove personal details, so that people who read the PhD could not identify you. Also, for ensuring the confidentiality of the data, it will be stored in my password protected computer in the separate folder also protected with the password. Only I will have access to this. The consent forms with your signature on it, during my fieldwork in Georgia, will be stored in my apartment, in a locked drawer. After returning to Glasgow, it will be stored in a locked drawer in my office, at the University of Glasgow. I would like to retain copies of the research data (without your personal data) for a maximum of twenty years after I submit the PhD thesis. In addition to this, some of your direct quotes may be used in the thesis (without revealing your names or other personal information about you), articles and conference papers. The results of the research will be reported in English. The thesis may be published.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH:

I will transcribe and analyse the interviews. Afterwards, I will write the thesis based on this data. The results of the research will be used in my PhD (earliest date of submission – September 2020) thesis. If you request, I will provide you with a short summary of the research findings at the end of the PhD programme. I may also use the data in conference papers, articles or in a book.

FUNDER OF THE RESEARCH:

The study is funded by a College of Social Sciences Scholarship, University of Glasgow.

STUDY REVIEW:

The project has been reviewed and approved by the College of Social Science Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow. If you have any concerns about the research, you can contact College of Social Sciences Ethics Officer, **Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk**

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For further information or any questions regarding to this research, please contact me: Sopio Davituri, email: s.davituri.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet (Georgian)

College of Social Sciences

მონაწილეთა საინფორმაციო ფურცელი

გენდერული უთანასწორობა: ქალების მიერ საჯარო და პირადი სივრცეების შეთავსება საქართველოში

(კვლევის დასახელების სამუშაო ვერსია)

მკვლევარი: სოფიო დავითური, სოციოლოგიის სადოქტორო პროგრამა,

ელ-ფოსტა: s.davituri.1@research.gla.ac.uk

სუპერვაიზორები: დოქტორი ფრანჩესკა სტელა,

ელ-ფოსტა: Francesca.Stella@glasgow.ac.uk

დოქტორი რობერტ გიბი, ელ-ფოსტა: Robert.Gibb@glasgow.ac.uk

პროფესორი რებეკა ქეი, ელ-ფოსტა: Rebecca.Kay@glasgow.ac.uk

მოგესალმებით!

მე ვარ სოფო, გლაზგოს უნივერსიტეტში დოქტორის აკადემიური ხარისხის კანდიდატი სოციოლოგიის მიმართულებით. მე ვატარებ კვლევას იმის შესახებ, თუ როგორ გრძნობენ საქართველოს სხვადასხვა ქალაქში მცხოვრები ქალები საჯარო სივრცეებში თავს. გიწვევთ კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მისაღებად. სანამ გადაწყვეტილებას მიიღებდეთ კვლევაში მონაწილეობასთან დაკავშირებით, მნიშვნელოვანია, კვლევის მიზნებსა და ამოცანებს გაეცნოთ. გთხოვთ, გაეცანით მოცემულ ინფორმაციას. იმ შემთხვევაში, თუ გაგიჩნდათ შეკითხვა ან გსურთ გარკვეული დეტალების დაზუსტება, მომმართეთ.

დიდი მადლობა ამ ინფორმაციის გაცნობისთვის.

კვლევის მიზანი

აღნიშნული კვლევის მიზანია ქალების ყოველდღიური ცხოვრების სხვადასხვა ასპექტის შესწავლა, იმის გარკვევა, თუ რა წინააღმდეგობებს აწყდებიან ისინი და როგორ უმკლავდებიან მათ. კვლევითი პროექტის დასრულდების მოსალოდნელი თარიღია 2020 წლის 30 სექტემბერი.

კვლევის მონაწილეები

კვლევის ფარგლებში, გავესაუბრები ქალებს, რომლებიც ცხოვრობენ თბილისში, ბათუმში ან ქუთაისში. თქვენ კვლევის მონაწილედ გიწვევთ იმიტომ რომ სხვა ადამიანმა მირჩია თქვენთან დაკონტაქტება ან თქვენ უპასუხეთ ჩემს მიერ გამოქვეყნებულ ფეისბუქ პოსტს ან გაეცანით საინფორმაციო ბროშურას კვლევის შესახებ.

კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მიღება

კვლევაში მონაწილეობა მოხალისეობრივია. ის თქვენ მოგცემთ საშუალებას, თქვენი მოსაზრებები დააფიქსიროთ და თქვენი გამოცდილებები განიხილოთ. თქვენ შეგიძლიათ უარი თქვათ კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მიღებაზე, მაშინაც კი, თუ თავიდან მასში მონაწილეობას დათანხმდით. ასეთ შემთხვევაში, თქვენ არ მოგიწევთ ამ გადაწყვეტილების მიზეზებზე საუბარი. თუ თქვენ ინტერვიუზე უარს მისი ჩატარების შემდეგ იტყვით, ჩვენი საუბრის აუდიო ფირი წაიშლება და თანხმობის ფორმა განადგურდება.

ინტერვიუს პროცესი

თუ თქვენ გადაწყვეტთ კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მიღებას, ინტერვიუ, დაახლოებით, 60-90 წუთი გაგრძელდება. ჩვენი საუბარი აუდიო ფირზე ჩაიწერება. თქვენს წერილობით თანხმობას კი ინტერვიუს დაწყებამდე ავიღებ. ინტერვიუები ჩატარდება თქვენთვის კომფორტულ ადგილას, სასურველია, კაფეში. ინტერვიუს დროს ჩვენ ვისაუბრებთ ისეთ საკითხებზე, როგორებიცაა: თქვენი ყოველდღიური ცხოვრება - ადგილები, სადაც დადიხართ, სადაც მუშაობთ ან სწავლობთ; რა სირთულეებს აწყდებით, როგორც ქალი; როგორი დამოკიდებულება გაქვთ ქალთა უფლებების მიმართ. თუ არ გსურთ რომელიმე კითხვაზე პასუხის გაცემა, შეგიძლიათ თავი შეიკავოთ პასუხისგან.

კონფიდენციალურობა

ინფორმაცია, რომელიც თქვენ შესახებ კვლევის განმავლობაში იქნება ხელმისაწვდომი, კონფიდენციალურია. თქვენ მიერ მოცემულ ინფორმაციას არ ექნება დართული თქვენი სახელი, მისამართი ან ნებისმიერი ისეთი პირადი დეტალი, რითაც თქვენი იდენტიფიკაცია შეიძლება მოხდეს. კონფიდენციალურობის დაცვის მიზნით, თქვენ მიერ მოცემული ინფორმაცია ჩემს პირად კომპიუტერში შეინახება და შესაბამისად, მასზე წვდომა მხოლოდ მე მექნება. კომპიუტერიც და საქაღალდეც უნიკალური კოდით იქნება დაცული. თქვენ მიერ ხელმოწერილი თანხმობის ფორმა, ჩემი საქართველოში ყოფნის დროს, ჩემს სახლში, საკეტიან უჯრაში შეინახება, ხოლო გაერთიანებულ სამეფოში ყოფნის დროს - გლაზგოს უნივერსიტეტში მდებარე ჩემს ოფისში, საკეტიან უჯრაში. კვლევის მონაცემების ასლებს (თქვენი პირადი მონაცემების გარეშე), თეზისის დასრულების შემდეგ, მაქსიმუმ ოცი წლის განმავლობაში შევინახავ. გარდა ამისა, თეზისში (ასევე, სტატიებში, წიგნებში და სხვ.), შესაძლოა, გამოყენებული იყოს ციტატები თქვენი ინტერვიუდან, რასაკვირველია, თქვენი სახელის და სხვა პირადი ინფორმაციის მითითების გარეშე).

გაითვალისწინეთ, რომ ჩემ მიერ კონფიდენციალურობა მკაცრად იქნება დაცული, სანამ ინტერვიუ პოტენციური საფრთხის გამორკვევის საფუძველი არ გახდება. ამ შემთხვევაში, უნივერსიტეტი იძულებული იქნება დაუკავშირდეს შესაბამის ორგანოებს.

კვლევის შედეგები

საველე სამუშაოების დასრულების შემდეგ, თქვენი ინტერვიუები გაიშიფრება და გაანალიზდება. ინტერვიუების მონაცემებზე დაყრდნობით, შემუშავდება ჩემი სადოქტორო დისერტაცია. მოთხოვნის შემთხვევაში, სადოქტორო პროგრამის დასრულების შემდეგ, კვლევის შედეგებს ძირითადი შედეგების სახით მოგაწვდით. ინტერვიუს შედეგად მიღებული მონაცემები, შესაძლოა, გამოვიყენო სხვა ტიპის აკადემიურ ნაშრომებში (მაგ. საკონფერენციო მოხსენებების, წიგნებისთვის და სტატიებისთვის).

სადოქტორო პროგრამის დაფინანსება

კვლევა დაფინანსებულია სოციალურ მეცნიერებათა კოლეჯის მიერ გლაზგოს უნივერსიტეტში.

კვლევის განხილვა

პროექტი განხილული და დამტკიცებულია სოციალურ მეცნიერებათა კოლეჯის ეთიკის კომიტეტის მიერ გლაზგოს უნივერსიტეტში. იმ შემთხვევაში, თუ შენიშვნები გაქვთ აღნიშნულ კვლევასთან დაკავშირებით, დაუკავშირდით სოციალურ მეცნიერებათა კოლეჯის ეთიკის ოფიცერს, დოქტორ მიურ ჰიუსტონს, დაუკავშირდით (ელ ფოსტა:
Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk)

საკონტაქტო ინფორმაცია

კვლევასთან დაკავშირებული კითხვების შემთხვევაში ან დამატებითი ინფორმაციის მოსაპოვებლად, დამიკავშირდით: სოფიო დავითური (ელ. ფოსტა: s.davituri.1@research.gla.ac.uk).

დიდი მადლობა!

Appendix 4: Consent Form (English)

College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: **Gender Inequality and Women's Negotiation of Public and Private Spaces in Contemporary Georgia** *(working title)*

Name of Researcher: Sopio Davituri, PhD in Sociology, email: s.davituri.1@research.gla.ac.uk
Supervisors: Dr Francesca Stella, email: Francesca.Stella@glasgow.ac.uk
Dr Robert Gibb, email: Robert.Gibb@glasgow.ac.uk
Professor Rebecca Kay, email: Rebecca.Kay@glasgow.ac.uk

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

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

- I acknowledge that I will be referred to by pseudonym in any publications based on this data.

- I acknowledge that all names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

- I acknowledge that the material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.
- I acknowledge that the material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research
- I acknowledge that the material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded ☐

I do not consent to interviews being audio-recorded ☐

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

Name of Participant ________________________________

Signature ______________________________________

Date _____________________________

Name of Researcher ________________________________

Signature ______________________________________

Date _____________________________

Appendix 5: Consent Form (Georgian)

College of Social Sciences

თანხმობის ფორმა

პროექტის დასახელება: **გენდერული უთანასწორობა: ქალების მიერ საჯარო და პირადი სივრცეების შეთავსება საქართველოში**

(სათაურის სამუშაო ვერსია)

მკვლევარი: სოფიო დავითური, სოციოლოგიის სადოქტორო პროგრამა, ელ. ფოსტა: s.davituri.1@research.gla.ac.uk

სუპერვაიზორები: დოქტორი ფრანჩესკა სტელა, ელ. ფოსტა: Francesca.Stella@glasgow.ac.uk

დოქტორი რობერტ გიბი, ელ. ფოსტა: Robert.Gibb@glasgow.ac.uk

პროფესორი რებეკა ქეი, ელ. ფოსტა: Rebecca.Kay@glasgow.ac.uk

- ვადასტურებ, რომ წავიკითხე მონაწილეთა საინფორმაციო ფურცელი და მომეცა მასთან დაკავშირებით კითხვების დასმის შესაძლებლობა;
- მესმის, რომ კვლევაში ჩემი მონაწილეობა მოხალისეობრივია და ნებისმიერ დროს შემიძლია უარი ვთქვა მასში მონაწილეობის მიღებაზე, მიზეზების დასახელების გარეშე;
- მესმის, რომ ამ მონაცემებზე დამყარებულ ნებისმიერ ნაშრომში ფსევდონიმით ვიქნები მოხსენიებული;
- მესმის, რომ სახელები და სხვა მონაცემები, რომელთა საშუალებითაც შესაძლებელია ინდივიდების იდენტიფიცირება, წაიშლება;

- მესმის, რომ ყველა მონაცემი კონფიდენციალურია და ისინი შეინახება უსაფრთხო სათავსოში;
- მესმის, რომ მონაცემები, ამ კონკრეტული აკადემიური კვლევის დასრულების შემდეგ, უსაფრთხო სათავსოში შეინახება, შემდგომში მისი აკადემიური კვლევის მიზნით გამოყენებისათვის;
- მესმის, რომ მონაცემები, შესაძლოა, სხვა პუბლიკაციებშიც (ბეჭდური და/ან ელექტრონული) გამოიყენებოდეს.

თანახმა ვარ, რომ ინტერვიუ აუდიო ფირზე ჩაიწეროს ☐

არ ვარ თანახმა, რომ ინტერვიუ აუდიო ფირზე ჩაიწეროს ☐

თანახმა ვარ კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მღებაზე ☐

არ ვარ თანახმა კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მიღებაზე ☐

მონაწილე ________________________________

ხელმოწერა ________________________________

თარიღი ________________________________

მკვლევარი ________________________________

ხელმოწერა ________________________________

თარიღი ________________________________

Appendix 6: Interview Guide (English)

Gender Inequality and Women's Negotiation of Public and Private Spaces in Contemporary Georgia

(working title)

Interview themes for in-depth interviews

- Before we start, do you have any questions regarding this research – Participant Information Sheet or Consent Form?

- Could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

Demographic information

- Age
- Education
- Current occupation
- Marital status
- Children
- Your personal income
- Family income
- Which area of the city does the participant live in

Challenging inequalities in public spaces

- Tell me about your usual day, besides workplace (*if employed*), where do you usually go? How do you manage your leisure time? Do you have time for yourself?

- Are there specific places that you often go?

  Possible prompts:

Do you visit cinema, theatres, and museums or attend concerts? Do you visit restaurants/cafes/bars? Anything else?

If not, why? Are there any places you want to go, but cannot visit, why? If yes, are there any challenges you face in these places or while accessing these places? If yes, do you challenge these issues? How? If not, why?

- Do you use public transport? Which one? Is there anything in public transport that makes you uncomfortable? What are such issues? If yes, do you challenge them? How? If not, why?

- How often do you walk in the streets of the city? Where, when and with whom? Have you ever felt uncomfortable in the street? If yes, have you ever challenged this issue? How? If not, why?

- What are other things that concern you the most in your everyday life?

If employed:

- Do you have any problems connected to your workplace? Do you have any problems in the workplace as a woman? Do you think you are treated differently at your workplace than your male colleges? Why? If yes, have you ever challenged this issue? If no, why not?

- How did you start working? Were there any barriers when you were starting a job from family or potential employers? Has anything changed in your personal life or family relations since you have started the job?

If a student:

- Do you have any problems connected to the place you're studying at? Do you have any problems there as a woman? Do you think you are treated differently there than other students? Why? If yes, have you ever challenged this issue? If no, why?

- How did you start studying? Were there any barriers when you were applying to the University (possible prompts: from your family)? Why? If yes, have you challenged this issue? If no, why?

Engagement with women's rights

- What are the main issues related to gender inequalities you face? Do you think other women have similar/different problems? If different, in which areas? Do you think there are problems that are significant for women in Georgia? How can these issues be addressed and challenged?

- Are you or have you ever been involved in any organization/movement or human rights campaign?

- Have you attended any demonstrations/protest in the recent years? Why? Have you ever felt uncomfortable there? How? If yes, have you ever challenged this issue? How? If not, why?

- Have you ever attended demonstration concerning women's rights? Why? How did you decide to attend? What were your expectations about the demonstration and did the reality meet your expectations? Have you ever felt uncomfortable there? How? If yes, have you ever challenged this issue? How? If not, why?

- How do you feel about activism around women's rights? Does it address important issues for you? Does it address important issues for other women? How would you evaluate their activities?

- How do you expect women's rights to improve in Georgia?

- Is there any other issue you want to address here or any comment you want to add?

Thank you for your time and participation!

Appendix 7: Interview Guide (Georgian)

გენდერული უთანასწორობა: ქალების მიერ საჯარო და პირადი სივრცეების შეთავსება საქართველოში

(სათაურის სამუშაო ვერსია)

ნახევრად სტრუქტურირებული სიღრმისეული ინტერვიუს სადისკუსიო გეგმა

- თქვენ გადახედეთ მონაწილეთა საინფორმაციო ფურცელს და შეავსეთ თანხმობის ფორმა. კვლევასთან დაკავშირებული კითხვები ხომ არ გაქვთ?

- სანამ დავიწყებთ, თუ შეიძლება, საკუთარი თავის შესახებ მომიყევით.

დემოგრაფიული ინფორმაცია

- ასაკი
- განათლება
- ამჟამინდელი საქმიანობა
- ოჯახური მდგომარეობა
- შვილების რაოდენობა
- კვლევის მონაწილის შემოსავალი თვეში
- კვლევის მონაწილის ოჯახის შემოსავალი თვეში
- ქალაქის რომელ რაიონში ცხოვრობს კვლევის მონაწილე

გენდერული უთანასწორობა საჯარო სივრცეებში

- თქვენი დღის შესახებ მომიყევით. სამსახურის გარდა (თუ დასაქმებულია), როგორც წესი, რას აკეთებთ ყოველდღიურად? როგორ ისვენებთ? რას აკეთებთ გასართობად? საკუთარი თავისთვის თუ გაქვთ დრო?

- არსებობს ისეთი ადგილები სადაც ხშირად დადიხართ?

(*სავარაუდო დამატებითი კითხვები*: რამდენად ხშირად დადიხართ კინოში, თეატრში, მუზეუმებში, ესწრებით კონცერტებს? მიდიხართ რესტორანში/კაფეში/ბარში?)

თუ არა, რატომ არ დადიხართ ასეთ ადგილებში? არის ისეთი ადგილები, სადაც გინდათ დადიოდეთ, მაგრამ ვერ დადიხართ? რატომ? თუ დადიხართ ასეთ ადგილებში, სირთულეებს ხომ არ აწყდებით? როგორ უწევთ წინააღმდეგობას ასეთ საკითხებს?

- საზოგადოებრივ ტრანსპორტს თუ იყენებთ? ისეთი შემთხვევა ხომ არ გახსენდებათ, როდესაც თქვენ თავი ტრანსპორტში არაკომფორტულად იგრძენით? როგორ მოიქეცით ასეთ სიტუაციაში?

- ფეხით თუ დადიხართ ხოლმე? სად, ვისთან ერთად და როდის? ისეთი შემთხვევა ხომ არ გახსენდებათ, როდესაც თავი არაკომფორტულად იგრძენით ქუჩაში? როგორ მოიქეცით ასეთ სიტუაციაში?

- კიდევ რა საკითხები გაწუხებთ ყველაზე მეტად ყოველდღიურად?

თუ დასაქმებულია:

- სამსახურში თუ გექმნებათ გარკვეული პრობლემები? როგორ ფიქრობთ, განსხვავებულად გექცევიან ხოლმე თქვენ და თქვენს კაც კოლეგებს? როგორ უმკლავდებით ასეთ საკითხებს?

- როგორ დაიწყეთ მუშაობა? გქონდათ ბარიერები სამსახურის დაწყების პროცესში? როგორი იყო თქვენი პირადი ცხოვრება ან ოჯახთან ურთიერთობა სამსახურის დაწყებამდე და როგორია ახლა?

თუ სტუდენტია:

- რა პრობლემები გექმნებათ უნივერსიტეტში/ინსტიტუტში/კოლეჯში ან პროფესიულ სასწავლებელში? როგორ ფიქრობთ, განსხვავებულად გექცევიან ხოლმე თქვენ და თქვენს კაც კოლეგებს?

- თუ შეგიძლიათ, მომიყევით, როგორ გადაწყვიტეთ ამ ადგილას სწავლა? პრობლემები ხომ არ შეგქმნიათ მიზნის დასახვის პროცესში? თუ შეგექმნათ, როგორ გაუმკლავდით ამ პრობლემას?

ქალთა უფლებებთან დაკავშირებული საკითხები

- რა ძირითად უთანასწორებას აწყდებით ქალებსა და კაცებს შორის? რამდენად ჰგავს/არ ჰგავს თქვენი პრობლემები სხვა ქალების პრობლემებს? რა კუთხით? ფიქრობთ, რომ გარკვეული პრობლემები მნიშვნელოვანია ქალებისთვის საქართველოში? როგორ უნდა გადაწყდეს ეს პრობლემები?

- ხომ არ ყოფილხართ ორგანიზაციის წევრი ან გარკვეულ კამპანიაში/საინიციატივო ჯგუფის მოძრაობაში ჩართული?

- დემონსტრაციებსა და პროტესტებს ესწრებით ხოლმე? მაგალითად, რომელს დაესწარით? შეგიძლიათ, აღწეროთ სიტუაცია?

- ქალების უფლებებთან დაკავშირებულ დემონსტრაციებს თუ დასწრებიხართ? როგორი იყო თქვენი მოლოდინი მათთან დაკავშირებით? შეგიძლიათ, აღწეროთ ეს დემონსტრაცია?

- რა დამოკიდებულება გაქვთ აქტივიზმის მიმართ ქალთა უფლებების შესახებ? თქვენთვის მნიშვმელოვან საკითხბს თუ ეხებიან ხოლმე აქტივისტები? სხვა ქალებისთვის მნიშვნელოვან საკითხებს თუ ეხებიან? როგორ შეაფასებთ მათ საქმიანობას?

- თქვენი აზრით, როგორ უნდა გამოსწორდეს ქალთა უფლებები საქართველოში?

- რამეს ხომ არ დაამატებდით?

მადლობას გიხდით გამოყოფილი დროისთვის და კვლევაში მონაწილეობის მიღებისთვის!

Appendix 8: Participant Observation Proforma

Participant Observation Proforma

Gender Inequality and Women's Negotiation of Public and Private Spaces in Contemporary Georgia

(Working title)

In all these settings I will observe primarily, women’s interactions and their strategies to respond to gender inequalities. During the observations I will take fieldnotes. All of them will be dated, places and the number of persons involved will be recorded.

In the public transport

I will conduct observations in different kinds of public transports, such as Metro, Buses and Minibuses and in different parts of the city. I will observe women’s behaviours and interactions. Specifically, I am interested in the following topics: how women use the spaces in the public transport; Is there any conflict happening; How women respond to the distress or discomfort; How they interact with other people.

In the parks

I will conduct observations in parks in different parts of the city. I will observe women’s behaviours and interactions. Specifically, I am interested in the following topics: how women use the spaces in the parks; Is there any conflict happening; How they respond to this; How they interact with other people.

In the cafes/restaurants/bars

I will conduct observations in cafes/restaurants/bars in different parts of the city. I will enter these spaces and will observe how women use them. As in the above-mentioned settings, here I am also interested in their interactions, how they engage in communication and respond to any forms of inequality.

On the demonstrations

I will attend demonstrations held in Tbilisi, Batumi and Kutaisi during the fieldwork (if any). Preferably, I will attend demonstrations about women's rights issues (if any). During those demonstrations I will observe how women use protest spaces. However, I will also pay attention to how participants of the demonstration and other people interact with each other.

On women's rights activist meetings

These meetings may take place before demonstrations (if any) or before planning the campaigns in public spaces. I am the member of the Facebook Group of Women's Movement in Georgia and I will have information about such events. In such circumstances, I will contact responsible persons/organisations and will ask them about permission to undertake participant observation. Meetings probably will be held in organisation's office. During these meetings I will observe how activists plan the demonstrations or campaigns, whether they have strategies or not to respond to people's reactions in the streets.

Appendix 9: Ethical Approval

College of Social Sciences

02/10/2018

Dear Sopio Davituri

College of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Project Title: Gender Inequality and Women's Negotiation of Public and Private Spaces in Contemporary Georgia

Application No: 400170243

The College Research Ethics Committee has reviewed your application and has agreed that there is no objection on ethical grounds to the proposed study. It is happy therefore to approve the project, subject to the following conditions:

- Start date of ethical approval: 06/10/2018
- Project end date: 30/09/2020
- Any outstanding permissions needed from third parties in order to recruit research participants or to access facilities or venues for research purposes must be obtained in writing and submitted to the CoSS Research Ethics Administrator before research commences. Permissions you must provide are shown in the *College Ethics Review Feedback* document that has been sent to you.
- The data should be held securely for a period of ten years after the completion of the research project, or for longer if specified by the research funder or sponsor, in accordance with the University's Code of Good Practice in Research: (https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_490311_en.pdf)
- The research should be carried out only on the sites, and/or with the groups and using the methods defined in the application.
- Any proposed changes in the protocol should be submitted for reassessment as an amendment to the original application. The *Request for Amendments to an Approved Application* form should be used:

  https://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/staffandpostgraduateresearchstudents/

Yours sincerely,

Dr Muir Houston

College Ethics Officer

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