Christian Orthodoxy and the ideological development of Georgian adults

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Abstract

The main topic of my thesis is Christian Orthodoxy and the ideological development of Georgian Adults. My aim is to analyze how Christian Orthodoxy affects the ideological development of Georgian adults. My literature review consists of the chapters: religion and sociology, History of Christianity, religion in Georgian History and Religion in Georgia today. In my research I used an interpretative research method. I had 10 interviewees (5 women and 5 men). I conducted semi-structured interviews
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Orthodoxy and the ideological development of Georgian adults

1. Introduction

The aim of my research is to analyse how Georgian (Christian) Orthodoxy affects the ideological development of Georgian youth. I try to analyse which historical facts and social actors impacted Georgia to become Orthodox country and Georgians – to become religious society.

In the first part of my literature review I talk about religion and sociology. I discuss the structural-functional approach to religion. The founding father of functionalist theory was Emile Durkheim. He was interested in how religion helped social institutions to be maintained. He coined the term “collective consciousness” - a tool which limits and shapes our beliefs, or in other words collective consciousness is the sum or the totality of individual “consciousnesses”, which includes shared beliefs and codes of the individuals of society and thus is how social institutions are maintained. He argued that when people worship God unconsciously they worship society which transcends their consciousness.

I also refer to Weber who saw religion more as a system of meaning than a social function. To define it with easier words members of the society explained their conditions with the help of the religion (for example their good or bad fortunes). People need the world to have sense and meaning and religion is the system which explains its meaning. Marx’s approach is simpler than the above mentioned authors’. He calls religion an “opium of the people” – individuals seek relief in religion and it happens because they are supressed and exploited by capitalism.

With my interview questions I seek to test those theories on participants and if possible define which theory works better on my respondents. And from their answers I will try to find what are their ideologies and determine whether they are more conservative or more liberal. For me it is difficult to label people like this because a person can be partly conservative and in some of their views liberal. The thesis seeks to be nuanced in reflecting the views of respondents.
In setting the context for the research I give a historic overview. The second part of the literature review is be about religion in Georgian History and also the History of Christianity (When the great schism happened and why? non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian forms of Christianity etc.) One of the most important social actor in Georgia’s religious development was the Soviet union and communism and in the literature review this is reflected upon.

The closing part of my literature review gives an overview of the religious situation in Georgia today with the statistics about different problems. The reader can see which values does the Georgian youth appreciate more and which institutions do they trust more. In recent years Georgia has been through paradigm shift and the values of youngsters are changing. So I discuss this phenomenon too.

My research method uses qualitative research methods. I think it’s best to identify intangible factors such as social norms, religion and etc. I present deep analysis of the values of the Georgian youngsters. I decided that interview would be vis-a-vis, because if I had done group interviews I might have missed some important answers, because religion and belief is a very sensitive topic.

At this point I would like to engage in some reflexivity, positioning myself in the life-world I describe. The Idea to write about how Christian Orthodoxy affects the Ideological development of the Georgian youth didn’t come to me in a second or a minute. During my childhood classmates used to call me an atheist. I liked it because I felt unique and different from others. It is because of Georgian Culture. Most of the Georgians are Orthodox and in this kind of society being atheist means being special. Ideologically I was not an atheist it was just me being infantile. I had not much knowledge about Christian Orthodoxy but I knew the main principles of new-testament and those were being kind, tolerant and to love everyone. But I often saw people doing crime in the name of Christianity.

I can recall in 2013 17th May the international day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia. At that day in Tbilisi during a rally gathered thousands of conservative Ultra-Orthodox supporters who broke through police cordons and clashed with gay rights activists. Among the Orthodox supporters there were many priests. So I was surprised how the people who call themselves Christians could do such a criminal act. I can recall a lot of other criminal activities which I talk more in details at my literature review part.
2. Literature review

2.1 Religion and Sociology

Let’s see what the founding fathers of sociology thought about religion. For Durkheim God equaled society. As he believed society existed apart from individuals. Social reality transcends individuals’ existence, so their beliefs are shaped and limited by ‘collective consciousness’ (The totality of individual consciousnesses). And this collective consciousness includes beliefs and moral codes which are shared among the members of society. In this way religion strengthens social stability and cohesion (Tomalin, 2007). As Thompson cited Durkheim’s words are: “A religion is a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (1982, p. 129). That’s as we see is a functionalist approach to the religion and is very interesting for me. Here is clearly seen how religion can unify people and that unity can strengthen ideology. In my opinion this theory can be very close to the situation of Georgia. In the Soviet Union (as long as Georgia was in it) communism helped to maintain social institutions and social cohesion (its rules, moral codes, beliefs), and Georgia as the other soviet countries had strict communist rules. After the soviet union collapsed those strict rules disappeared and members of the society needed to have new strict social system and I think Christian Orthodoxy was a best choice for the “collective consciousness” as long as this consciousness remembered this institution was working good before entering the soviet union.

For Marx people seek relief and solace in the religion when they are exploited by capitalism and upper class (Tomalin 2007). This is also good point because Georgia always was relatively poor country. I won’t go further with Marx because it’s very narrow approach towards religion whereas religion is seen through the lenses of capitalism.

As reader can analyze from next pages Georgia is only formally a secularized state. Let’s see what we can find in sociological literature about secularization. If we will follow Woodhead and Heelas (2000, pp. 307-41) there are four positions on secularization: (1) the disappearance thesis, (2) the differentiation thesis, (3) the de-intensification thesis and (4) the coexistence thesis.
I won’t discuss the disappearance thesis, because it’s about modern West and how religion will disappear in contemporary west, as long as Georgia is not a contemporary west.

The differentiation thesis suggests that religion might not be influential in the public life of society but it still has power in the private life of people. One of the key features of modernity is the differentiation of society into ‘public’ and ‘private’ lives. The public sphere is the sectors such as medicine, science or economy. The private life is the sphere where male/female finds meaning (Beyer, 1994). So Theorists suggest that in modern era religion lost the integrative function in public sphere. Here is very interesting point for me, because in Georgia religion is a still functioning in public spheres. And transition from developing country to developed country must include privatization of religion I think.

But some scholars think that the secularization in Europe is exception than a rule (Martin, 1990) and Obviously Georgia is not exception in this case. Nowadays we see growing interests towards the influence of religion on public life, humanities and social sciences, and this includes interests towards the interaction of religion with the secular states and societies (Tomalin, 2007).

What modernity brought in the west was a fragmentation of society. And many sociologists like Durkheim, Weber and Marx think that because of this fragmentation religion has lost its significance (Tomalin, 2007). Here speaking is about fragmentation of the society as different actors and different roles. People have different occupations in modern society. That’s an interesting detail. Reader will see in next pages that the Georgian youngsters who have different occupations and are regular employees have sense of more individuality comparing of those who are not-workers. Not-workers see themselves as a parts of their families, nation or religious groups. And those who see themselves as individuals are less inclined to the religion then those who are not-workers and see themselves as aparts of bigger society. So here the research which I analyzed about Georgian youngsters affirm what Weber, Marx and Durkheim thought.

What weber said about his research and interest about religion is very important point in my thesis. He said next: “To define ‘religion’, to say what it is, is not possible at the start of a presentation such as this. Definition can be attempted, if at all, only at the conclusion of the study. The essence of religion is not even our concern as we make it our task to study the conditions and effects of a particular type of social behavior. The external courses of religious behaviors are so diverse that
understanding of this behavior can only be achieved from the viewpoint of the subjective experiences, ideas, and purposes of the individuals concerned – in short, from the viewpoint of the religious behavior’s meaning”. Weber, The Sociology of Religion (1963, p.1). For me it’s the same I’m not interested in the essence of religion but I’m interested in how the religion and particularly Orthodoxy affects Georgian youth’s development. But of course when someone is speaking how religion affects something, there must be the few words about the religion itself. If you don’t know what something mean than it’s more difficult to measure how it affects other thing or things.

Hamilton said that the religion for Weber is the necessity for individuals to account for their conditions in which they find themselves, for their bad or good fortunes. In other words religion clarifies and makes the sense of the world (Hamilton, 1998). Many times, at my surroundings, I’ve heard the words: “It was the god’s will” and people were saying it when something bad or something good happened. So I think Hamilton’s words have a sense. I think it’s at some point bad because when individual is always explaining his/her fortune by god’s will, it might put him/her in the position of reluctance.

As you will see in the next chapter religion had a very big impact in Georgian History and Georgian culture. Now it’s time to talk about the social capital. As Putnam explains the social capital is next:

“Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue”. The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital” (2000, p.19).

Talking about social capital one should not forget that latter is generated from the religion (Smidt, 2003). Fukuyama explained that social theories relating about the inevitability of secularization only works in Western Europe, elsewhere there is a little evidence that religion is losing its importance. For example we can look at the Latin America and Islamic world were in last decades has emerged a new forms of religiosity. From the viewpoint of social capital not every form of religion is positive. As an example we can look at the sectarianism which encourages hatred, violence and intolerance.
But still religion is historically the one of the key sources of norms and culture and might remain in the future. Social capital often is produced from the sources of authority which is hierarchical. Authority establishes norms and expects obedience to it for a-rational reasons. Examples can be Islam, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and etc. Such norms go from generation to generation by socialization which involves more habit than a reason (Fukuyama 1999). Unfortunately the role of the social capital is underestimated, under researched and poorly understood in non-western societies (Verter, 2003; Park and Smith, 2000). Probably this is why I could not find any scientific research paper about social capital in Georgia.

2.2 History of Christianity

A central focus of the literature review is Christian Orthodoxy in Georgia. So of course I need to give a historical overview. As is widely known Christianity became the dominant and official religion of the Roman Empire between the 306-337 AD, in the time of the Emperor Constantine the Great, who founded Constantinople, the Roman Empire’s new seat. In 451 AD the Council of Chalcedon introduced the formula of Christ where two natures were united but both were distinct from each other. These two natures mean Christ’s divinity and humanity united in individual existence of Christ. After that there was a split between non-Chalcedonian and Chalcedonian forms of Christianity (Roudometof, 2013, p. 231). Non-Chalcedonian churches included Ethiopians, Armenians, Coptic and Assyrians (MacCulloch, 2009). The term “orthodox” (meaning the correct doctrine) was used by the Chalcedonian churches to express them. Orthodox and Catholic Christians appeared in the Chalcedonian church (Roudometof, 2013, p. 231). Originally there was just a Chalcedonian Christianity which included both parts of the Mediterranean basin (Clendenin, 2002; McGukin, 2008).

It is important to consider the distinctions of Orthodox Christianity and Roman Catholicism because they are the main branches of Christianity and it is claimed we see more development in Catholic countries then in Orthodox countries and thus I may find a reason for that through a review of the two branches. The Great Schism, which happened, in 1054 is the term used when a symbolic division occurred between Roman Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity. Patriarch Michael Celuraius and his followers were condemned by papal delegates in Constantinople (Chadwick, 2003; Geanakopoulos, 1993; Pelikan, 1977). As a response patriarch’s synod excommunicated the papal delegates (Harris, 2007). The great Schism not happened in a day or an year, it was gradual
process which officially reached culmination in 1054. It happened because of the Political power segregation and doctrinal differences.

At first the connection of the Roman emperor and Christianity’s high clergy involved an ecclesiastical governance by the pentarchy – the five ancient patriarchates of Antioch, Jerusalem, Alexandria, Rome and Constantinople. Each of the patriarchates had their representative. From the viewpoint of the Roman Empire and Orthodoxy, the bishop of Rome was first among equals. After the bishop of Rome by rank came the Patriarchate of Constantinople as Rome’s chief rival. The Pope was the highest in the rank, as the successor of St Peter’s, and other bishops should yield to his authority (Roudometof, 2013).

If the reader has read a bible and moreover new testament he/she can appreciate easily what kind of contrast we see between these issues of division of power and teachings of Christ: “{5:33} Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: {5:39} But I say unto you, That ye resist no evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. {5:40} And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have [thy] cloak also. {5:41} And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. {5:42} give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. {5:43} Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. {5:44} But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; {5:45} That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and unjust. {5:46} For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? {5:47} And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more [than others?] do not even the publicans so?” (New Testament). I can hardly believe that author of this word could welcome such hierarchies and separation of powers as I have detailed, moreover if it was done by his name. It’s enough to remember the crusade wars and read the above mentioned text and you see the clear contradiction. But knowing the history of Christianity and its development, now I’m not surprised by the crimes done by the name of Christ, which often has occurred in Georgia and about what I will talk in next pages.

I was surprised when I found out that Orthodox Christianity has more liberal doctrines than Catholic Christianity, because we can clearly see that Catholic countries are more developed than Orthodox
countries. Of course one can say that it’s because other reasons and not because of religious heritage, but as we sociologists are taught everything is connected and anything has an impact on everything. As a central societal institution it is reasonable to assume that a nation’s faith has some bearing on its development. I found the table of the Countries with rating by their Human Development Index (HDI). Calculations and data’s were collected from UNESCO Institute for statistics, UNDESA, United Nations Statistica Division and World Bank. The first Orthodox country which comes by number is Greece and it’s in 29th place and Georgia’s place is 70th, whereas Catholic countries such as Switzerland, Australia and Germany are in first four places. Before I continue about distinction between the above mentioned Orthodoxy and Catholicism I must define the two terms: indigenization and vernacularization.

“Vernacularization blends religious universalism with specific vernacular languages- which are endowed with the privileged ability of offering communication with sacred” (Roudometof, 2013, 229) and “indigenization Blends religious universalism with local particularism by adopting religious ritual, expression and hierarchies into the specifics of a particular ethnicity” (Roudometof, 2013, 229).

The root of the separation of Orthodoxy was as mentioned above the issue between Rome and Constantinople and in the eastern Mediterranean part Christian Orthodoxy was established which was distinct from the Christian tradition of the west. In order to codify the correct faith the religious document Synodikon of Orthodoxy was written in 843 A.D. (Louth, 2006).

Indigenization was more typical to Orthodoxy, because it had decentralized administration. On the other hand we see that in Western Europe Latin remained as a liturgical language; At the same time in the Eastern Mediterranean while Greek was an imperial language it was never thought to be a sacred language. For example in Georgia the Old Georgian language was used and in Syria Aramaic which were not sacred languages. Clearly it is seen that Vernacularization was more typical to Catholicism (Roudometof, 2013, 233). That’s why I said above that Orthodoxy had more liberal points than Catholicism.

One more example of the flexibility of Orthodoxy was the use of Old Slavonic for liturgy and construction of the Cyrillic Alphabet. Also orthodoxy was granting autonomy to various archbishoprics.
Again particularly talking about Orthodoxy I found out that the Orthodox priest can be married, while it’s restricted in Catholicism (Pew Research Centre, 2017). The Pew research centre is the centre which makes research about global religion and they analyse religions impact on societies around the world and religious changes. In this research paper it was also said that Orthodox Christians allow divorce and remain moral conservatism on same-sex marriage and homosexuality.

So as I talked about how Christianity was split up and the main distinctions between Orthodoxy and Catholicism now I will talk about Georgian Orthodoxy.

2.3 Religion in Georgian History

Georgia’s sense of self is bounded up with Orthodoxy. One of the reasons is that Georgia is surrounded by Muslim states (excluding Armenia) and Georgians had to protect its Christianity starting from the fifth century. Georgia was a communist state from 1921 to 1991 and communism was not very welcoming towards religion so after the split of the USSR the religious feelings started to break free again with new power. If you now see the Georgian flag it has Christian five-cross flag which only strengthens the feelings of religiousness.

Theoretically Georgia is a secular state, but practically the church intervenes in the public and private life of Georgians. The reason is next as they say: “The ‘protection of society’ from sexual perversions or looseness” (Spurling, 2004, p. 218). For example they have closed sex shops in Georgia and the justification for that is to conserve Georgia’s morality and Heritage. As the Tamara Shamil said in 2004, who was working for the Caucasus Institution for Peace, Democracy and Development, the church of Georgia has a special department to monitor television programs and books.

I will tell a few stories of the recent past of Georgia which will help the reader to see what was happening years ago regarding religion. The Orthodox priest Vasil Mkalavishvili (Father Basil) was defrocked (expelled) by the Orthodox church in 1997 for his violent behavior and strong opinions. But for the Emil Adelkhanov, who is human rights defender from the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development, it was the act of giving freedom to such people to do whatever they want. Malkhaz Songluashvili, a Baptist bishop said that he was sure that Mkalavishvili was
supported by the Georgian Church tacitly. Government did almost same. Songulashvili went to meet state minister Eduard Shevardnadze to demand some security guarantees but he was told that they were unable to imprison Father Basil because of the fear of public demonstrations. So Songulashvili answered: “If you’re not able to put him in jail, why can’t you put us in jail so we can feel more secure?” (Spurling, 2004, p. 219). Baptists had their church burnt, from churches were stolen 10 litres of sacred wine and thousands of their Bibles burned, between 2002 and 2003.

If we trust Songulashvili, the aggression towards Baptists was caused by the Patriarch who accused them of buying people with humanitarian help. Baptists Church had several homes for disabled people and some education centres. The Patriarch asked Shevardnadze’s help “with the cults flooding the country” (Spurling, 2004, p. 219). The church was not the only aggressor, but police was also responsible as they didn’t intervene when they were asked by the minorities.

One of the targets of Father Basil and his followers were also the Jehovah’s Witnesses. They attacked anyone who even defended them, including human rights Liberty Institute and newspapers (Spurling, 2004).

Finally some legal proceedings came against Vasil Mkalavishvili in 2001. He was forbidden to leave Tbilisi. Then in 2003, he was sentenced for three months of pre-trial detention. The reason for the conviction was destroying the literature of Witnesses of Jehova for the past two years. But a month later police still didn’t know his whereabouts (Spurling, 2004).

When Shevardnadze was overthrown in the Rose Revolution, in 2004 March, Basil was arrested in his suburban diocese during a dawn raid. Before that he was a wanted man for 8 months. “Basil’s followers were out in force with their stones and pike staffs. But the police were equally heavy-handed” (Spurling, 2004, p. 221). But I can say that Spurling, who was a freelance journalist based in Tbilisi, was mistaken here very much. I have seen the video of the raid and it’s right that from the people there was aggression and they were with pike staffs and stones, But the police didn’t use their power proportionally. They were hitting women and men when they were already disarmed and it made no sense. This is evident in a video which can be seen at this link https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M021FwUJ4a8&t=633s.
2.4 Religion in Georgia Today

I was able to find a piece of research conducted by Friedrich Ebert fund which was focused on young Georgians ranging between 14 and 29 years in 2016. For most of them trusted social reference point is the immediate and good family life. They don’t trust political institutions and they say political institutions didn’t much care about their interests. They want to access NATO and EU knowing that it will cause difficulties with Russia. They are keen to preserve Georgian culture and to reproduce traditional values. The church is the most trusted institution for them, because it’s representing these values. Alongside with this their acceptance of equality and diversity are very low. Like in most of the countries there are big contrasts between females and males and also in youngsters of capital and youngsters of rural areas. In rural areas youngsters tend to be more conservative and in the capital more liberal (Omanadze et al, 2017). We can see strong links between the trust for church, family values and conservatism of values and not accepting the minorities and diversities. That is nowadays what churches and priests are preaching.

Here should be noted that by Georgian Orthodox tradition the new-born is expected to be baptized from 8 days till 40 days of his/her living. I will translate the words of the famous Georgian Archimandrite Gabriel: “Newborn must be baptized from 8 days till 40 days of his/her living” (Sibrdzne.ge, 2019). This fact is worth noting for me because one has to understand that in most cases when an individual becomes Orthodox Christian s/he is unconsciousness of that. Later in my research I will get back to this point again.

The main institutions which Georgian youngsters trust are religious institutions, the army and police. The most important value for them is God (90%) (Omanadze et al, 2017). Least trust by them are given to LGBT people. They said they would not be happy if a homosexual couple would live in the same neighbourhood in which they are living. But here I should mention that 45% said they would not care if such a couple would come to live in their neighbourhood (Omanadze et al, 2017). And this attitude is strengthened by their Orthodoxy. Knowing this I ironically remember the words of John from the new testament “20. Whoever claims to love God but hates a brother or sister is liar.” And Lukes’ words: “37. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven”. Now we can clearly see how discrimination against every kind of people is not Christian behaviour. One-fifth of respondent wants to migrate in order to improve living conditions and to have access to education employment, because in Georgia
we lack practical components in the study process of higher education institutions (Omanadze et al, 2017). We can say that Georgia is inclined to the traditional values. Those values of youngsters are explained by the traditional social environment where they live and where they go to socialize in childhood and youth. Again I will say that one of the most important value for youths is family (Omanadze et al, 2017).

One of the reasons why I chose to focus on youths is because every fifth person in Georgia is between ages 15-29. This is according to the National Statistics Office of Georgia. These youngsters are those whose attitudes will have impact of the development and future of Georgia and its Ideology. During the social transformation values are changing, moreover values of young people (Sumbadze, 2012). Recent surveys showed that for the Georgian population democracy is preferable than any other form of governing (47%). And the higher share of those who prefer are people among 18-35 (51%) (CRRC, 2015).

The citizen participation in Georgia is very new. We can say that 79% of Georgians, have not used media to express their opinions, signed a petition or attended a public meeting. But higher engagement we can see in voting behaviour (Omanadze, et al 2017). The youngsters of Georgia sporadically engage in activities when there are hardship times of Georgia, but it has not a shape of regular activity. For example we can remember Tbilisi flood of 2015. 38% of Tbilisi youngsters helped others during this flood (Omanadze, et al 2017). We must note here that to build a democracy civil participation is most important element, but it must have regular rather than a sporadic status. One of the biggest problems which Georgia faces is the unemployment. This problem was named by 85% of youngster respondents (Omanadze et al, 2017). So logically unemployment is followed by poverty.

Young people of Georgia are not rightists neither leftists, they prefer a centrist view. They say government must provide to every citizen basic necessities and a socially equal environment. (Omanadze et al, 2017). This attitude is good if you ask me. For me being a radical in any way is bad. I prefer to be somewhere in the centre. In this case a person is ready to take new opinions and viewpoints and this is always good to build up Democratic ideology.

I think in order one to have a will of participation in citizen activity there should be conditions of a favourable environment or invitation to participate in politics. This motivation is hindered by lack of
education and poverty. Before 2012 in Georgia there was not any legislative framework for youth to address their interests. In order to establish an environment which encourages youth development, to fully realize their potential, and youngsters to be involved in all spheres of citizen activity (public life), The Georgian Government approved a “State’s Youth Policy document” in 2014 (Government of Georgia 2014).

We know that liberal viewpoint place more accent on individual and conservative viewpoints and make more emphasis on collective self-perception. I think when we talk about youth’s values and ideologies we must also make an emphasis on what I said in the later sentence. More than half of the participants said that they belonged to their Nation. 12% of them said that they were world citizen. 11% said that they were part of their town or village, 1% said they were part of their neighbourhood and 20 percent said they were autonomous citizens. It’s worth noting that most of the youngsters who said they were world citizens or autonomous individuals were living in Tbilisi and were employed, also they were from the middle and upper social class (Omanadze, et al 2017). From these statistics we can again see how nationalism is important for young Georgians and how employment strengthens the feeling of individualism. I think it’s because when you are employed and you take care for yourself you feel more independent from others. It’s very interesting how employability can change a paradigm and world view. From these statistics I can deduct that rise of employability and job offers can raise ones’ sense of individualism. It’s very different topic to measure correlation between employability and sense of individualism but its interesting fact.

Georgian youngsters feel optimistic towards the future, 95% of them think that situation will improve in the country in next 10 years. Concerning migration they see it like a threat. I mean increase of the migration rates (Omanadze et al, 2017). Discrimination is also issue for young Georgians how it is like in most of the countries. 8% of the participants said that they were discriminated because of their economic background very often (Omanadze et al, 2017).

A major determiner of human behavior are the beliefs, attitudes and values. Also social environment plays important role of the shaping attitudes, values and beliefs of the individual. There are two broad values according to the global map of values by Welzel-Inglehart’s Cultural Map. So there are two dimensions: first is the dimension of “traditional vs secular-rational values” and second is “survival vs self-expression values” (Inglehart, Welzel, 2005). When there are changes in political and social environment between those two dimensions happens shift also.
“Regarding the first dimension, traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, national pride, respect for authority, obedience marriage, parent-child ties, and traditional family values. People who embrace these values reject divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. Secular-rational values have opposite preference than traditional values. These societies place less emphasis on religion, traditional family values and authority. Divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide are seen as relatively acceptable” (Omanadze et al, 2017, p93). We have clearly seen that Georgians prefer more traditional values then secular-rational values. For me it was a surprise to read that secular-rational values are more relatively acceptable to suicide. I fear that is very different topic then mine but I still can attach it to my thesis. From Georgian Orthodox viewpoint it’s sin to commit suicide and partially I agree with this, though there are many different kinds of situations why that suicide happened so it’s very big topic. One I know is that when a person dies it happens to everyone else then person who dies. I mean it affects his/her social group and of course not him/her anymore (at least in our world) because he/she is already dead. One thing that I can say about that is in the society where suicide is more acceptable I think that more suicides will happen then where it’s not acceptable. For more information you can check Durkheim and his research on suicides.

Concerning about “survival vs. self-expression values” the former involves a priority towards physical and economic security rather than non-acceptance of homosexuality, liberty, tolerance, low levels of trust (towards outsiders), tolerance and abstinence from political action. As you see it’s more ethnocentric viewpoint. Self-expression pays more attention to the things which survival values pay less attention for example tolerance towards homosexuals and foreigners, environmental protection and etc. (Inglehart, Welzel, 2016).

So Georgians are more inclined to traditional and survival values. This is natural for me because if we will see history of Georgia we will understand that we had many wars and we were occupied many times by Iranians and by Agha Mohhamad Khan Kajar in 1795. They wanted Georgians to become Muslims but most of the Georgians didn’t obey them and were ready to give their lives in order to sustain Orthodoxy and self-identity. Georgian self-identity and Orthodoxy are very correlated and it helped us to survive many years. By orthodoxy we naturally sustained our traditions and I think now it’s difficult to say “good-bye” to them.

“According to survey results, the absolute majority of young people believes in the existence of God (97%) and in the creation of the world by God (91%). Also, 80 percent of respondents believe in the
existence of heaven and hell, while a comparatively smaller share believes in God as the source of moral norms and obligations (75%)” (Omanadze et al, 2017, p. 108). Here is the interesting thing. If religion helps for some people to strengthen their moral norms and obligations than it has good affection. Of course there are some people who are not religious but still have moral norms and they don’t need to be in some religious dominations. But if for some people it’s otherwise and even more, even if for some criminal-minded people religious invents limit then it’s very good thing to be religious.

Lot of time I heard that science and religion have some misunderstandings between each other. For me it is wrong and now I will state why. Science and religion are very different dimensions and one cannot measure religion from scientific view and science from religious view. “Science is the study of the nature and behavior of natural things and the knowledge that we obtain about them” (Collins dictionary). And most controversial issue between science and religion is the how world was created or whether Jesus was living and if he was living if he was really a son of God. I consider myself as a Christian so for me, if the day will come and science will figure out that Christ was not living at all, it won’t change much. Most important thing is that that kind of person was living in the other’s mind at least and they could imagine person with such traits and talks. As long as a person like Christ is living in the minds he is alive. I’m afraid I little bit changed direction of my thesis so I will get back. Christianity’s and Georgian Orthodoxy’s main goal is to teach people how to live in harmony and kindness, don’t do bad things and strengthen their moral and here science doesn’t have any say. Its interest is very different than what I said about Christianity. Now I will summarize the words of the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia and the spiritual leader of the Orthodox Church Ilia II.

Unfortunately there is no English translation available for the text. He said that faith and knowledge (Scientific knowledge) is two very important things. If the person has only faith than he/she is slave of the god, but if person has faith and Knowledge (Scientific Knowledge) than he/she is the friend of the God. But he adds also that scientific knowledge must come and be based on the faith and not in any other way. Nowadays Science is not coming from the faith and that’s why we have so many problems. Good example good be the holes in the Ozone layer which brought us so many cataclysms. And that’s because Science has forgotten the faith (Illia II, 1997).

Youngsters of Georgia differentiate between two categories of religiosity (1) “believers” and (2) “religious people” / “church goers”. First category involves people who believe in god but rarely or
never do religious rituals. The latter involves people who go in the church and do religious rituals, for example to confess, have a person priest, etc. But from this survey also appeared “church critics/opposers”. These people oppose not the Christianity, but Georgian Orthodox Church. Their opinions come to challenge the religious statements of some priests. They say priests inappropriately understand religious teachings and make bad interpretations of it. “It is stated that going to church, fasting, and performing other religious rituals is considered fashionable, and therefore lots of young people are following without putting much meaning into their behaviours” (Sumbadze, 2017, p. 113). We clearly see here pattern of what Durkheim said that religion helps social cohesion. People like similar people and they feel attached towards each other and then “collective consciousness” comes to an action.

The values of the young people were studied in the following way. They had to evaluate: “(1) importance of different personality traits; (2) their attitudes towards various behaviours connected with sex and sexuality, such as abortion, sexual abstinence and gay people, and (3) various statements associated with different values” (Omanadze, et al 2017, p. 114). And not surprisingly the choices of most respondents were traditional values. From the majority of respondents faithfulness, decency/correctness and dignity were chosen as most important values.

Regardless of their sex, age, economic or marital status the family is equally valuable for young Georgian population. But as the study of Values and Generation showed there is a difference between the young and old generation: young people place more value on work, leisure, friends, religion and education than the old generation (Sumbadze, 2012). When we are talking about the different values of different generations, we must consider which major changes went through Georgia in past two decades. The Country disintegrated from Soviet Union which was followed by the civil war and loss of territories, what greatly affected the cultural, economic and political life of Georgians (Omanadze et al, 2017).

“When a society and culture undergo a paradigm shift, the new paradigms does not immediately replace the old ones as the dominant patterns of thinking and behaviour. Some traditional elements are losing their authority of relevance, while other elements retain their force. Such reconfiguration is an intrinsic part of more general process of social change, especially visible in a transitional setting such as in Georgia, and it affects in the first place the younger strata of society, more susceptible to change, - primarily family, gender and generational relations, as well as the general
process of transition to adulthood in the general framework of the life cycle. The processes of change are not characterised by a straightforward replacement of existing behavioural stereotypes and value orientations, but rather they are gradual and non-homogenous, although there are examples of more rapid change. Such “mosaical” transition is taking place in Georgia, contributing further to its cultural diversity. Indeed, Georgia is culturally and ethnically highly diversified country, so the traditions of family, relations between generations and the gender role may differ strongly. Still, there are some overall patterns and stereotypes to be observed, rooted in the dominant centuries-long tradition of Orthodox Christianity, the Mediterranean value system and the Soviet legacy, with emerging role of Western influence” (Sumbadze N., Tarkhan-Mouravi G., 2012, pp. 2-3). As I see this transition goes in Georgia but in very slow paces. One of the example of this transition can be “legalisation of weed only for users” which was legislated at 30 July of 2018 by the constitutional court of Georgia. But very next day the Georgian Orthodox church said that Georgian constitutional court should be closed.

In Georgia there are different norms and expectations about girls and boys and their relationships and sexual roles. Girls say that they have much less freedom in the choice of friends, and parents look after it very strictly. Same pattern we see in bringing a boyfriend home without a permission or living separately with them. But with the keys of boys there is very different situation. Boys and their parents have same perception of freedom for the former in expressing their opinions, living alone and choosing their girlfriend and they can freely contradict the parent’s views (Sumbadze, Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2012). The gender difference is a very big topic and below I describe some important points related to gender. What I can say shortly is that most values we have come from how people understand Georgian Orthodoxy but the new testament doesn’t say anything about that men have more rights than women. I won’t state my opinion here because my job is to measure and check how Georgian Orthodoxy affects youth of Georgia and how orthodoxy is understood by them.

In western societies young people are delaying the marriage; they prefer to live in cohabitation. It’s monogamy without marriage. In Georgia youngsters rarely live like that because in most cases families don’t approve that and one reason for that is that for girls’ parents virginity is highly valued, but society is little by little changing their attitude towards the sexual freedom for the girls (Sumbadze, Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2012). Also one reason for not preferring living in cohabitation is Georgian youngsters themselves. 43% of respondents think that “one advantage of marriage over an
unmarried relationship is that marriage assigns more responsibility between partners. However, one fourth (25%) of young respondents think of marriage as a priority because marriage is more respected in Georgia than cohabitation. Only one in ten (11%) respondents thinks that there is no difference between marriage and cohabitation. There were no important differences in terms of age and gender perspectives” (Omanadze et al, p. 140).

Concerning the emigration (81%) of young respondents say that they want to study abroad and less of them want to go abroad to work for three years. Men have more desire to do it than women. Mostly youngsters have negative attitude towards emigration (Sumbadze, Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2012).

3. Methodology

In my research I use semi-structured interviews because I think it’s the best way to investigate the participants’ deep feelings and thoughts. In this sense the research is interpretative meaning that “interpretative research is a research paradigm that is based on the assumption that social reality is not singular or objective, but is rather shaped by human experiences and social contexts” (Courses.lumenlearning.com, 2019), moreover when the topic is as sensitive as the religion is. In this research the Georgian Orthodoxy is the independent variable and dependent variables are the participants. I try to investigate how religious social actors impacted in creating other religious social actors. I want to make group interview because it will help me to understand the topic from the functionalism point of view. Thinking of the interview questions were difficult because the belief is very personal thing and some participants can be offended very easily. First I will start with the warm-up questions and then I will go to the personal questions. Coming out from reactions of the participants sometimes I will improvise with questions. I might not ask any question from the bottom but change it with more relevant question. Sometimes I might add questions to clarify the answer more (See appendix for questions).

The research conforms to the International Sociological Association code of ethics by being based on informed consent – thus respondents will be given an information letter and asked to sign their consent – the letter also promises anonymity (See appendix)
In order for the participants to feel more comfortable I will use both confidentiality and anonymity. They will remain anonymous throughout the study and they will have the fictional names (For example interviewer N1. Etc.). In this way I assure that the welfare of the members will be protected.

My participants will be all from Georgia. Five males and five females, because I want to see gender differences (if there will be any). As I already mentioned in my literature review in Georgia there are equality problems between men and women and society expects from them different things.

### 4. Findings

**Background information of the participants:**

All my participants were from Georgia. Five male and five female participants under the age of 30. Five of them currently live abroad and five of them still live in Georgia. Nevertheless all their cultural identities were created in Georgia and all of them perceive themselves as Christian Orthodox. From five males three live outside of Georgia and two are locals, of the females – three of them are locals and two live abroad. The youngest age when one of my participant left Georgia is 17 years, and he fully identifies himself with Georgia. When I will consider necessary I will refer to my interviewees who live currently in Georgia as “locals” and who live abroad as “emigrants”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Where currently located</th>
<th>Education level/occupation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Masters/Technical support analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lillian</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Bachelors/HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severus</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Bachelors/unemployed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Most of my interviewees don’t remember when they were baptized. The youngest approximate age of the baptism in my research is 40 days, so even less than one year. The maximum age is 5 years. Mostly female participants remember clearer or have information when were they baptized. It might be because culture and traditions have more restraining and affecting impact on them than to the males. What all said was that baptism was not their decision but their parents’ decision. William specified that even though it was not his choice he would do the same given the current perspective he holds. Severus added that he had a positive attitude towards his baptism and he does not see a problem that mostly when Georgians are baptized it happens during a very early age and it’s their parents’ decision, because they can always go in the church and get unbaptized. Here comes the problem which I already mentioned in my literature review. When an individual becomes Orthodox Christian it’s not his/her choice in most cases and he/she can’t fully understand what with this ritual is happening.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Education/Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Masters/ unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walter</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Bachelors/Financial analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nino</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Bachelors/Restoration architect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Bachelors/Press service and piar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabella</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Bachelors/Media monitor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>Bachelors/purchase accounting analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>PHD candidate/academic researcher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig 1 Participants
Half of my participants said that the main teachings of Christian Orthodoxy are the 10 commandments. Some of them did not remember all the commandments but mainly they underlined the commandment which said “Thou Shalt not kill”. It strengthens one of my “sub-hypothesis” that religiousness strengthens the moral code for some people and restrains them making violent behavior. It does not need any research that at least for some percentage of non-religious people “Thou Shalt not kill” is already clear fact without any religious affiliation. So to summarize about this topic half the sample said that the main teachings of Christian Orthodoxy are 10 commandments, 4 out of 10 underlined “Thou Shalt not kill” and another 4 said that Orthodoxy’s basic tenet is to love others. The answers were so similar in this part that I remembered Weber’s “collective consciousness”. In interviewees the moral codes and beliefs which are shared with the help of religion were evident. This theory was even more strengthened by my participants when mostly all of them said that religion strengthens cohesion and social stability.

Concerning the question if religion helps my participants to make sense of the world with the help of religion I received very interesting answers. More than a half of them said that they understand the world with the help of religion and science and one of them said that religion and science are intertwined. Kate said that for her Darwin’s theory of evolution and Christian Orthodoxy are not contradicted by each other. For Isabella religion is more for the order and to unite people then to explain the sense of the world (Webers’ system of meaning) Now it seems apt to repeat the words of the Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia and spiritual leader of the Orthodox Church Ilia II: “If the person has only faith than he/she is slave of the god, but if the person has faith and knowledge (scientific knowledge) than he/she is the friend of the god”. In the case of my participants scientific knowledge is not blocked by the religion and they are “friends of god” as Ilia II said.

My next questions were about the gender differences and gender problems. The 6th question was whether God asks different things for women and men, or to clarify if there is something that is sinful for women and same thing can be not sinful for men or reversed. All of them answered with no. Concerning sex before marriage eight of them said that it’s completely okay and acceptable. Nino said it is acceptable for her but it puts the women in a more difficult situation in Georgia than the men. In her surroundings she often heard that boys refused marriage with the girl because she was not virgin. Severus said that it is not acceptable for him because under the tenets of Christian Orthodoxy it’s a sinful act. In the traditional societies women are expected to be housewives and
raise a children and not pursue their career. On this issue the interviewees answers were identical. They think that it is acceptable (even normal and in some cases necessary thing) for women to raise a child and same time pursue their career.

*Figure 2 - Acceptance for sex before the marriage:*

The thesis interviews drew some interesting findings for the question was: “do you think Georgia has gender equality problems?” (clarification: every country has such a problems, but if it is statistically higher). Maria said that Georgia is a part of the patriarchal world. The situation is not as bad as it is in Islamic countries, but not as good as it is in the Scandinavian countries. Walters’ answer was that there exists gender equality problems, because when a husband is bullying his wife psychologically or physically or both it’s perceived as normal by other people (not all of them) and they don’t interrupt the situation because they are thinking that the wrongdoer is the wife as the husband is head of family and will do to his wife whatever he wants. William also affirmed that there are problems but added that now the situation is much better than it was before. Severus said that concerning gender equality in Georgia there are no problems (only a few incidents). He added that this kind of issues (gender equality, LGBT problems) and problems are created artificially in order for some people to make money on it.
Nine of my interviewees stated that the gender equality problem is partially reinforced from our traditions and religion. Only Severus said that it’s not coming from above mentioned. Explanations were different: one said that religion and God are different dimensions and intermediary people who explain us religion in the wrong way are different dimensions. Walter said that the Georgian church is developed in the same level as Georgian society is developed. So how developed Georgian society is any other Georgian institution will be developed in the same manner. For him one example of reinforcing gender discrimination was the international day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia which was on 17th may. As I already mentioned before the priests and their parish went out and physically attacked the peace-full protesters. Kate said that church reinforces discriminating traditions at some level, also poverty reinforces lack of the education. Nino added that some religious people perceive the information in peculiar ways and Lillian said that dominance of the men is coming from Orthodox Christianity. Once again I need to refer to Welzel- Inglehart’s Cultural map. There are two broad values according to them. The first is “traditional vs. secular-rational values” and second is “survival vs. self-expressions values” (for explanation see the chapter “Religion in Georgia Today). My interviewees answers affirmed my literature review finding that Georgians are more inclined to traditional values.

I asked the interviewees if they know a religious person whose words they believe without analyzing them. It’s important question because I wanted to know if they have an “idolizing-type” of thinking. I call “idolizing-type” of thinking the way of thinking when any authoritative person tells you something and you trust his rationalizing without analyzing it. Examples of such authoritative persons could be Hitler, Stalin etc. Nine respondents said that they do not have such a religious authoritative person, but Severus said that he has such a person.

I wanted to see if my interviewees were thinking in global terms or in local terms, so I asked them if they think that Christian Orthodoxy is the only true religion and answers were diverse. Seven of them said that they do not think that Christian Orthodoxy is the only true religion and three of them said that yes. The respondents who said no explained their answers differently: God is one but has different interpretations, same values (as Christian Orthodoxy has) can be found in different religions too, it does not matter which confession you belong to, because God judges you by you behavioral. As you see most of my participants in this issue are open-minded and they do not think their religion is the only one and unique.
Concerning about where do my participants’ religious knowledge comes from the answers were different but in most cases primary school and the family were leading answers. Walter said that his religious knowledge comes from other individuals, but he had never felt to further his knowledge in Christian Orthodoxy because in the people who claimed Christianity he mostly never finds anything really Christian, so he has only superficial knowledge.

I asked my participants to attach their personality to the one word from these: Georgian, Orthodox, Individual or citizen of the world. None of them answered with citizen of the world. Only one answered that he attaches himself with Orthodoxy. Six of them answered with individual and three of them answered with Georgian. Nevertheless, Severus further defined his answer (Georgian). He answered Georgian because it already consists of orthodoxy.

One of the crucial questions in the research was: do you think that in Georgia, for some people, Orthodoxy is reinforcing negative attitude towards women, religious or sexual minorities. Jones said that specific priests and clergy’s do this, but not the Church or Christian Orthodoxy as general. Ninos’ answer was not affirmative neither negative, she just said that Orthodoxy can be used in the negative way if someone wants to use it on that way. Severus said that it does not reinforce negative attitude towards religious minorities or women, and it condemns religious minorities because of the Christian Orthodox doctrine.
Lillian said that it does reinforce negative attitude towards women in the sermons and it does moreover with the sexual minorities. William added that it does partially. Most interesting answer for me came from the Maria. She said that it does from the starting with public speeches ended with sermons. She has heard many ungodly and tactless speeches from the patriarchate. The first statement which shocked her was made as she remembers in 2012 or 2013. The Patriarch in his epistle preached that women must wash their husbands’ feet when the latter comes home. After that in Georgia a campaign started from the minority of men with the slogan: “we will wash our feet ourselves”. The second thing which she remembers was the incident of 17th May which I already pointed in my literature review. After that incident Patriarch called May 17th the day of the “holiness of the family” which she thinks reinforced the negative attitude towards sexual minorities. She says that she is not talking about only the Patriarch but also the decision-makers in the Georgian church and for some of that people who do not condemn the aggression when they have to do that. Another “immigrant” female underlined that Georgian church reinforces negative attitude especially towards women. For William it does not reinforce such an attitude towards women or religious minorities, but it marginally reinforces towards sexual minorities and he remembered the 17th May incident which happened in 2013th in Tbilisi. Walter said that he does not have an answer about that.

One of the characteristics of being religiousness is that people think that their current condition was determined by the god. For me this has two sides (negative and positive). Negative is that this attitude can change in idleness. Positive in this type of thinking is that if something dreadful happens to an individual s/he can take it calmly and confidently if she is religious person and take it as a God’s will. As I already mentioned in the chapter “Religion and Sociology” Hamilton referred to this issue also. He interpreted Weber’s words as the necessity for individuals to account for their conditions in which they find themselves, for their bad or good fortunes. So I asked my interviewees: “Do you think that your current condition was determined by God?”. Some participants were not sure, but female respondents had more clear answers about it. Jones answered on this question that may be yes his current condition was determined by God. Severus and Isabella answered that their condition was determined by themselves. Nino answered that everything is conditioned by god but her share in her condition exists too. David answered that his condition was probably not determined by the God. Kate said that her condition was determined by the God and she often requested something to God and she thinks that she has gotten the answer back (not clear answer was positive or negative). Walter asked me back about which God (which confession) I was
talking about. Nevertheless, at the start of the interview I defined that if I mention God I mean the Orthodox Christian God. Maybe he forgot about that, but why I went in details with this is that participants seemed most confused on this question. Afterwards the latter added that God is one and it doesn’t need to be the Christian God, but he thinks that his current condition was determined by himself. From Maria came answer that she gets from life what she deserves and sometimes she gets what she doesn’t deserve, in the end she is grateful for many things and thinks that in her condition there exists Gods’ hand too. William answered that God is one of the factors which determined his condition. The last answer about this topic was from Lillian which said that it depends on her mood how she thinks about this topic.

Before going to the next question I will quote Thompson’s interpretation, when he defined Durkheims words (1982): “A religion is a unified system of belief and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them”. This is a functionalist approach which underlines the fact how religion can unify people and strengthen social stability or cohesion. So I asked my participants: “Does the Orthodoxy and Church helps Georgia to maintain social stability?”. Jones said that yes. Isabella said that it does in particular groups. Severus remembered the historical fact that happened in Tbilisi in 2007, 7th November. For Georgian collective consciousness this day can be hardly forgotten. There were peaceful protest demonstrations in front of the Georgian Parliament against the government. Many thousand Georgians gathered during the demonstrations. Protest actions didn’t start at 7th November but it was going several days. On the 7th November police used tear gas, batons, rubber bullets, acoustic guns and water cannons to disperse the demonstrations. The day earlier when this incident happened one of the opposition leader met with the current Catholics-Patriarch of All Georgina and the spiritual leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church ilia the II. Opposition leader told Ilia II that they have gathered a large amount of the people and they could make a revolution. Ilia II answered that they should not do this because it may cause destabilization and civil war as my interviewee says. So this is an example how Georgian Church could maintain social stability.

Lillian also agreed that Georgian Church keeps social stability because “We Georgians are undecided humans and we always need something to direct us where to go”. This answer is very close to my reasoning as I already said “In the Soviet Union communism helped to maintain social
institutions and social cohesion (its rules, moral codes, beliefs), and Georgia as the other soviet countries had strict communist rules. After the soviet union collapsed those strict rules disappeared and members of the society needed to have new strict social system and I think Christian Orthodoxy was a best choice for the “collective consciousness” as long as this consciousness remember this institution was working good before entering the soviet union”. Maria who told me before about the Patriarchs speech concerning about that wives should wash their husbands feet, in this case answered that Orthodoxy and Church helps Georgia to maintain social stability, depends from which angle are you looking at it. She said that it has played a good role, because it’s not very radical, not very much directed to aggression and at some point in Christian Orthodoxy humanity plays one of the important role. She thinks that if in the Patriarchate people who preach Orthodoxy would be little bit more tolerant in Georgia there would be a much better situation. In the end she summed up that their role in maintaining social stability is better than worse. Kate said that it plays its role in maintaining social stability but it’s role is specific, Georgian Church suggests its own rules of piece (I could say system also) to public, and not the international standards of piece.

I already mentioned that Georgia is a secular country but only nominally. I was interested in the attitude of my participants about this issue so I asked them if Georgian church has to intervene in the governing of the people. Jones said it should not, but it does in Georgia and similar countries. Isabella female also that it should not. Nino was not sure about it. Severus said that Christian Orthodoxy in its idea and concept is so much directed towards kindness and intertwined with the civil everyday life that it should intervene. Also acknowledging our history Georgians kings were taking help from the church and churches had many educational centers. So you clearly see he has the conservative attitude about this topic. Lillian said that religion and politics should be separated.

Now I will move on to “emigrants”. Walter said that the church has its role and church is place where people can go if they want and take spiritual livelihood. If some issues are discussed with the Orthodox Church than it has do discussed with other religious branches too which are in Georgia. Today you often see the politicians going to Church in order to get advice from them. He added that it should not be like these, because people elected politicians with a voting system and we (people) tell them what we want and politicians should not go to another institution to ask advice from them. If they want to ask someone this, it should be the “people” and not the church. If discussing topic concerns religion than it should be discussed with every branch. “Church is not the governing
institution, it’s spiritual institution and human can decide by him/herself if s/he will go there or not, that’s why peoples elected government should not decide peoples’ lives with the help of the church” – that’s how my respondent ended the answer. Kate also said that it should not intervene in governing. William said that it should not intervene in governing of the country but it should intervene in spiritual issues. My David said that it is already intervened. Church is dictating moral to the people and that’s what church has to do, so in some points it should intervene and it some points it should not intervene.

The pen-ultimate question was “what is the most trusted institution for you in Georgia: Police, Church, NGOs, governmental organizations, media or neither of them?”. Seven out of ten of my interviewees said they trust neither of them. Severus said that he mostly trusts Church. William said that he trust Church (at some points) and police. Maria said that she trusts the government if it publics the annual report and she trusts police if it publics its annual report, but she won’t trust Church if it preaches the aggression towards the gay minorities.

Before going to my last question I must explain it. As long as I knew that the current Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia and the spiritual leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church Ilia II has great authority amongst the Georgian Christian Orthodox individuals and I told them his words from one of the epistle but first I didn’t tell them that these sentences was said by him. So his preaching was: “The happiness of the wife and husband comes primarily from their mutual love and respect. For example when tired husband comes home from the work, you (wife) must suggest him to rest, must suggest him washing his feet, must suggest him food, you should show him caring”. I asked them what do they think about these words. David started to laugh when I was reading this sentence. Than when I told him it was the words of the Patriarch of Georgia he said that from the spiritual person this words have different interpretation but from the civil person these are funny words. These sentences are more understandable from the spiritual person, nevertheless he doesn’t agree with that.

William also said that he doesn’t agree with this sentences but then when I told him it was the Illia the seconds words he also said that it has different interpretation. They both said that in these words he meant that wives should take care of their husbands. Jones said that he doesn’t agree with this words and when I told him whose words it were he said he doesn’t agree with that anyways. Isabella said also that he doesn’t agree with that anyways. Nino said that if wife wants to choose it she can do that, but it’s not obligatory of course (she knew before-hands that this sentences were
Severus said that about Patriarchs words that it’s desirable, he can’t see anything bad about it, and same can be said about husbands (that they should do same) (this participant also knew it was Ilia II-s words). Lillian said that it’s complete nonsense, especially the words concerning the washing feet of the husband. Then I asked her if such kind of words should be said in live media and she said no, because it creates stereotypes. When I told her the author of the words she still remained with her opinion.

5. Conclusion

As the reader can see my participants have conservative and liberal values simultaneously. I can’t divide them into binary typology like conservatives and liberals because mostly every one of them personally had both values some time.

Concerning the gender roles all of my participants had the same answer. They think that God doesn’t ask from men and women different things. Here we don’t see any difference between locals and emigrants of Georgia. In the case of sex before marriage it was not acceptable for only one participant named Severus, who remained with relatively more conservative viewpoints compared to other participants. For all of my participants it was acceptable for woman to have a child and pursue her career at the same time. I have mentioned in my literature review that in Georgia women are more culturally restrained than men but we can’t see that in my participants responses (though, it doesn’t mean the situation is not like that in Georgia). All of my participants think that in Georgia there are gender equality problems except for Severus. And again except for Severus, they all think that this problems partially comes from our traditions and religions. The same can be said about my question: “do you think that in Georgia, for some people, Orthodoxy is reinforcing negative attitudes towards women, religious and sexual minorities?” all the answers were affirmative, except for Severus’s answer. To sum up attitudes between migrants and locals I can say that there was not much difference (of course there was differences in the answers, but it was not made by the local/emigrant distinction). I have to get back to what I already said; most of my participants had liberal and conservative values simultaneously. Even the most conservative participant said that his
current condition was determined by himself alone and for him is acceptable even good if woman will raise a child and pursue her career at the same time. Webers’ explanation of religion as system of meaning was relevant for some of my interviewees, because as you’ve already read they account for their current condition for God.

Analyzing my literature review and interviewees you can see that in Georgia there are gender and minority problems. The most neglected minority are sexual minorities. Severus said that Christianity condemns homosexuality(or bisexuality). And this is what I hear from many Georgians (As I said in my literature review most of Georgians youngsters feel the least trust towards sexual minorities).

Now we come to the problem which is called in this case “not enough education” and lack of analyzing skills. It’s true that any acts of sex outside the marriage are perceived as sinful from the Orthodox Christian tradition, moreover if the act happens between same genders, not talking if it involves many participants. In the new testament homosexuality is condemned but the act itself not the homosexuals, but there is also condemned drunkenness evil thoughts, lying and many other things which unfortunately we might be doing daily and there is not said that homosexual act is more sinful than any other above mentioned.

From 2002 till 2017 the financial amount which was given from the government to the Georgian church was 285 million Georgian Lari (93 768 166 Euro) (On.ge, 2019). I would suggest Georgian government to reduce the funding of the Orthodox Church. Referring to the Orthodox church, it’s positive that they are providing the education for the children not only. If their system and system of their education would become more accepting system than a denying and rejecting system. Their education and sermons should be very carefully analyzed before-hand. They should not say people “have to do”. They can say what “people can’t do” at some cases (for example thievery, killings, criminal things). If the Patriarch and Georgian church wants to say that wives must wash feet of their husbands it would be better if they said it will be good if wife will wash the feet of their husbands and if husbands would do same, and not like the patriarch said (see earlier discussion).

Also I think they have to reconsider their attitude towards sexual minorities. Moreover they must do this because they know that 83% of the population supports them and trusts them (On.ge, 2019). I should advise them to include people, in the patriarchate, from other branches than religion is. For example more sociologists and psychologists, to have more objective views and more objective information than they have now.
It would be good if in the Georgian Church they will reconsider the education of the current priests and workers. Flow of information must come strictly from new testament and not how priests are interpreting it. Their analyzes lacks rationality and afterwards in their sermons it is clearly seen and people are getting the wrong theories about the Orthodoxy.

You could see in the last part of my interview how two of my interviewees David and William responded to the question if they agreed with the speech of the Ilia the second about the wife and husbands relation. When they didn’t know the author of the words their disagreement was obvious. After I told them the author of the speech their attitudes were relatively changed. Here in my opinion we have case with the term (how I referred to it) of “idolizing-type” of thinking which I have seen in many religious people. If the Georgian church will somehow change the role of the Patriarch as a suggestion maker and not order giver I think it will be more rational. And if in the “collective consciousness” of Georgian people patriarch will be more adviser than an idol it will be better. But in needs a lot of work and lot of analyzing because religion and belief is very personal, private (same time collective) and sensitive issue.

To sum up most of my interviewees were not conservatives, but you could still see that for some of them religion had some restraining impacts. In creating values of these personalities and other Georgians Church has a huge role so in my opinion if we want Georgia to become a more liberal and tolerant country the main changes should happen in the church and after it church should spread education and sermons in very conscious and rational way.
References:


• Pew Research Center, Nov. 8, 2017, “Orthodox Christianity in the 21st Century”


• Sumbadze, N., Tarkhan-Mouravi G. 2012. Transition to adulthood in Georgia: Dynamics of generational da gender roles in post-totalitarian society, Tbilisi: Research Gate


APPENDIX

The questions will be:

6. Do you consider yourself a religious person or non-religious one?

7. When were you Baptized?
8. Was it your decision or your parents’ decision?

9. In your opinion what are the main teachings of the Christian Orthodoxy?

10. For you does the world make more sense with the religion or to clarify do you explain the world with the help of religion? (Weber-system of meaning)

11. Do you think that God asks from Men and Women different things?

12. For you is it acceptable for women and men to have sex before the marriage?

13. If the woman has a child is it acceptable for you if she will pursue her career meanwhile the raising a child?

14. Do you think Georgia has gender equality problems or no?

15. If yes do you think it partially comes from our tradition and the religion?

16. Do you think that all your sufferings in this world will be appreciated by the god in afterlife? (Marx approach)

17. Do you have a religious person whose words you believe without analyzing it?

18. Do you think that Christian Orthodoxy is the only true religion?

19. Can sexual minority people be Christians also?

20. From where comes your religious knowledge?

21. If you had to define yourself with one of the following word what it would be: Georgian, Orthodox, human or citizen of the world?

22. Do you think that in Georgia, for some people, Orthodoxy is reinforcing negative attitude towards women, religious and sexual minorities?

23. Do you think that your current condition was determined by God? (Weber approach)

24. If yes why it’s so?

25. Does the Orthodoxy helps Georgia to maintain social stability?
26. Do you think that Church has to intervene in the governing of the people?

27. If yes why?

28. What is the most trusted institution for you: Police, Church, NGOs, governmental organizations or media?

CONSENT LETTER

In this section, I will present the consent form which I will give to my interviewees.

Dear (Participant’s Name):

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my BA degree in the Institute of Sociology at the Corvinus University. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

This study will focus on How Christian Orthodoxy affects the ideological development of Georgian adults.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately 30 minutes. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded but if you are unhappy with this I can make written notes. Only I and my examiners will have access to the recording. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study, however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at +36202879986 or by e-mail at glonti.ivane@yahoo.com. You can also contact my supervisor, Ryder Andrew Richard at e-mail Andrew.ryder@uni-corvinus.hu.
I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours sincerely, Ivane Glonti