

Women and Political Participation

A Minor Field Study on Hindrances for Women's Political Participation in Georgia



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Abstract

This thesis examines hindrances for women's representation in Georgian politics at national level. The purpose is to understand what causal mechanisms that impact female representation in the National Parliament of Georgia. More precisely, the main purpose is to examine the hindrances for women to participate in politics in order to facilitate a deeper understanding of the known phenomenon of under-representation of women in politics. The thesis seeks to understand the contemporary situation in Georgia.

The thesis is carried out with the case-study design and material consists mainly of interviews with female members of Parliament, representatives from political parties, and gender-issue experts from NGOs. The analysis of this thesis is also based on the results of previous research. The questions asked in the study are: *What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?* and *What are women's organisations', political parties' and policy entrepreneurs' role in increasing women's political participation in Georgia?*

The overarching theoretical framework used in the thesis consists of structures, institutions and actors as well as feminist theory. The thesis argues that major obstacles for women to participate in politics are public opinion, the electoral system and the nomination process in political parties in Georgia. Further, influential individuals, so called policy entrepreneurs are seen as having an important role for the increase of women's political participation and gender-equality issues in general. The most likely action to be seen is continued training and education for society as a whole, mainly targeting women. Affirmative actions such as party quotas seem far away.

Key words: Georgia, political parties, women's political representation, gender equality.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Women's Political Representation

Women's political under-representation is a failure of today's democracies. The reality is that roughly half of the world's voting population is women but the average percent of women in national parliament is not even a fifth (18.7%, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), World average for women in national parliament, single or lower house, Situation as of September 2009). Representation in politics where men and women are equally represented is called a gender-balanced representation.

When examining the political representation, it is of higher interest to look at representation in legislative bodies than in other political bodies since it is elected by the people and considered the most influential.

The under-representation of certain groups includes other groups than women, for example ethnic, class, racial or religious groups. Some argue that a population should not be divided into different groups which might be under-represented in politics and other spheres of society (See as an example Phillips 2000). Nevertheless, it is hard to neglect that under-representation of some groups in society will lead to under-representation of certain opinions and insufficient attention to particular questions.

Several arguments for a gender-balanced representation have been brought up including one of the ground pillars of democracy; everyone's equal right to participate in politics, to vote, candidate and participate in decision making processes (Held 2006, Dahl 2007:345). When arguments for democracy are brought up it is usually about demands on what could be called *politics of presence*. This implicates that all parts of society should be able to participate in politics to ensure that all opinions are represented in the decision making process. This politic of presence include the equal representation of men and women (Phillips 2002:15).

The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the UN in 1979. CEDAW requires all 186 countries that ratified it to eliminate all hindrances for citizens, regardless of sex, to have equal possibilities and equal rights. One key article ensures women's equal possibility to participate in political and public life (United Nations Treaty Collection, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Status as at 14 September 2010).

It appears to be a global trend that women's political representation has increased both on local and national level during the last decades (Lovenduski 2000: Introduction). The world average of 18.7 % for women's political representation in the lower house, according to the Inter Parliamentary Union (World average for women in national parliament, single or lower house), includes a great variation around the world from 0% in Saudi Arabia to over 50% in Rwanda (IPU, World average for women in national parliament, world classification according to country. Situation as of September 2009).

The variation in these bodies have a wide spectra of explanations and researchers can not agree on one or a few factors universal for all countries or periods of times. Some stress structural factors, while others claim that institutional or actors are the crucial explanatory factor.

Georgia is a country where democracy is on the rise and female representation is on a very low level. Contemporary Post Soviet Georgia is struggling with many issues concerning democracy. The issue central to this thesis, namely women's representation, has not been highly prioritized but it is an issue which has grown in importance and more actors are now more seriously dealing with this democratic flaw. There is no doubt that there are many capable women wanting to be represented; but how is it that the low representation of women is still a fact? This question will be thoroughly examined in this thesis.

1.2 Aim

The overarching aim with the study is to understand the low number of women represented in the national Parliament of Georgia today. The key question of the research concerns women's low participation in politics, why the largest part of the thesis will investigate hindrances for political participation of women in Georgia. Another aspect interesting for the aim is to examine different actors' role in increasing women's political participation. Actors can either work to positively affect female representation or consciously or unconsciously work to hinder women from being represented in legislative bodies.

1.3 Previous research

The variation in women's representation has in previous research been explained by *institutions* such as the electoral system, women's right to vote etc; *structures* in the form of gender structures, political structure etc and *actors* such as political parties, women's

movements and individuals (For an overview see for example Wide 2006). The explanations for why female representation is extremely low in many countries vary greatly. One of the most discussed explanation that has been lifted in research and literature of female representation is the electoral system. Some researchers claim this is the strongest reason for women's under-representation in parliaments. Previous research shows that countries with a majority system have less women represented in Parliament (Unicameral or if bicameral the lower house) than countries that practise proportional system. This is due to the small chances of women to get elected, why men are in enormous majority as candidates in majority systems (Wide 2006).

The structures that have been regarded as either promoters or hindrances for increased female representation in previous research are the socio-economic structure and culture (Wide 2006:25). Gender roles are here included within the concept of culture. Actors that have proven to have vast impact on women representation in political bodies are the political parties. It is evident in previous research that greater representation of women in the decision making bodies of parties that elect candidates for elections lead to a higher number of female candidates and eventually higher representation of women in legislative bodies, nationally and locally (Wide 2006).

Studies made of women's political representation have mainly focused on western democracies, and especially the US. There is relatively weak statistics and data on female participation in politics of poorer countries (Wide 2006). Many studies made in this field observe women legislatures' impact on policy (See as an example Poggione 2006). Much focus is aimed at examining the differences between men and women in legislation and their different impact on policies. Results from previous research mainly suggest that women politicians are more committed to welfare policies concerning children, women and family (Poggione 2006:183). I consider that this aspect of women's representation have already been fairly well explored, although not to imply that no more research needs to be done in that field in the future. My view is, however, that examining why there is such low representation in elected legislative bodies is more necessary in order to achieve greater understanding and through that create new mechanisms that facilitate better possibilities for women to be represented.

This thesis will recognize that there are different probable explanations and theories based on previous research on why there are so few women in politics. These include the electoral system, culture and religion, socio-economic factors, institutions, structures and actors etc (See Wide 2006). These factors will be discussed and their impact on women's political

participation examined. However, the focus of this thesis is on the actor perspective. Actors are seen as one of the strongest influential factor for increasing women's political participation but is not as commonly researched as institutional and structural factors. Actors in this context are political parties, women's organizations and highly influential leaders in politics. Kingdon also discusses the concept of *policy entrepreneurs* (1995:122-124).

1.3.1 Comparative research

Jessica Wide explores women's political representation in a comparative perspective in her dissertation from 2006. She investigates the impact that structures, institutions and actors have for female representation in politics, both on national and local level. Wide aims to explain variation of female representation in time and space and she does this using both statistical analysis and case-study-design. Wide argues that women's political representation is a result of the interplay between structures, actors and institutions. In her dissertation, Wide presents the empirical findings on spatial variation of female representation on the national level. She concludes that institutions were the most important factors before the downfall of communism and she continues:

From the mid-1990s the explanatory power of the structures increases. By the end of this period, religion and economic development as well as a proportional electoral system are the most important explanatory factors. In addition, the use of gender quotas had a significant effect. The conclusion is that both structures and institutions are necessary to explain the spatial variation in women's political representation. (Wide 2006:329)

Wide's conclusion suggests that in the time period of which my research is focus on, that is after the fall of communism, structures have shown to have the greatest importance to explain women's political representation in legislative bodies. Her research however only stretches until 2005. Considering time as a factor, Wide's results might not be as actual today as they were five years ago.

Women in parliament: Beyond numbers is a Handbook by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, IDEA, written by a number of contributors. The Handbook includes a chapter of Nadezhda Shvedova (2007), called "Obstacles to women's participation in Parliament". She investigates the hindrances for women to participate in

parliaments and she divides the explanatory factors into three main categories: *political* such as: the masculine model of politics, lack of party support, cooperation with women's organisations and electoral system; *ideological and psychological* like: traditional roles, lack of confidence, the perception of politics as "dirty" and the role of mass-media; *socio-economic obstacles* including: feminization of poverty and unemployment, the dual burden and lastly, education and training.

1.3.2 Research on Georgia

In her thesis, Tamar Sabedashvili investigates, the impact of transitional developments (transition towards democracy after the break-up with Soviet Union) on women's positions in Georgia. Sabedashvili focuses on: legislative and institutional developments regarding women, chances for women's political participation in political decision-making, women's activities in NGOs and conditions of the displaced and migrant women. The results of interest in her thesis, for my study, are those concerning women's chances to participate in politics. For the analysis of women's chances to get into the National Parliament of Georgia, Sabedashvili looked at the electoral system including: electoral formula, district magnitude, malapportionment, electoral threshold, assembly size and the possibility of linked lists, according to Lijpharts' electoral systems' dimensional criteria. She concludes that national and local electoral systems are not favourable for women's possibilities to be represented in the Parliament. Sabedashvili also makes a more general conclusion of the hinder for a high female representation. She mentions the distrust in politics as a result of the communist past. She further stress the public opinion that regards politics is a battlefield for men, women's lack of political organisation and financial support, that women's issues have a low priority by both men and women because of social and economic hardship and lastly, that the legislative framework hinder women to get elected (2002:24-33).

The research coordinated by Nodia and Scholtbach have a similar approach, where the structural approach has been given more importance in explaining the low level of political participation for women in Georgia. The research stresses that the women involvement in decision making is "utterly insufficient" although their participation on a lower level is quite good. Findings in this research made in Georgia claims that hindering factors for women's political participation includes traditional values: that women have the greatest responsibility for domestic work, an idea that gender quotas violate gender equality, lack of awareness in society of the importance of gender equality, economic conditions and that successful women

politicians do not emphasize gender issues. This research concludes that the cultural and psychological stereotypes are main factors in explaining women's low participation in politics (Nodia & Scholtbach 2006:176, 178). The psychological factors are seen as part of a structure which is hard to change and it works as a frame, implying that certain behaviours and attitudes are acceptable, while others are not.

1.3.3 Concluding remarks

Accordingly, there are studies on women's political participation in Georgia. However, these studies are mainly focusing on one or a few out of many explanations such as the electoral system (Sabedashvili 2002) or the political parties and psychological hindrances (Nodia & Scholtbach 2006). One aspect of Georgian modern historical background that has not been that well- researched and linked with contemporary issues on women's political participation is its Soviet Union past. Previous research lack the ambition of including many different explanatory factors. Wide (2006) has done a very broad explanatory attempt, but it is very general and although including some 100 countries, the case-studies are focused on western Europe, Sweden and Norway in particular.

These previous results from other researches cover different categories of hindrances for women's political participation. The institutional hindrances appear to be focused on the electoral system and electoral codes. These hindrances are important in order to understand the institutional framework for women's possibilities of participating in politics. The structural hindrances that have been pointed out as key factors in studies of Georgia are cultural and psychological stereotypes. Actor-related hindrances are mainly posed by political parties' insufficient work to increase women's political representation. Another argument as I see it, is that these findings need also to be re-examined since variation across time have been a factor and the hindering factors need therefore to be re-evaluated. These remarks lead over to the concrete research questions of this thesis.

1.4 Research Questions and Delimitations

I will in this study seek to give answers to the following research questions with the starting point based on previous research and the aim of the study.

1. What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?

2. What are women's organisations', political parties' and policy entrepreneurs' role in increasing women's political participation in Georgia?

The study will cover factors divided in the three categories shown in previous research to impact political participation for women: actors, structures and institutions. However countries have different contexts and therefore there is no single explanation that can explain variation in all countries or periods of time. This thesis will mainly focus on the actor perspective analyzing how political parties, women Member of Parliament, women's organisations and influential individuals can impact the political participation of women.

The research questions need to be further reduced in order to answer them on a less abstract level. The first question: *What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?* will be narrowed down to: What are Georgian women's perceptions on hindrances for women to participate in politics in Georgia? The study can therefore not be said to examine the actual hindrances for women to be represented, but the perceptions of these. The rephrased and slightly narrowed question is of a more empirical nature which is needed to operationalize, making it possible to examine the phenomena in question. The more theoretical question is necessary in order to lift the study on a more general level, making it interesting to look at, even outside the case of Georgia. What is studied will be connected to the material and the method used and this reasoning will be further developed in the Chapter 3 which deals with the method discussion. The study will investigate women's access to the National Parliament of Georgia which is one of the study's first limitations. It is consequently not the local politics that will be dealt with in this study. Instead it is the national politics that is focused on and the main researched area is the capital Tbilisi.

The second question is, in a way, focused on a second phase of women's under-representation, namely how to overcome the hindrances. I regard actors as a key factor and significant in their ability to influence women's access to politics. Thus, I will narrow my second research question into how three specific actors in Georgia can help to increase political participation. The actors are political parties, women's organisations and policy entrepreneurs. A further limitation will be made since it is not *all* political parties, women's organisations or possible policy entrepreneurs that will be investigated in this thesis¹.

¹ See page 20 for further delimitations and motivation of these.

1.5 Disposition

In chapter 2 the theoretical framework of the study will be dealt with, exploring feminist theory and the overarching theoretical framework which consist of structures, institutions and actors. Chapter 3 will be designated to the method of this thesis, namely– how the study is executed, what type of material that is used and a critical approach to the method. Thereafter follows three empirical chapters. Chapter 4 is an introduction to the case of Georgia with focus on the status of women and political situation. In chapter 5 I will present the results on the first research question: *What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?* This chapter starts with a classification scheme on hindrances for women's political participation based on the data collection from the material. The sixth chapter centres the second research question on actor's role for women's political participation. The presentation of the result in chapter 4 and 5 will be done through a systematic disposition where the two research questions will be dealt with and answered one by one. The final chapter, number seven, is a conclusive discussion where theory and results are connected to the main issue at hand, namely under-representation of women in national politics. The research questions that are intended to pervade the entire study are also reconnected to the main results. The aim is here to make both a more theoretical conclusion as well as putting my own ideas and wonderings at focus.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Arguments for gender-balanced representation

Gender equality and women's political participation is not just a question of academic interest. It holds many aspects equally important in the political and social sphere for all people. The basic argument is from one point of view a question of fundamental democratic rights, everyone's equal right and possibility to candidate and to exercise political power. There is also the fact that big amounts of aid go to democracy promotion which to some degree seek to increase women's political influence and participation in politics. Different projects work with educating women in political issues, preparing them to be candidates for local governance and increase women's influence in politics (see for example Women's Political Resource Centre (WPRC)). There is a point in examining hindrances for women's participation connected to the type of projects mentioned, since there needs to prevail some sort of understanding of women's access to politics in order for attempts to increase female representation will lead to desired results. There is in many aspects a great achievement per se to get more women into politics but their possibilities and role in politics need further to be examined.

As Lovenduski writes in the introductory chapter in *Feminism and politics* (2000), there are different arguments for increased female representation: normative arguments that say it is unfair for men to monopolize representation and pragmatic arguments which stress women's special interests and experiences that can only be represented by women. The normative and pragmatic arguments, Lovenduski states, do not say that getting more women into politics will affect the outcome of politics. The third argument, on the other hand, which is based on the stance of difference means that getting more women in politics will lead to an improvement of the politics (Lovenduski 2000: Introduction).

My point of departure concerning under-representation as a problem within political science starts with the reasoning of Anne Phillips. She suggests that social background and opinion-representation should not be separated, but that over-representation of one social group leads to over-representation of opinion (Phillips 1995). She provides the following logic:

The most immediately compelling of the remaining arguments is that which presents gender parity as a straightforward matter of justice: that it is patently and grotesquely

unfair for men to monopolize representation. If there were no obstacles operating to keep certain groups of people out of political life, we would expect positions of political influence to be randomly distributed between the sexes. There might be some minor and innocent deviations, but any more distorted distribution is evidence of intentional or structural discrimination. In such contexts (that is, most contexts) women are being denied rights and opportunities that are currently available to men (Phillips 1995: 63).

What Phillips points to is that under-representation of women in politics is to be viewed as structural or intentional discrimination. This implies that there are factors behind the under-representation, factors this study aims to explore.

2.2 Overarching Theoretical Framework

The theory of why women representation is low is, as stressed in chapter 1, best understood as an interplay between *actors*, *institutions* and *structures*. Structures, institutions and actors function in a reciprocal interplay where actors' activities are limited by the current structures. Actors work within fixed structures but actors are also the creators of the structures (Rothstein 1988:27-35). This thesis will pay more attention to the actors' role in increasing women's political participation. This is why I have chosen to put focus on all three explanatory factors in the first research question, while giving the actors more room and focus in the second research question.

Based on previous research, the analysis scheme that will make out the ground pillar of the thesis is the interplay of structures, institutions and actors. This type of scheme is utterly necessary in order to operationalize the main findings in the material into theoretically interesting results.

2.2.1 Structures and Institutions

There are mainly two structures that influence the view on gender in society: socio-economic structure and culture. A country's socio-economic structure has great impact on women's condition in society. In countries with a modernised socio-economic structure the gender roles are not as obvious as in the more traditionalistic ones. There is also a co-variation with culture and socio-economic structure which makes it more difficult to differentiate the influence on women's conditions in society (Wide 2006:23).

In majoritarian electoral systems, which is an institutional hinder mentioned in the introductory chapter, parties are more likely to nominate men as their candidates since it is less likely for the electorate to vote for a woman. In PR systems parties try to reach out to as many voters as possible and that is why more women are nominated according to researchers. Elements of voting based on personality in PR systems can either have a negative or positive impact on how many women are elected. If the attitude towards women is negative, fewer women will be elected. More women will however be elected if the electorate strive for gender equality (Wide 2006:36-37).

2.2.2 The rational actors

Political Parties

Political parties are crucial actors in explaining variation in female representation. They have control of the nomination procedures and they decide whether to have quotas, and in that case what type of quotas in nomination of candidates (Wide 2006:28). Political parties are the strongest actors on the political scene and constitute a key role in democratic governance. Political parties are furthermore the main component of parliament and they are also, in most political systems, the main conduits between decision- makers and civil society (Luciak 2007: 2). Figure 1 on the next page shows the relations of political parties, women's movement and policy entrepreneurs.

Women's organisations

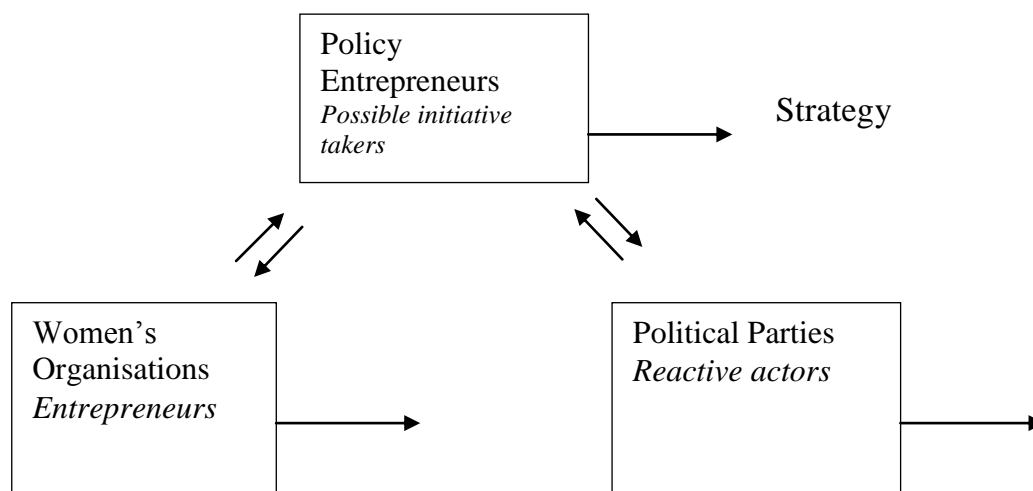
Women's organisations are generally regarded as core initiative takers in issues concerning gender and politics. This is true around the globe, and in Georgia women's organisations has been an actor that has grown tremendously in importance after the transition towards democracy from 1991 till present day (Sabadashvili 2002). Women's organisations are, like political parties, collective actors. This entails a built-in complexity where it is not clear who is behind a decision and how much conformity plays its role within an organisation.

Policy Entrepreneurs

It can be of interest, Wide states, to look at what impact women in high positions may have for women's conditions in politics. This would imply both the belief that one single person

could contribute to the reshaping of politics and that one or a few number of people can really make a difference in terms of getting new issues on the political agenda and impact the policy outcome. Wide points out that this type of influential individuals might have a role in increasing women representation, but she maintains, on the other hand, that it is probably not the case (Wide 2006:27). Kingdon calls this type of people *policy entrepreneurs*. He considers these people rational actors that are putting resources into the policies which they promote (Kingdon 1995:122-124). In this thesis, I will include policy entrepreneurs as possible initiative takers; I will examine who these individuals can be in the case of Georgia in order to examine if they in fact can play an important role in increasing the number of women in politics.

Figure 1: Relations between actors and their roles



(Reworked with Wide 2006:28)

Figure 1 shows the relation between, what is considered, the main actors in this study. Jessika Wide uses a similar model in her dissertation from 2006, in which she shows the relation between the women's movement and the political parties. I have added policy entrepreneurs and I have chosen to use the concept women's *organisations* instead of women's movement. The main idea is that women's organisations are working on issues concerning gender equality and more precisely, in this study, women's participation in politics. The work of women's organisation then influence political parties through lobbying and other methods of putting focus on these issues. Political parties then in turn react, either taking new questions into consideration or more commonly, when referring to gender equality issues in Georgia,

rejects the ideas. Policy entrepreneurs are expected to have a central role, constituted of key politicians and other important individuals. I here imagine policy entrepreneurs not only as politicians, but also prominent representatives from women's organisations and possibly representatives from international organisations or donors working to increase women's participation in Georgian politics.

2.3 Feminist theory

In this thesis I will use basic feministic theory in order to spotlight the problem of women's under-representation in politics. The gender-power-order according to feminist theory is always present in our society; it shapes structures and sets current power relations.² The core of this theoretical framework is the essentials of feminist theory. Marysia Zalewski writes that it appears that all feminists share the notion that different social benefits and burdens follows depending on what sex you are born as (Zalewski 2000:97). A central feature of feminist political theory is the notion that women and their situation are central to political analysis. Its interest lies in questioning the fact that men appear to have more power and privilege than women and asking how it can be changed (Bryson 2003:1).

Gender in politics has two sides, and although separate it is associated with each other. One is women's representation and the other is concern for women's issues. Representation increases the likelihood for considering women's issues as well as brings in gender perspective; however representation on its own cannot guarantee the desired outcome (Sumbadze 2008:33).

Gender refers to the roles, relationships, attitudes, behaviour and values etc that society ascribes to men and women. Much of the recent focus on gender relations has to do with the influence of feminism. Feminists all over have come to characterize gender relations as matters of subordination and inequality (Waylen 1996:6). Different roles are given women and men where women's supposed caring nature and men's aggressive nature provides clear roles.

2.3.1 Feminism and representation

One fundamental point in feminist view on the politics of women's representation is that differences among women, such as class, ethnicity, race, generation etc, have great impact on their interests and priorities (Lovenduski 2002:Introduction). There are important differences among women that should not be neglected, whilst the difference between men and women also play an important role in the politics of representation.

I will mention some existing theories on the low representation of women in politics. It is for one said that traditionalistic cultures have a lower female representation than so called

² There are as known different types of feminist theories which I will not further investigate.

moralistic and individualistic state cultures³. Clark brings up a number of common theories on low representation within feminist theory. Sex-role socialization is a factor much similar to the gender role structure and relations mentioned in the text as the cause. Women and men are taught different roles in life where the home is the women's area and politics and public life is seen as the man's world. Another point in this sex-role problematic is the fact that house work and family responsibility hinders women from participating in politics and public life. She mentions male conspiracy theory which derives from feminist ideology and is based on the idea that men are discriminating women therefore women have low representation in political office. She continues with institutional constraints that women are less likely than men to become incumbents and therefore have less chance to get into office. The power, prestige and desirability of political office, she concludes, has also been seen as a factor determining the level of representation of women since these characteristics are seen as male dominated where women have strong difficulties to compete with men (Clark 1991:70-75).

Descriptive and Substantive Representation

There are mainly two different ways to approach the problematic of female under-representation in politics: some studies argue that there need to exist a certain amount of female representatives (descriptive representation), called the *critical mass* while others stress the importance of a few female politicians that actively pushes issues on gender-equality (substantive representation). There are varying opinions on how many women that constitutes this critical mass and they vary from 10 to 35% depending on the researcher (Lovenduski 2001, Dahlerup 1988). Laurel Weldon is one researcher that regards a few women politicians that actively promotes questions on gender-equality, in contrast to many who actually play "the game of men", as more important than a certain level of female representation (Weldon 2002).

Theories of descriptive representation argue that the exclusion of any group from positions of power may distort policy decisions and political outcomes (Clark 1991, In Lovenduski 2000:2). Substantive representation has to do with how much influence women have as political office holders. Even though women have managed to get more equal representation, in numbers, it is not given that their opinions and interests are being taken into consideration.

³ These categories of cultures come from Elazar's classification of the states in the United States of America. I do not regard these categories as perfectly adaptable in any way. Nonetheless, they are useful in getting an overview and some sort of idea on different types of cultures (Clark 1991:70-75).

Drude Dahlerup investigates the idea of a critical mass, that politics need a certain amount of women, e.g. 30%, to enable them to actually make a difference in politics. According to Dahlerup, a growing number of women in politics would lead to a decrease of stereotyping between sexes. Childs and Krook (2008) states that this decrease of stereotyping women is a result of increased women representation since more types of women are occupying the political arena. Clark writes that when there are few female office holders, there are few female role models and opportunities for women to get political experience are few (1991: In Lovenduski 2000:65).

I will attempt to apply the mentioned theoretical points of departure of representation to the results of the study. My aim is to compare the different theories, apply them to the results and analyze which theory best corresponds to the results. I will for example look into whether it is the substantive or descriptive approach that gets more focus. Another important aspect is comparing the results with the mentioned theoretical framework in this chapter, also including the previous results.

3. Method

The main problem at hand for this study- *how can the level of female representation be explained* - will be a starting point for the method chapter. The purpose of the research questions is to get an understanding of what obstacles there are for women to participate in politics as well as looking into actors' role in order to increase women's political participation. It is therefore appropriate to carry out a qualitative methodological approach for this study.

This study was carried out during a seven-week-field study in Georgia, between November and December 2009. Qualitative in-depth conversational interviews are the empirical base of the study, which focuses on women's political participation in the case of Georgia. Sixteen interviews are made with representatives from political parties, women's organisations, female members of parliament in Georgia and gender experts mainly in Tbilisi. The purpose of the conversational interviews is to answer the overarching aim at hand for this study and the two more precise and delimited research questions that have been identified (see 1.3 Research Questions and Delimitation). This is a second and more specified purpose for the interviews in this study. For this type of question it is preferable with a qualitative approach since I seek to explain rather than to describe the phenomena of under-representation.

Qualitative textual analysis is used as a supplement to the interviews. The textual analysis does not take up too much room in this thesis, but it is important due to the contribution of additional answers, based on interviews, similar to the ones made in this research.

Georgia is the case chosen for this study and it is therefore the low representation in Georgia that I seek to explain. Georgia was chosen as the case since its representation of women in politics has decreased from the elections in 2004 to the last elections in 2008.⁴ There is also as mentioned, little research made on the countries in the east.

In my choice of research issue, feminist theory will lay the foundation for explanatory attempts. It is a point of departure in which the gender perspective and the relation between men and women are put in focus. The feminist theory is well known to be closely connected with the qualitative method. This has its first obvious reason since the ground pillar of feminism is recognizing the differences between men and women, which cannot fully be done by using quantitative methods such as statistical research. The use of quantitative methods is seen as negligent of the substance differences. Therefore the study will not contribute to the

⁴ From 9.4% in 2004 to 5.1% in 2008 according to the IPU, Parline database on Georgia. Situation as of September 2009.

understanding of the social or political phenomena of interest according to feminist theory (Lovenduski 2006:17). Other research on women's representation has used the quantitative method, however the research questions are then usually of the type that compares a large number of analysis units why the quantitative approach is more suitable.

3.2 Research Design

This study uses the case study design to facilitate the aim of understanding the low political representation of women. This can be argued to be the most suitable design since going deeper into a problem and focusing on one context have the advantage of giving a more detailed answer which enables a deeper understanding of the problem. This can be fruitful when continuing studies are made with one or more cases. The case study design is widely criticized for not being able to generalize the results.

Women's political representation will be looked upon as the dependent variable. By using female representation as the dependent rather than the independent variable focus will be put on women's political participation (Wide 2006:3). Participation of women in politics should not solely be seen as the number of women represented, but also their influence and role in politics must be measured. This study will explore both the substantial representation and the descriptive representation meaning both the role of women and the number of women represented in national Parliament. Explaining the level and variation in female representation will be carried out by identifying different independent variables.

3.2.1 The case study as a methodological tool

In the thesis the use of causal mechanism aims to explain the phenomenon of low female representation. According to Robert K Yin the case study approach would be most suitable when questions are of the type *how* or *why* aiming to understand and in-depth describe some social phenomenon (Yin 2009:4). The questions used to answer the fundamental issues and aim of this study is both of descriptive and explanatory character. The questions would according to Yin's rather weak but still reasonably logic argument fit the case study research design. With the first question the goal is to describe variation in female representation beginning with the first elections after independence from the Soviet Union until the most recent elections in 2008. The last question is of more explanatory character.

3.3 Material

Sixteen interviews were carried out with female members of Parliament, representatives from parties and NGOs that are working with women's political participation and/or gender equality issues in general. Due to the low number of women in Parliament, the interviews can not be aimed at generalizing these women's role in national legislature. The aim is rather to analyze their specific experiences and their perception of obstacles for women to get into politics as well as what measures should be taken, if any, to increase women's political participation.

The interviews took from 30 to 60 minutes and they differed depending on what sphere the interviewee represented. All interviews had three similar themes: hindrances for women's political participation and representation, the actors' role in increasing women in politics and more general questions on the political situation etc. The vast majority of the interviews were made in English. Two of the interviews required an interpreter. In the interview with Member of Parliament Rusudan Kervalishvili – one was provided. In the interview with Berdzenishvili the interpreter was a contact of my own. The language skills of the interviewees differed greatly and had a clear impact on the quality of the interviews. The language problem did not however, affect the essential points made by the interviewees.

When presenting the results of the interviews in the empirical chapters I will use a shortened version when citing the source. Like for an example (MP1), referring to the interview with the female Member of Parliament Chiora Taktakshvili (See List of references). When using quotes from the interviews I will instead use a more detailed way of citing, stating name of interviewee and date of the interview, for example (Interview 091112, Chiora Taktakshvili). I wish to make it easier for the reader, using longer citations only when referring to the interviews in quotations where I consider it more appropriate to spotlight the source.

Table 1: Interviewees divided into spheres

Sphere	Male	Female	Total
Members of Parliament	-	3	3
Representatives of Political Parties	2	3	5
Gender Experts/ Representatives from NGOs	-	8	8
Total	2	14	16

3.4 Qualitative textual analysis

There have been previous studies concerning hindrances for women to participate in politics in Georgia (See Sabedashvili 2002, Nodia & Scholtbach 2006). However, these studies main aim is often something else than mine and they only touch the subject on the surface. The results of these researches and others, will be used as a complement to the conversational interviews. What it said about women's political participation from these researches are of interest, why the qualitative textual analysis is used. It is thus, only parts of the text that will be focused on and thoroughly read in order to systemize the substance and include them in the classification scheme on of what the possible hindrances are for women to participate in politics.

3.5 Qualitative conversational interviews

In depth conversational interviews will be the core tool used to collect material for this study. The interview objects chosen will represent the main actors that are considered relevant and important influences in the question of women's political participation. Political parties are represented with both male and female members and women MPs are chosen since it is their perception on their own possibilities that are interesting for the study. Representatives from NGOs working with gender issues are seen as both representatives from their organisation and as gender equality experts. One interviewee expressed the wish of being considered as a gender expert, not as a representative from the organisation she was working for (UNIFEM).

From these interviews the aim is to find answers to my research question about the women's experienced role in politics and what obstacles that hinder from a more extensive political participation of women in decision making.

The questions asked in the conversational interviews were semi-standardised in the sense that depending on the person asked, if she or he was a Member of Parliament, representing a political party or an NGO, the questions differed. The questions were open where the respondents had the chance to give her, or his, own personal opinion within the theme or question asked.

Among the first steps in the research was to identify which parties should be included. The selection was made through looking at the results of the latest national parliamentary elections of 2008 and establishing which parties that now are represented in the Parliament. These are the Christian-Democrats (CDP), The Joint Opposition (National Council, New Rights), United National Movement- for Victorious Georgia (UNM), Republic Party of Georgia and

the Georgian Labour Party (GLP). Representatives from all parties but one, The Joint Opposition, were able to participate in interviews.

The data collected from the interviews on the subject of hindrances for women to participate in politics, aiming to answer the first research question⁵, will be presented in a classification scheme (Figure 2: Hindrances for women's political participation, p 27). The goal with the interviews is, as mentioned in 1.3 Research Questions, to find the core perceptions of what obstacles there are for women's access to politics among women MPs, representatives from political parties and gender experts.

3.6 Methodological difficulties and critique

One of the main difficulties found during this research was the problems of finding male gender experts and male interviewees. One explanation for this can be the procedure I used in order to get in touch with the interviewees. Firstly, I limited the number of parties to those represented in the National Parliament of Georgia, from which I was looking for one representative for the interview. I called their respective office and from there whoever spoke English I would ask for help to set up an interview with one representative from the party leadership. However, few people spoke English and in many cases the party leadership were not available for interviews. This is why the positions of the representatives from political parties that were interviewed vary from international secretaries to assistants of international secretaries. The ideal case would have been to get in-depth interviews with all political leaders of the parties represented in the Parliament. The political leader and the leadership are considered the most representative of the opinion of the party. Party representatives in general are seen as individuals with their own opinions and ideas rather than representatives of the party's standpoints. However, for the aim and research questions of this thesis, the most important aspect is to analyse opinions and perceptions from the interviews on hindrances for women to participate in politics and from that define and categorise in order to answer the first question: *What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?*

⁵ What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?

3.6.1 Critical approach on the sources

There are some issues that need to be raised concerning the liability of the sources used in this study. A first realisation is that the representatives from political parties, organisations, politicians and gender expert have their own interests.

Official statistics on women's representation in Georgia and other countries are mainly taken from the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). IPU is an international organisation and the data collected from it will be regarded reliable. The qualitative primary sources are constituted by data that I myself collected through qualitative conversational interviews. These primary sources are given more weight than secondary sources. The aim with the primary sources is to find different *perceptions* of hindrances for women. Thus, there is no ambition to investigate the *actual* hindrances for women's participation in politics from the interviews. I use a less critical approach to the primary sources based on the above mentioned aim of the qualitative interviews. There are however, known possible problems with qualitative conversational interviews. The interviewer-effect, meaning that the interviewees may be influenced in different ways, affects the data, from the interviewer (Esaiasson et al. 2002). I will avoid this effect by not using aligned questions and keep a neutral position towards the statements of the interviewees. The qualitative secondary sources are mainly previous research from various researchers. These are used with a more careful approach, regarding different researchers' results as indicators of the phenomena but not taking the results as "truths".

Some difficulties have been the trustworthiness of the data on number of women in politics. Even official data on the number of women in the Parliament differ and one problem is the political instability resulting in politicians resigning from their seat in parliament, like in 2008. Data from the Inter-parliamentary Union have since the first numbers, directly after the election with nine women in a total of 150 seats, have changed to seven women out of 137 seats and today's situation with nine women out of 138 seats (All data from IPU, Parline database on Georgia as of September 2009).

4. Women in Georgian Politics

4.1 The Case of Georgia

Today many women can be seen in manifestations or busy in pre-electoral activities. The problem does not lie in the low participation of women, but in the discrepancy of power between the interest and the activities of women, as well as their representation in decision-making bodies. Equality is very far from desired in respect to who is elected at any level of governance. It can be definitely stated that women's participation in politics and decision-making in the country is very limited and lags far behind the UN set goal of 30 percent. (Sumbadze 2008:33)

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the global trend is that women's political participation increases over time. In the case of Georgia, the opposite has taken place. Firstly, being one of the post-Soviet countries, Georgia has experienced the most drastically negative change in female representation. Under Soviet communist regime (1921–1991) women's representation was about 30% due to an outspoken goal that the representation in Parliament should reflect the composition of the population (Wide 2002:7, Nechemias 1994). However, the Parliament during this period did not exercise any real power and the institutions where the power was had few, if any women. This is a rather known feminist fact: where the power is, women are not. It does not seem logical to dig deeper into the causes and what possibilities women had in politics during the communist era in Georgia because of the mentioned argument that real power was not in the Parliament. It is, however, of theoretical interest to look at the contemporary development and change of female representation in Georgia. Since the independence, women's representation in parliament has been on a relatively stable level of 6 – 7%. After the latest elections in 2008 it decreased from 9 to 5.1% (IPU database, World average for women in national parliament, Single or Lower House, Situation as of September 2009). This makes Georgia a valuable case to examine since the development does not seem to fit the global trend. Studying hindrances for women to participate and accomplish representation in legislative bodies in Georgia is therefore motivated since it represents a deviant case.

Table 2: Georgian national Parliament, 1994-2008: Numbers of Women Members and Women as Percentage of all Members

Election year (month)	Seats	Women	%
1994 (November)	231	16	6.9
1998 (October)	235	17	7.2
2004 (Mars)	235	22	9.4
2008 (May)	137	7	5.1*

* Data from IPU database on Georgia, Situation as of September 2009.

After the election in May 2008 only nine women out of 150 seats were elected into office in the Parliament. After the election, opposition denied their seats in parliament, 13 in total, as a protest of the election. Therefore, the total number of seats were, according to statistics from 2009, 138 and women controlled only seven out of these. From May 2008, after the elections, until today, the numbers have shifted between 137 and 150 of the total number of seats and between seven and nine women. This shift is, as said, due to oppositional parties refusing their seats in boycott of the election, out of the 13 politicians that refused their seats directly after the election, two were women. It is not clear whether it is the same MPs who initially refused their seats or if new MPs have been taking over the “empty” seats.

4.2 Background

The transition towards a democratic state has been ongoing since 1991, and in no way without difficulties. Political instability for one has severely damaged women’s possibilities to participate in politics. Few parties last more than some years, new ones are constantly created and other parties disappear. The turmoil during the years after independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 includes two ethnic wars in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, civil war fought in 1992–1993 and flaking relations with Russia leading to war in August 2008. The two ethnic conflicts are still unresolved and have marked the political future of Georgia (Sabadashvili 2002:6, 24).

In 2003, peaceful demonstrations in protest of former president Shevardnadze and the sitting administration led to his resignation and in the elections that were held in 2004

Mikheil Saakashvili was elected president. This became known as the Rose Revolution and with it came a lot of changes in Georgia. Out of the three front figures leading the peaceful revolution, one was a woman, Nino Burjanadze. In 2003 with the Rose Revolution followed major changes in attitude towards the issue of gender equality. It became acceptable to talk more openly and people in general paid more attention to this issue (Nodia & Scholtbach 2006:171). However, Georgia today is still a country said to have traditional social structure where men and women's gender roles are well-defined (Sabedashvili 2002:2). Issues of this character require an understanding of the context of the explicit unit of analysis in question. In Georgia there is a quite clear difference in gender roles where women according to culture have a huge responsibility for the family (MP1).

5. Hindrances for women's political participation

The project called “Promoting the gender equality in public life” was carried out between January and April 2009 by the NGO Humanitarian Fund Sukhumi. This was an organisation that I visited during the field-study. It includes interviews with female local Governance body representatives in the Imereti and Samegrelo regions. This projects' result showed that the main interfering reasons that prevents women to be active in politics are: *traditions*, *stereotypes* and *social and economic factors*. Factors that were found assisting for women's participation in politics are: support from the family, leader qualities in women, political education for women to develop their leader qualities, for women to have good past and history and quotation which will ensure women's legal right to be represented in politics (Narrative interim report to Women's empowerment project 2009:6-7).

There have also been many questions asked around the latest Parliamentary election results when it comes to the low number of women elected. There were a number of changes made in the Georgian electoral code in 2007 and during a round- table presentation in the Parliament, Badashvili presented factors behind the decrease of women's representation after the 2008 parliamentary election. The factors listed were as follows;

- decrease of the total number of the parliamentary mandates
- decrease of the share of the proportional election mandates;
- the single – mandate majoritarian election districts (women are not successful in such types of election districts)
- decrease of the election threshold from 7 % to 5 %

(Medea Badashvili 2008, Women's participation in the political life of Georgia)

These four mentioned factors are institutional hindrances and part of an electoral system that works more hindering than including for women to participate in national politics. With the decrease from 235 to 150 seats in the parliament it is self written the number of women would decrease as well. However, the proportion of women in parliament went from about 9% to 5.1% which is a decrease not motivated by the now fewer seats in the Parliament. It is, as mentioned above, harder for women to be elected in majoritarian systems than proportional. In Georgia, both are used and when the new change with fewer shares of proportional election mandates came with the 2008 parliamentary election, it decreased women's chances of becoming represented as members of parliament. As discussed in the chapter 2, women have

a hard time getting elected in single-mandate majoritarian election districts because of the high competitive way. Only one candidate is elected from each district and when the competition is this tough, women usually don't stand a chance. The difficulties for women to compete with men in parliamentary elections are many.

In order to analyze the results of the interviews I will categorize the answers from the in-depth interviews in a simplified classification scheme. The scheme also includes the results from previous research, in order for it to give a more accurate picture. The main question at hand is how these women and men perceive hindrances for women to participate in politics and the main focus is on legislative bodies.

Figure 2: Hindrances for women's political participation

Psychological, Cultural & Socio-economic obstacles			Political obstacles	
Public Opinion	Soviet Union Past	Resources	Political culture	Electoral System
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Traditional values *Gender equality is a low priority issue *Women lack ambitions *Lack of civic education *Society trusts more in men in the political sphere *Low political will *Negative attitudes towards gender quotas *The role of religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Negative attitudes about social benefits *Democratic and freedom values are fairly new *Resistance towards quotas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Economic resources *Time *Support *Information *Self – confidence *Authority *Influence * Network/ Political organisation * Social and economic hardship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Lack of internal democracy *Political instability *Male dominated politics *Lack of mechanisms for implementation * Legal obstacles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Majoritarian system *2007s reforms

5.1 Public opinion

My interpretation of public opinion is based on what researchers have written about it before and I include traditional values as well as general opinions and ideas on a certain subject, in this case women in politics. The definition can seem vague and too inclusive, but this is chosen in order to fit the results of the interviews and other material to facilitate an overview and classification of the results. People's negative opinion about women's participation in politics will hamper women's political participation. These negative opinions are shared by many parts of society why it can be called public opinion. Georgian society is labelled traditionalistic according to most researchers. This goes hand in hand with the fact that public opinion is far behind more modern societies when it comes to acceptance of women as office

holders and politicians. The Georgian society is less willing to accept the fact that women are actively involved in politics since, amongst other things, it clashes with the traditional gender roles that women are considered being ultimately responsible for the family (MP1). The idea of women's place being at home, leaving little or no time for a political carrier is a known dilemma in feminist theory and the politics of women's representation. The burden of taking care of the family does not go well with being an active politician (PR2). But there are of course women who manage to be active in high politics (for example MPs) while taking care of their family.

The lack of civic education is another hindrance that is believed to affect public opinion and the statement that it seems as if neither society nor political parties understand the loss of not having women in public offices (E4). Society is not ready to take women's political participation seriously; they are still laughing and giggling about these issues (MP3). This attitude can be traced to different factors but it seems as though the most common idea is lack of awareness.

Another aspect of the answers to the question is that women more or less equally share the opinion that women should not dedicate their time to politics. This is a point that feminism brings up as well where women can be of the same negative opinion and attitude as men. This has several underlying factors such as that the society does not accept women in public offices, so women accept this "society's opinion". It can also be that women in some cases have accepted the traditional society's role as caretakers of the family so strongly and do not practice a profession. One of the interviewees expressed this problem with the following words:

I think the main obstacle is public opinion. And not only men but also women. I won't be surprised if there is as much dislike of women holding public office from women as it is from men. (Interview 091211, Tinatin Bokuchava)

Men are dominating the seats in parliament which means that there are more people voting for men than women. Both in the majoritarian electoral system and on the party lists from the PR seats are more men elected, although chances for women to get a seat are greater in PR. This electoral behaviour of voting for men to a higher degree is sometimes said to partly depend on people having more trust in men than women in the political sphere. This can be traced to the ideas of gender differences in politics of which Bourque and Grossholtz writes (In Phillips 1995).

A low political will from all levels of politics, from parties to Parliament have an apparent negative effect on initiatives towards a more gender balanced representation. The political will has however increased and now women are given better chances to participate in politics (PR4).

The last obstacle in the category public opinion is, according to the interviewees, the negative opinions about introducing gender quotas in parties and parliament. Gender quotas are a sure way towards a more gender balanced representation. There is no lack of intelligent women according to one interviewee (MP2), but they face many hindrances in becoming MPs and gender quotas are a way of eliminating some, but not all.

The best way is to change the public opinion. If the society demands women politicians, the political parties won't have much choice and women promotion will become a natural process. Women representation must be the public demand. (Interview 091118, Magdalina Anikashvili)

In conclusion, changing public opinion is today needed to facilitate a better future for women's possibilities to get into Parliament.

5.2 Soviet Union past

One aspect of Georgian modern historical background that has not been that well- researched and linked with contemporary issues on women's political participation is its Soviet Union past. The Soviet Union regime that lasted from 1921 to 1991 meant an extreme political situation. One interviewee relates to the effects that the communist regime has had on the attitudes towards women's political participation:

After the communist regime threw away all social benefits: you couldn't talk about social benefits, maternity leave, child care etc –it is communism! (Interview 091120, Lika Nadaria)

Since the Communist era many Georgians have strong negative attitudes towards social benefits such as maternity leave, child care and the concept of state subsidies. These are factors that would help women with the problem of not having enough time which hinders them from dedicating their time to political activity.

Carol Nechemias writes that:

...an effort to understand controversies concerning the representation of women and national minorities in legislatures must take into the account the legacy of the past and its impact on contemporary thinking...The lengthy Soviet experience of token workers, collective farmers and women- deputies who rarely spoke up and voted in accordance with the party leadership – left the Soviet public with a distaste for quota systems. (1994:90, 96)

Nechemias makes a point which was found in the data in the interviews as well. This resistance and negative attitudes about quotas are to a high extent present in Georgia today. The Georgian society has not, as other former Soviet countries, a deep tradition of freedom and democracy values in society. As one of the interviewees expressed, the values have been introduced for a short time, too short of a time for them to be fully understood and accepted. Amongst these newly introduced values are equality and gender equality especially important (PR4).

5.3 Resources

Women's lack of resources is commonly discussed in theories of gender and feminism. The male conspiracy theory which derives from feminist ideology bases on the idea that men are discriminating towards women which would partially explain the low representation of women. From this theory one could believe that women do not get access to certain resources that would be beneficial in a political carrier and therefore are left out. Another theory on women's low representation that could be useful, when looking at the resources as hindrances, is the sex- role socialisation as a cause: that men and women are taught different roles growing up. This has, from a feminist perspective, lead to the view that politics and public life is seen as the men's world and the home is the women's area. The fact that house and family responsibility hinders women from participating in politics and public life is also part of the sex-role socialisation idea (Clark 1991:70-75).

Feminist theories stress the inequality of the distribution of resources such as financial resources, time and information. It is an agreeable statement that the distribution of economic resources is unequal to the disadvantage of women (E1, MP3). Women also do not have sufficient information in political contexts which constitutes as an obstacle in getting involved in political work. As Helen Rusetskala from Women's Informational Centre concluded, there

needs to be more tools available for women interested in becoming politically active such as easier access to information through Internet and other media (E2). The absence of self-confidence and the disbelief that they are an asset in political work is also issues which can be seen as a lacking resource for women. However, some would argue that it is strongly connected to the existing gender roles. I would argue that it is a resource that men possess to a higher degree than women. One aspect of problems concerning difficulties in participating in politics was brought up by one of the interviewees. She meant that in order to be elected in local politics the person needs to be “with authority, influence or wealth”, these are resources or personal attributes which are rare for women to possess in Georgia (MP2).

The difference in women’s role is discussed by one interviewee as follows “The women have a great responsibility for the family, to educate the children.” (MP1). Men in some families, she meant, are not accepting the fact that their wives, mothers, sisters or daughters are politically active. The need of working with education the people, the electorate, is very important so that women will actually be accepted to have a bigger role in political life.

5.4 Political culture

The political culture as such constitutes a major problem with allowing women to participate and be represented in Georgia. It is often stated in political science that politics as such is male dominated. Feminism has questioned this assumption on male dominance and how male and masculinity stands as the political ideal (Bourque & Grossholtz 1998:24-25). Some of the interviewees mentioned the lack of internal democracy, hidden discriminatory rules and non-transparent nomination procedures within parties (E1, E4). These hidden discriminatory rules and non-transparent processes can be a sign of the fundamental discrimination towards women. According to the narratives analysed in this thesis, the political instability in Georgia is problematic, according to narratives, in the sense that political parties are created then disappears. This situation leaves small chances for organisations working with women’s issues to create stable cooperation with political parties (E1, E2, E4).

5.5 Electoral system

As mentioned earlier, the type of electoral system has been showed to influence women’s representation. System with proportional representation has a higher number of women than majoritarian systems. Georgia has a mixed system where some are chosen from a majoritarian

system and some according to proportional representation. This implicates that the great majority of parliamentarians chosen from majoritarian principles are men. Out of the nine elected women only one got in through the party list. More women are elected out of the representatives chosen from the PR system.

6. Actors' role in increasing women's political participation

6.1 Political Parties

As discussed in the theory chapter, the political parties are a core actor influencing representation in elected legislative bodies. This study includes the parties represented in the national Parliament since these are the ones having the most influence and power in Georgian politics (Nodia & Scholtbach 2006). It is reasonable to argue that if more women are members of decision making organs within parties that elect candidates, more female candidates will be elected. How or if women are represented in the organs that elect candidates and take important decisions within the party is reasonably a factor that affects women's chances of getting elected as candidates. It has been widely argued that this same phenomenon is true if women are represented in Parliament they will have greater chances to get into the Government. However, the correlation between these factors are not as strong as one might think, according to Wide (2006:64).

Within the political parties the lack of sufficient information on the number of women in party congress and other important bodies is apparent. This poses as a problem, since it therefore is very difficult to map the number of women in decision-making processes in political parties.

Promoters for women's issues stress the importance for the political parties to introduce intra party quotas. Conduct training regularly within parties is also important to show women that they can, as good as men, advance within the party. This training should work as strengthening for women, to become more self- confidence and make women believe in themselves and their ability to be successful in their profession.

Political parties have the power to, if they choose, promote women as candidates in elections and for positions in the party leadership.

6.2 Women's Organisations

During the field study I met with representatives from different organisations, most of them NGOs, some solely focusing on women's issues, other more focused on certain aspects of society such as democracy, fair elections, political parties etc. These organisations lobby and push for questions concerning gender equality and women's rights in society. Not all, but some work specifically with increasing women's political participation, like for example

Women's Political Resource Centre (WPRC). WPRC also organizes political training for women and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) focuses on training for women within political parties. Women's Informational Centre (WIC) were at the time of my visit (November 2009) working on a project aiming to show successful women from different spheres, like business, art and politics. They were interviewing a selected number of women and the result was to become a book with a collection of stories from these women. This project was an answer to the request, which Helen Rusetskala from WIC had heard from the civil society, on finding out where the successful women in Georgia are (E2). The types of initiatives and activities organized by women's organisations and NGOs that I met with seem, on the whole, to be focusing on getting more women into politics. That is exactly in the line with Dahlerups' idea of a critical mass and the descriptive representation approach.

One example on how women's organisations are working to increase women's participation is the collection of signatures to introduce gender-quotas in the Parliament. The Georgian Women NGOs Coalition in 2008 collected 32 000 signatures in support for amendments in the election legislation. The signatures were forwarded to the National Parliament of Georgia but it was denied and not further discussed in Parliament (Nodia & Scholtbach 2006:171, Women's Coalition of Georgia forwarded to the Parliament 32 thousand signatures, Press-conference. May 2, 2008). Although this particular initiative was not that successful, these types of initiatives demonstrate the strength and importance of women's organisations as initiative takers.

Women's organisations are, in conclusion, generally working to increase women's political participation by lobbying for law proposals, such as the gender-equality law and also working inside the parliament and with politicians to increase their knowledge and put forward questions on gender-equality.

The women's organisations also have the continued challenge of coordination, of keeping the pressure on the Parliament, aiming to develop more and better mechanisms for women to participate in politics and to be represented in Parliament.

6.3 Policy Entrepreneurs

The two different approaches towards participation of women in politics, substantive and descriptive representation, do not need to be in strict conflict. The idea that one or a few women are important to push for women's issues can be as important as having a critical mass. The concept of policy entrepreneurs are closely related to the substantive approach.

Rusudan Kervalishvili is one out of the seven female MPs and a leading politician for UNM. Rusudan is also said to have been one of the initiators of the Gender Equality Law that is being discussed in Parliament.⁶ She has initiated some clauses meant to positively reward women promoting behaviour in parties. One example was that parties with 50 % or more female candidates on their party-list received more air time in the media (E4).

Helen Rusetskala, from the organisation WIC, mentions Rusudan Kervalishvili, when I asked her about what actors that she sees as important initiative takers to increase women's political participation. "She supports our initiatives and she gives more than previous women MPs have. She helps more and she is interested but there needs to be more strategic work." This statement by Rusetskala emphasizes Kervalishvili's role in the work for gender equality in Georgia. Rusetskala also say that more strategic work needs to be done and of her points was creating more institutional machinery. She concludes that the only institutional machinery for gender equality in Georgia is the Gender Advisory Council.

There are other important actors that has not been focused on but that have come up in the interviews. The European Union and countries such as Sweden, considered to be a leading country in gender equality issues, has been brought up as actors who should do more for increasing the female representation as expressed by some interviewees. The fact that Sweden was brought up in more than one interview needs a small comment. I believe that it has to do with the combined fact that I presented myself as a Swedish student and that Sweden is in fact a leading country in gender-equality issues and also, that The International Swedish Development Agency (SIDA) support projects on gender equality in Georgia.

The mass media has an important role when it comes to changing attitudes and public opinion. One of the recommendations that have been lifted in the interviews is the notion that women need to see examples of successful women in politics and other spheres. This is expressed by both party representatives, women MPs and Gender experts (E1, E2, MP1, PR3).

The parliamentary council on gender issues, the Gender Advisory Council, is an actor that could work as an initiative taker in gender issues (E2). Lika Nadaria also mentions Rusudan Kervalishvili and her work with the Gender Advisory Council in the Parliament of Georgia.

...when Rusudan arrived, The Gender Advisory Council started to work. What you are doing very much depends on personality and personal approach. When it was Nino Burjanadze who was not interested in the issue. It was a very low issue for her, like

⁶ One bill out of eight in total was adopted by the Parliament on 24 September 2009.

“beequeen-symndrome”, that is what it is called. The Council was completely dead, even though we at that moment adopted the National Action Plan, we adopted the gender equality concept and we adopted the domestic violence law. But the way *how* it was adopted, it was adopted because it was a USAID project... But when Rusudan arrived, whose approach is much more honest to these questions and she is personally involved, it started working. (Interview 091120, Lika Nadaria)

Lika Nadaria also stresses the importance of civil society involvement in the process of putting new laws into work:

The Gender Equality Law will be completely different from domestic violence law which we adopted the way that it was only once reviewed by NGOs this law was systematically reviewed by us, we lobbied every time. The procedure was completely different. Because the procedure was different it will make difference because there is involvement of civil society. And civil society will feel responsible for it. It is their law and not a USAID project. (Interview 091120, Lika Nadaria)

In the two quotations above, Nadaria makes some interesting indications in the question of policy entrepreneur. Firstly, she mentions Kervalishvili as an individual that has made a difference in politics. Nadaria concludes that Kervalishvili made the Gender Advisory Council work and that it is because of her as a person, comparing her to Burjanadze. Burjanadze can be said to be one woman that has enrolled with the masculine norm and she did not put any focus on the gender-equality issue. The point made by Nadaria is also that it is important to include civil society in this new law.

6.4 Women's Role in Politics

Women's role in politics is not one of the research questions of this thesis. However, it is interesting to look at the concept in relation to women's access to politics since they are generally connected. At least, many obstacles for women's access to politics and few women in parliaments are assumed to indicate a lesser or weaker role of women in politics than few obstacles and more women represented in parliaments. Nodia and Scholtbach concludes that the

...proportion of male and female members of political parties is almost equal. The same cannot be said about their roles, however. (2006:180)

On the subject of women's role in political parties one of the experts in gender issues concluded:

All campaigning is done by women, they go door to door and they do lobbying; they do all "black work" or "house work" of political parties but they remain to serve coffees. It is very difficult for them to reach places. (Interview 2009-11-20, Lika Nadaria)

This narrative expresses the concern that women are stuck, although they are participating in party activities on a lower level – they have great difficulties climbing higher in politics. This is a known tendency and one simply needs to look at how few the women are who possess leading roles within parties and in politics to prove this point. This aspect is also observed in a study of women in the security sector in Georgia where Irakli Sesiashvili concludes that there is a grave inequality of women in leading positions in the security sector. Many interviewees bring up this aspect when asked about their perception of women's role in politics. When asked if they see any differences between men and women's role in politics and in political parties the vast majority said yes. For example, in the interview with Nino, I asked if she believed that quotas would be a possible solution. She answered that she did not believe that the political parties or the society was ready for that yet. Further she maintained that:

...opposition and position alike, which doesn't happen in Georgia a lot, were quite against quotas. It is the one thing that everyone agrees on. (E3, E4)

7. Conclusive Discussion

The overarching aim of this thesis has been to understand the low number of women represented in the National Parliament of Georgia today. Two research questions have been focused on, namely: *What are hindering factors for women's political participation in contemporary Georgia?* and *What are women's organisations' political parties' and policy entrepreneurs' role in increasing women's political participation in Georgia?* In this final chapter I will discuss the main results of this thesis, as regards this aim and research questions.

Feminist theory on representation and the overarching analytical scheme of structures, institutions and actors interplaying, constitutes the theoretical framework of this study. Furthermore, more specific theories of representation within the feminist perspective, brought up in chapter 2, are sex-role socialization, male-conspiracy theory and the two different approaches on representation- descriptive and substantive representation.

7.1 Hindrances for women's participation

This thesis has shown that women's access to the National Parliament of Georgia is strongly limited. Public opinion, the majoritarian element in the electoral system, and psychological hindrances seem to be the most salient factors that hinder women's access to the national politics in Georgia according to the interviewees. This thesis can also conclude that the descriptive approach on representation has been more significant than the substantive representation. The sex-role socialization as an obstacle is clearly present in the data collected from the interviews. Taktakshvili, was one of many interviewees that pointed out the role of women, being at home, taking care of the children and the home, as a major hinder for political participation. Clark also stated that when there are few women in politics – there are few female role models and little opportunity for women to get political experience. This theoretical point of departure is in accordance with the expressed need, of the interviewees, to show prominent women in politics.

When comparing the main results of this study on the hindrances for women's political participation to previous research, presented in chapter 1, it can be concluded that they are similar in many aspects. Nonetheless, when looking to more general studies made (for example Wide, IDEA) there are factors that these studies cannot answer when looking at the

case of Georgia and results made in this thesis. This is a reasonable conclusion since variation among countries' specific contextual factors is not taking into consideration in these types of general studies. One important complement that this thesis does to previous research is the deepened approach on causal mechanisms and explanatory factor for under-representation of women in politics. What my study has contributed with further is the needed increased focus on this part of the world. As mentioned, little research has been made in the developing world on these issues which are important for the continued democratic process. The study has explored women's political representation on the national level in Georgia which makes it difficult to come to general conclusions. The study does nonetheless, point to the problems of female under-representation in the case of Georgia. This study has explored the context, structural-, institutional- and other situational factors making further research and comparisons possible, since research bases on previous research.

7.2 Actors' role

The second question, on the actors' role to increase women in politics, focuses on political parties, women's organisations and policy entrepreneurs. The main results point to parties' nomination processes and hidden discriminatory rules as hindrances for women. These processes keep women from being nominated in elections and getting key-positions within the party leadership. This is arguably a sign of the male-conspiracy theory which Clark points out as a hindering factor for female representation. Women are, according to the theory, suffering discrimination to the favour of men. Men who are sitting in the political party's leadership are more likely and, probably – most likely, to choose other men as their successors and colleagues. The role of political parties is concluded as great. Furthermore, the importance of influential individuals for the increase of female participation in politics, such as Rusudan Kervalishvili, can clearly be read from the interviews. Kervalishvili's importance for her work with the Gender Advisory Council has especially been lifted. Her role and importance for these issues are interpreted as strong. Nonetheless, they should not be exaggerated. Another conclusion concerns the measures that actors' should engage in for an increase of women's representation in Parliament. Examples of measures, brought up in chapter 6, are: to put forward successful women in media to show good examples, work to make women in high political positions put greater focus on the issue of women's access to politics, educate future and current female politicians in political skills and train political parties in the importance of having more women in politics.

No strong conclusions can be made on the issue of the interplay between structures, institutions and actors. The relations between the three important actors for this study- political parties, women's organisations and policy entrepreneurs- have only been touched on the surface in this thesis. The insufficient conclusions on the above mentioned relations can be regarded as a natural outcome since the focus has been on perceptions of the problematic of under-representation. More structural and abstract relations are more likely to be well-investigated in other types of studies, such as in the statistical part of Jessika Wide's dissertation.

7.3 Reflections and further research

The major shortcoming in women's political representation in Georgian Parliament is, according to the narratives of my interviews, derived from many interconnected factors. There is a wide understanding in the Georgian society that affirmative actions are not the solution to help overcome the underrepresentation of women. Most gender equality experts and women issue promoters put their vote for gender quotas while party leadership and parliamentarians do not.

The implication of the delimitations made in chapter 1, considering the research questions, need to be stressed. Narrowing down and delimiting the first research question means that the focus of this thesis lays on the perceptions of hindrances. This does not imply that the results are narrow personal opinions on obstacles for women's political participation. On the contrary, the results show a deep factor analysis which is based on women MPs', gender experts' and political party representatives' reflections, all of whom are assumedly familiar with the problems that women face.

There are also important differences among women that should not be neglected, whilst the difference between men and women also play an important role in the politics of representation, as shown in this thesis. But the fact that it is hard to say how much there are cultivated women's interests remains. It is a central part of this thesis since it motivates the quest for a gender-balanced representation. I can only summarize the results in short by stating that the difference between men and women are clearly noticeable in Georgia. This problematic is important and points to the feministic basic idea- that these differences and current power-relations should indeed be evaluated, questioned and changed.

Another difficulty that I found through the study is women interviewed in the parliament do not see themselves in the problem of getting access to politics. They talked about the

problem on a more or less general level. This is also a main point of feminist theory concerning women in politics- that women in high politics subside for the male dominating norm. It is a problem since gender issues will be kept a low priority issue and it is going to be hard for women in Parliament to push for these types of questions, for there will be no support for them.

One important aspect that has not been given proper attention in this thesis is the concern of ethnic tensions in Georgia as a strong obstacle towards participation for some women. When talking about women's competitiveness as candidates and the issue of financial support especially for women, an interviewee stated: "Maybe in certain regions, more money should be given to women in for example the Muslim population, where it is hard for female candidates" (MP1). In the case of Georgia, which is known for ethnic conflict, it could be of interest to look at different ethnic groups' access to politics. A further aspect that this thesis has not answered is the local level of politics which generally is considered to deal with typically women-oriented political questions such as health care and education. It would be useful to look into the local level, seeing what trends there are in female representation and exploring hindrances compared to those found on the national level.

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Experts in Gender Equality/ NGO representatives

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(E2) Helen Rusetskala 091120. Coordinator of Women's Information Center (WIC).

(E3) Nino Vardosanidze 091211. Program Coordinator, National Democratic Institute (NDI).

(E4) Tinatin Bokuchava 091211. Senior Program Officer, National Democratic Institute (NDI).

(E5) Tamar Sabedashvili 091214. Gender Advisor, United Nation Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

(E6) Eka Siradze-Delaunay 091214. Executive Director, International Society of Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED).

(E7) Miranda Gvantseladze 091215. Humanitarian Fund Sukhumi.

(E8) Meri Gelashvili 091216. Project coordinator, Humanitarian Fund Sukhumi.

Members of Parliament

(MP1) Chiora Taktakshvili 091112. Member of Education, Research and Culture Committee, United National Movement (UNM).

(MP2) Magdalina Anikashvili 091118. Deputy Head of the Health and Social Issues Committee, Christian Democratic Party (CDP) (This interview was done in written, through e-mail correspondence).

(MP3) Rusudan Kervalishvili 091120. Deputy Chairperson of Parliament, United National Movement (UNM).

Party Representatives

(PR1) Neshtan Kirtashi 091126. Secretary of International Office, Labour Party of Georgia.

(PR2) Natalia Mchedlishvili 091128. Assistant to International Secretary, United National Movement (UNM).

(PR3) Irakli Kavtaradze 091128. International Secretary, United National Movement (UNM).

(PR4) Ana Sulakvelidze 091210. Assistant to International Secretary, Christian- Democratic Movement (CDM).

(PR5) Davit Berdzenishvili 091211. Veteran party member, Republican Party.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Representation

Is it important with gender balanced representation?

Would you consider gender equality issues and women's political participation high priority questions?

Hindrances for women's political participation

Do you consider women in Georgia have equal possibilities to get elected into the national Parliament?

What obstacles do you see for women to participate in politics?

Please elaborate which? (Gender, class, economic indicators, culture, other..)

Actors' role

What measures do you think should be taken to increase female representation?

(Nothing, financial support for women candidates, party training programmes for women, party quotas, affirmative action for women candidates)

Would you say that women and men in general have different roles in the political work of the party?

Do they perform different tasks? (It has been noticed that women are much more active in campaign work, door to door etc)

What actors have responsibility for increasing women's representation (NGO, Party, politicians, women's clubs)

What are the actors' role?

Appendix B: Map of Georgia and its regions



Source: http://www.workpermits.in/images/map_of_georgia.jpg 2010-09-19

Appendix C: List of women MPs in National Parliament of Georgia

Anikashvili Magdalina, By party list, Giorgi Targamadze - Christian-Democrats
Gogorishvili Khatuna, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Jabua Guranda, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Javakhadze Elene, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Kervalishvili Rusudan, Majority, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Kherkheulidze Ekaterine, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Ochiauri Khatuna, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Taktakishvili Chiora, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia
Verulashvili Marika, By party list, Unified National Movement - for Victorious Georgia

Source: http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=23 2010-09-10