

# **Transition to adulthood in Georgia: Dynamics of generational and gender roles in post-totalitarian society**

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

During the past decade Georgia underwent drastic changes. The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 and subsequent establishment of independence in the South-Caucasian republic of Georgia was strongly linked with the population's expectations of democratic development, prosperity and inclusion into global processes. However, it resulted in political instability leading to bloody ethno-territorial and civil wars, economic standstill, mass unemployment and impoverishment of population. Weakness of the state, mismanagement and lack of strategic thinking resulted in demolishing of the social security system and led to mass impoverishment. During these years the social stratification became more visible, partly due to increasing income gap between the new poor (more than a half of the population is considered to live below the poverty line) and the thin layer of the new rich who either used available financial and social resources to accumulate capital mainly through privatisation or trade, or acquired wealth through corruption. Another change is linked to the restructuring of political and economic system from Soviet centralized type to (embryonic) free market. Much of the new capital concentrates in the cities, while most of rural areas experience full economic stagnation, increasing another gap - between rural and urban population, giving rise to growing migration to the capital city and other bigger urban centres, but also to emigration to other countries.

These "history-graded" changes and developments, along with the forces of globalisation, had immense impact on the lives of people. They got reflected in the societal and personal transformation, in changing human values, social support systems and relationships, first of all within family. There has been strong impact on the relationships between the generations and on gender relations, but also increased differences between different groups of the population, particularly in the sphere of values and political preferences.

When a society and a culture undergo a paradigm shift, the new paradigms do not immediately replace the old ones as the dominant patterns of thinking and behaviour. Some traditional elements are losing their authority or relevance, while other elements retain their force. Such reconfiguration is an intrinsic part of more general process of social change, especially visible in a transitional setting such as in Georgia, and it affects

in the first place the younger strata of the society, more susceptible to change, - primarily family, gender and generational relations, as well as the general process of transition to adulthood in the general framework of the life cycle. The processes of change are not characterised by a straightforward replacement of existing behavioural stereotypes and value orientations, but rather they are gradual and non-homogenous, although there are examples of more rapid change. Such “mosaic” transition is taking place in Georgia, contributing further to its cultural diversity. Indeed, Georgia is culturally and ethnically highly diversified country, so the traditions of family life, relations between generations and the gender role may differ strongly. Still, there are some overall patterns and stereotypes to be observed, rooted in the dominant centuries-long tradition of Orthodox Christianity, the Mediterranean value system and the Soviet legacy, with emerging role of Western influence.

So, Georgians ascribe great importance to kinship ties, and the kin are expected to share both happy events and grievances. Relatives meet regularly at important social events such as wedding parties or funerals, and neglecting social duty to attend is disapproved. Kinship system played very important role in the period of extreme hardship (1992-1994) cushioning the implications of economic crisis, when social welfare appeared fully disrupted. Obligations towards family members and kin as well as friends are considered a priority and are placed before obligations to the state and society at large. The family structure of Georgia could, and to considerable degree still can be described as traditional. The family even in urban setting often consists of three generations, and the eldest male is considered as the head of the family, exercising high authority. Although basic household in cities commonly consist of a nuclear family - parents and children, still quite frequently grandparents would live together with them, sharing responsibility for bringing up the children. Children are the focal point for any family, and much attention is paid to their education and development, especially in educated layers of the society.

Transition to new political, economic and social systems has to a considerable degree affected families. Georgian national culture, although male-dominated, strongly values respect to a woman, and rude or indiscreet attitude towards a woman is strongly disapproved. At the same time, women were supposed to fit to there predominantly subordinate roles, concentrate on family-related duties. Their behaviour outside of family is traditionally more restricted by social norms than that of males, and marriage is considered to be a norm. In the first years after independence, however, devoid of work and their traditional role of breadwinners, men found themselves out of place in a society and in a family. Unlike more flexible and active women, men at large did not succeed in adjusting to new economic realities, they did not seek opportunities to open own business or find jobs outside their professional field. The base of their authority to a certain degree became eroded, and frequently even re-establishing in the subsequent period of their economic role in the family would not fully return their habitual dominance in family-related decisions. Indeed, confronted with the urgency of finding the means for feeding the family, women proved to be more flexible than their spouses, showed more readiness to “downgrade”. Thus many women with the PhD degree gladly took the jobs of housekeepers or other toil. Petty trade was most vibrant business, especially in nineties,

almost exclusively occupied by women. Making shuttle journeys to Turkey and Russia, bringing food and commodities for resale in Georgia, trading in small kiosks or market places - still remains females' domain. Women are also active in rapidly developing hotel and bed-and-breakfast business. They, more than men, are employed by international organizations. If at the beginning of transition men comprised the majority of economic migrants, now the pattern is apparently changing. Women seem to find jobs abroad more easily than men. However, if male migration target is Russia, where men are mostly occupied in construction business or trade, women more often go to Greece, Israel and US, where they work in families as housekeepers, *au paire*, or look after the old people.

The economic changes have first of all influenced the power structure of the family, previously fully dominated by elder members who were also the main breadwinners, while the younger members remained economically dependent upon their parent until quite late in their lives. Now families deploy young adults for work as part of a larger household survival strategy, or, actually young adults enter the labour market out of economic need to help reduce the vulnerability of their households as well as to pursue their own career. This way they are nonetheless provided with opportunities to sustain their families, but also to learn, to grow as individuals, and prepare for the future career, as how and when a young person enters the labour force can set the stage for future status and work opportunities. Economic globalization is providing unprecedented opportunities for older adolescents and young adults, especially girls, to earn incomes that can increase their social and economic standing, self-esteem, and skills. Simultaneously, this changes their status within their respective families. The young, who in many cases appear to be more flexible and active in the labour market than their less dynamic parents, start to contribute more and more significantly to the family budget, which radically increases their say in family matters. At the same time, there is higher unemployment among young adults than other age groups. Youth unemployment has many implications for the labour market, for poor households, and for young adults themselves - the inability to find work exacerbates economic exclusion, poverty, and the probability of future joblessness. As working is an important means for young people to develop adult roles and responsibilities, unemployment obstructs the movement of young people from adolescence to adulthood. These both factors create increased diversity in the power structure within a family, but in any case lead to earlier maturing of the youth.

Similarly, in the families where women became prime breadwinners, male heads of families lost much of their power and authority. This tendency is apparent not only in urban families with high level of education, but now also in rural areas. Although it should be noted that male authority is seldom challenged either by women or the young generation openly and in public. Women often even try to downplay their share in family income for leaving space for men's pride. Market economy also imposed hard conditions of employment. Those who have own business or work in a private sector often work for 10 or more hours a day, 6 or even 7 days a week, have no vacations. The family usually feels happy if at least one of its members is employed. Hence other members of the families frequently take the gender-specific role of the employed. So the traditional role

division between husband and wife is not kept any more. Husbands known for their authoritarianism and adherence to traditional role division now can easily be found doing all kinds of house chores and looking after the children. Possibility to generate income increased the self-esteem and independence among previously dependent women. It also contributed to the increase of responsibility and self-reliance.

Under the Soviets until 1991, young people enjoyed a hundred per cent literacy rate, easy access to education, full employment, and a reliable and free medical system. Today, most of this has been lost: young people are increasingly poorly educated, and find it difficult to get work. Their health is seriously threatened by drug abuse, unhealthy life style and other health risks. Other dramatic changes took place in the education system. After having gained independence in 1991, the new Georgian state immediately faced huge problems in financing this state system of universal education. This has been an enormous challenge, but the government has not addressed the main problems causing today's failure: rampant corruption, growing inequality, and the inability of the new system to offer employment prospects. While many analysts of the post-Soviet transition have suggested that positive changes would appear both with consolidation of the country and as more young people came through the system, the reality appeared to be quite different at least until now: instead of a new generation with new ideas coming to power, the best and the brightest are leaving for other countries, with those left behind are worse educated and less equipped to handle a complex world and live a decent life. As noted by Henrik Urdal (2001), "if young people are left with no alternative but unemployment and poverty, they are likely to join a rebellion as an alternative way of generating an income".<sup>1[1]</sup>

Still, the numbers of young people who actually get involved in politics, or even more so in various radical or other potentially destabilising groups is very small, while young people are absent from many areas of social and political life. But behind those who actually join up is a much larger disaffected group that sees little hope in the future, except through migration. In Georgia, the potential for radicalisation of youth is already visible, as demonstrated by recent political events after and before the parliamentary elections of November 2003. The attitudes and abilities of young people remain to be a critical political issue in Georgia.

Finally drug-consumption, prostitution and crime must be addressed as top priorities considering the way they are rapidly threatening youth and future generations. This is especially important in the context of growing influence of peer-groups, and the growth of numbers of impoverished youth without sustainable livelihood or family care. Peer influences and how adolescents view themselves compared with their peers overall influences young adults when forming their own values and perceptions, as they are very vulnerable to peer pressure at this age. Friendships and peer groups are very important

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<sup>1[1]</sup> Henrik Urdal, "The Devil in the Demographics: The effect of youth bulges on domestic armed conflict, 1950-2000", International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. 2001.

during early adulthood – young persons rely on friends for support and advice, mutual openness and personal disclosure, groups provide for them a support base outside the family to explore and develop different identity roles. Conformity to peer pressure may also arise at this time leading to alcohol, drugs, and criminal activity. At the same time, early adulthood is a period of "floundering" and for many young people, particularly for the youth not bound by educational system or family authority in the situation when the society fails to help them organize their time and facilitate their development. The more so that adolescence and early adulthood are the prime period for thrill-seeking risks<sup>2[2]</sup> that involve behaviours challenging social norms or socially unacceptable, such as involvement in violent gangs or criminal networks, currently flourishing in Georgia. Sexually transmitted diseases are also becoming most common in the age group of 15-24, with more sexual libertarianism on the scene while awareness about prevention measures is low, and promiscuous adolescents are becoming most susceptible to various diseases. Rapid urbanization and impoverishment along with increased needs resulting in large numbers of unskilled young people on the economic margin and only tenuously connected to their families, along with a ready market for sex, has led to large numbers of adolescents entering prostitution. The risk of infection is particularly increased for the young women of low social status who may be forced into sex or have little power to negotiate condom use with sexual partners, as sexually transmitted infections can lead to infertility and have a devastating impact on the life of an adolescent.

In previous times, notwithstanding the relatively early physiological maturing of adolescents specific for the Caucasus, and equally early acquisition of civil rights at 18 while marriage was allowed from 16, the same age (16-18) an average norm for graduating school, the transition to adulthood from above-mentioned perspective was somewhat delayed if compared to western analogues, or even to northern parts of the Soviet Union. This had partly to do with traditionally close family relations and prolonged intimacy between parents and children characteristic for the Caucasian societies, but also with economic dependencies and the way the society was organised – in the situation of restricted geographic mobility of the young in a small country with limited employment or educational opportunities, deficiency of accommodation and virtual impossibility for a young person to acquire independent housing, low salaries and restricted career opportunities for the young, - the latter as a rule even after marriage lived with their parents, relied upon their financial assistance for livelihood, and had limited voice in family matters. At the same time, career was strongly dependent on the age, and with minor exceptions the young could hardly achieve a high managerial or political position/role.

Currently, there are many developments that have impact on the role of the young and hence on their social standing. First, jobs and well-paid employment are more easily

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<sup>2[2]</sup> Gullone and K. Moore define that risk-taking “is the participation in behaviour which involves potential negative consequences (or loss) balanced in some way by perceived positive consequences (or gain)” (2000, p.393). One can view risk-taking as either positive, or “socially approved” behaviours and negative or “deviant” behaviours.

available for those with dynamism, skills and knowledge that are more easily acquired at the young age, be it new technologies, foreign languages or computer-related competences. Especially in urban areas, the westernisation of the lifestyle brought more equality in social status of different cohorts. The changes concerned primarily the younger generation, and the distribution of roles among generations. Relative freedom from Soviet mentality, English language and computer skills enabled young generation of urbanites to find employment more easily. There are many cases when men and women in their early twenties are the sole providers of their parents who are still in productive age. Young people also more easily go abroad, whether to study or to work, or frequently to combine work with studies, while money remittances from them is often an important contribution to the family livelihood. The young can easily pursue a successful career in business, politics or in public service. In education, the multitude of newly emerged private and state-owned commercial educational institutions provide easy access to higher education in almost every small town, even if the quality of studies is rather low. Still, there is increased migration of youth to bigger urban centres where there are more opportunities for career and employment, drastically changing the age structure of many rural and especially mountainous settlements. If in Soviet times the young were obliged to live with their parents because there was little opportunity of having separate housing, the emergence of real estate market has totally changed the situation, and if the young still live with their parents, it is often not due to lack of alternative opportunities, but rather to support aging parents or because it is easier to raise children together under conditions of scarce pre-school institutions.

Now, while the juvenile phase is expanding in the West, the opposite trend is observed in Georgia, as the young acquire independent social identity at an earlier age. Many factors lead to earlier transition to adulthood, in addition to economic independence, and especially important are the cultural differences between different generations. While the elder were brought up under Soviet regime, and the legacy of the Communist ideology and socialist life experience have formed their value orientations and habits, the young generation knows little about that time, and cares even less. Such gap between life experiences makes the transition to adulthood somewhat different from what it was in the past, with more inertial and conservative society, where transition meant simply aging and acquiring the culture of the adults, their rules of the game and their values. Now the new cohorts bring the totally new culture along with them to the early adulthood, squeezing out the old culture and the older people from their dominant position. Even the language skills of the new adults are different, and the knowledge of Russian is no more a social indicator, English gradually occupying its place.

New generations are much more westernised, business oriented, sexually liberated and politically indifferent than the previous one. One may expect the young to be increasingly intent on pursuing non-material and emancipatory goals, as this happens in societies with longer democratic tradition. However, not only the cultural gap between cohorts is increasing, there is even stronger divergence among young adults themselves as one finds a mixture of opposing orientations which might be classed as individualism, self-

realisation, independence or emancipation, on one hand, among the majority of more educated and well to do social layers, but also more common emphasis on material well-being, respect for authority, narrow pragmatism, careerism, religious traditionalism and intolerance mixed with habits of political obedience, and moral egocentrism, among others. In general, secularised orientations, post-materialism, sexual permissiveness, ecologism, feminism, postmodernism, and libertarianism are more evident among highly educated young urbanites, who are exposed most intensively to new social arrangements and western ideological influences, show greater willingness to accept new ideas, and who bring these to adulthood. Their ideals are linked to personal wealth and life in the west, rather than material well being in the sense of comfortable life and having an apartment or a car, also family responsibility or nationalism. However, unlike Western European societies, - left materialism, idealism, as well as political activism are of rare occurrence among every social stratum of the young adults, due to negative legacy of the past. Still, in general, young adults are more optimistic, more self-confident, more satisfied with their life, show less interpersonal trust, and, surprisingly, in spite of evident political passivity and mistrust of political elites, believe in the effectiveness of civil participation, compared to the older generations.

### ***TRANSITION TO ADULTHOOD: THE SURVEY***

Young adulthood - a formative time in the life course between sexual maturity and the assumption of adult roles and responsibilities - has changed dramatically over times, and especially over the past decades, and in certain sense it is a universal phenomenon of the modern society, with its institutes of prolonged education and at the same time with acceleration of physiological maturing of adolescents. Indeed, earlier sexual maturity, later marriage and prolonged education have contributed to the acceptance of adolescence as a distinct phase of life.

The early years of adulthood -- about age 16 to 24 - mark the coming together of a number of developmental challenges and tasks considered essential for the assumption of adult responsibilities. This is the time when most young people face new challenges of adulthood, take on new roles, develop new behaviours and new ways of interacting; they explore the possibilities for adult life, test some initial choices, acquire the skills they need for jobs and careers; establish positive interpersonal relationships and begin to prepare for parenthood. This is period when young adults make a commitment to a particular life course and become able to contribute in a positive way to their community. There is multiple transitions of young adulthood taking place - leaving home, entering or leaving educational institutions, finding employment, marriage, cohabitation, childbearing--and the variety of combinations and sequences in which these occur.

Not only have ongoing social changes affected gender and family roles, but the process of transition within life-cycle is itself undergoing drastic modification. In particular, transition to adulthood is very different now from it used to be a decade or two ago. However, before describing these changes, it is important to specify, which aspects of transition, and of adulthood itself, we are discussing, even if we take as a basis the so called “Early Adult Transition” and “Entering the Adult World” of Daniel Levinson (age 17-28) (Levinson, 1978). This means we are talking of those young people who were between 3 and 15 in 1990, when the political and social overhaul actually started with disintegration of the Soviet Union. Naturally, this history-graded event was of utmost importance for following social change, but it naturally had different impact on the young children and the adults, men and women. No surprise that the cultural gap between these cohorts has widened, it is more surprising sometimes to encounter unexpected continuity and similarities between different cohorts, much more than continuity within cohorts themselves.<sup>3[3]</sup>

Transition to adulthood is a multifaceted phenomenon, it has many different and strongly interrelated aspects, and hence one needs interdisciplinary perspective to understand the complexities of the process. We will consider factors that are linked not to physiological/biological transition and the legal status (close to “Normative Age-Graded” influences of Baltes, Reese and Lipsitt, 1980), notwithstanding the great importance of these (actual determinants of adulthood in the strict sense), but primarily those related to changes in behaviour, worldview, value orientations, social status/career and capitals/capacities, as well as temporal and social characteristics of transition. Transition to adulthood is understood here along behavioural and social lines as developing psychological, economical and social independence of an individual gradually acquiring well-defined and full-pledged social status, responsibility and participation. As recent socio-economic developments have changed every aspect of the transition, and it is these changes that interest us, formally adolescence and early adulthood are considered within the same age points as at earlier historic periods. Another focus of our interest is the change in the value system of the younger generation.<sup>4[4]</sup>

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<sup>3[3]</sup> “People do change as they get older. They learn more, fill new roles, and seek new means of coping with new circumstances in their lives. By and large, however, people remain basically the same in how they think, handle interpersonal relationships, and are perceived by others. For better or worse, adults tend to display many of the same general personality characteristics and the same relative level of adjustment that they did as adolescents.” (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995)

<sup>4[4]</sup> “During adolescence, as teens develop increasingly complex knowledge systems, they also adopt an integrated set of values and morals. During the early stages of moral development, parents provide their children with a structured set of rules of what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and unacceptable. Eventually, the adolescent must assess the parent's values as they come into conflict with values expressed by peers and other segments of society. To reconcile differences, the adolescent restructures those beliefs into a personal ideology.” (G. M. Ingersoll. Normal adolescence. Bloomington. 2003).



While it is exciting to study all aspects of very much under-explored transition to adulthood in Georgia, we have limited ourselves in our study both from the viewpoint of the methodology, the topics covered, and the social group that was researched. The study draws mainly from the results of a survey based on specially designed questionnaire conducted in Tbilisi, capital of Georgia, among young unmarried adults between 18 and 22 and their respective parents, the young adults mainly students with both parents living together in a family. Hence the sample represents relatively educated and urbanised layer of the society, with undivided parents living together that can afford their children to study full time. Such sample was chosen not only from the viewpoint of operational and logistical simplicity, but because such families<sup>5[5]</sup> are considered to represent a functional type better reflecting the rapid changes in intra-family relationships, as well as the value system and practices, happening due to ongoing political and societal change. Of course, despite the individualization of the life course across social classes, there are significant differences in the experience of transition to adulthood by social status, rural/urban divide and geographic location, including precocious family transitions, and more problematic transition to adulthood for those of lower socio-economic status. We were not able to tackle these differences in our study.

Our intention was to study the impact of historical time, and such global trends as described by globalisation, upon the process of transition to adulthood. Other factors such as new political and economic realities in which young people's personalities has been formed, in contrast to different realities characteristic of their parents' adolescence period, were considered as potent factors shaping the value system and attitudes. The main focus of the study was aimed at describing value profiles of young adults as compared to those of their parents, assessing the attitudes toward such issues as independence, traditions, equality, gender, tolerance towards minorities and similar. Thus, the topics that were covered in the questionnaire included the key aspect of transition to adulthood characteristic for the Georgian society – i.e. independence in the decision making in private affairs, as well as some values that reflect both history-graded and age-graded developments. This means that a number of very important aspects of transition such as the role of peer groups and group behaviour in general, sexual behaviour, risk taking and delinquency, along with some others, were omitted from the study as requiring more refined and complex instruments. Of course, the observed difference in attitudes between adolescents/young adults and their parents can sometimes be attributed both to the general age-related changes and the generation/cohort-related changes, the latter more closely linked with globalisation. The study which we carried out does not allow to differentiate between the two, which itself is not an easy task, but still can point to the important inter-generational differences and can allow for some assumptions in regard to their causes. The format of a questionnaire, while providing limited opportunity to understanding some of the listed aspects of transition, still provide very valuable, in our

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<sup>5[5]</sup> Of course, we are well aware of the importance of the issue of parental accord or economic status – so, for instance, many researchers have observed that there are higher levels of parent/adolescent conflict in families experiencing divorce, economic hardship and other stressors (e.g. J.G. Smetana. Conceptions of parental authority in divorced and married mothers and their adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 3(1), 19-39, 1993).

opinion, information about ongoing changes, or sometimes, about surprising inertia, characterising transition to adulthood in Georgia.

In order to supplement general considerations discussed above, we have carried out a small-scale survey, focusing on the generational and gender differences with regard to norms, values and practices concerning personal independence of adolescents, their obligations and responsibilities, personal ties, risks and attitudes. The data was obtained both from young adults and their parents, so that in each family three persons were questioned.

As described above, a number of issues were studied in families containing young adults, the majority of these students of different universities, art and business schools located in Tbilisi. Besides young adults themselves, their parents were also questioned through separate specially designed instrument. The interviewers visited respondents at home and conducted interviews individually, covering all in all 176 families. Young, unmarried persons aged 18-22 (44.9% male and 55.1% female) as well as their parents were interviewed separately at their homes, at locations in the capital of Georgia - Tbilisi. Summarily, 528 respondents, i.e. three members from each of 176 families (i.e. about twice as many parents as the young adults) have been interviewed. The majority of questions in those two questionnaires designed for the study were identical, containing both specific questions and some standard instruments (measuring satisfaction with life, general trust and optimism). The young adults' questionnaire consisted of 119 questions, one for their parents - of 111 questions.

The families of respondents consisted of three to eight members ( $M=4.6$ ,  $SD=1.1$ ). Among young adults the majority, - 70.9%, were students; 17.7% had already got university degree and 11.4% were high school graduates. Among their parents the overwhelming majority, - 92.4%, had university education. Most of our respondents, (78.2%) estimated their families as neither poor nor rich, while 11.0% considered themselves as poor and only 10.8% as affluent.

99% of respondents belonged to the Georgian Orthodox church. Gender differences were quite noticeable in observing religious practices, measured through the frequency of attendance of church rituals. Women of both generations (Chi-square 8.3  $p<.05$  among young adults and Chi-square 22.5  $p<.001$  among their parents) attend services more often than men. 40.5% of young men compared to 57.7% of young women attend church on festivities or regularly go to service. The corresponding numbers for the generation of parents are 35.1% and 48.5% for men and women respectively.

## **FAMILY: INDEPENDENCE AND POWER**

As family plays an extremely important role in the Georgian society, it is meaningful to start our discussion with intra-family relations. Indeed, one of the major indicators of transition to adulthood is the shift from personal dependence to independence, marked by undertaking obligations and responsibilities, but also freedom of choice and decision. A number of questions tapped the perception of actual situation in regard to independence, but as well the age-norms concerning it. Respectively, respondents were asked a preliminary question of assessing their general state of independence within the family, before going into different concrete aspects of personal independence. 61.4% of young respondents (supported by the opinion of 73.4% of their mothers and 73.8% of fathers) pointed that they feel themselves rather independent. Respondents also estimated independence as revealed through different behavioural options and choices.

The distribution of power in families, in the majority of cases, continues to follow a well-established traditional pattern of male dominance. Fathers are perceived to be the most influential members of a family, according to 73% of their sons, 67.1% of their daughters and by 74.6% of parents, while mothers occupy the second place - as rated by 67.1% of young males, 62.9% of young females and 70.3% of parents. By the opinion of the relative majority of respondents (47.6% of young males, and 45.3% of young females, and 45.3% of their parents), young adults occupy the third position in family power structure.

Transition to adulthood and acquiring independence may be a painful process. Slightly more girls (83.5%) than boys (81%) experience conflict at home, - 33.0% of girls and 24.1% of boys say that they have conflicts at home at least once or twice a month. Parents in their turn provide lower estimates for family conflicts with the involvement of their children, especially of their daughters. 78.3% of boy's parents and 72.7% of girl's parents admit to have conflicts with their children.

Family functioning involves effective communication and sporadic conflict. The way adolescents and parents view their communication with each other affects the way they view their relationship and themselves. The male dominated power structure leads to the fact that the majority of boys have more frequent conflict with fathers (41.7%), than with mothers (28.3%), brothers (10.0%) or sisters (10.0%), while the girls conflicts with almost equal frequency with mothers (26.8%) and fathers (25.6%), but also quite often brothers (19.5%) if compared to their assessment, and with sisters (13.4%). Mothers overestimate the frequency of conflict, while fathers tend to underestimate it, also smaller proportion of fathers (36.9%) than their sons (41.7% as indicated above) admit to experience conflict.

In the opinion of the majority of boys (36.4%), most frequently conflict concerns money, while 16.4% thinks that reason is dissatisfaction with their educational performance. Most of their parents agree that money and studies are the strongest reasons for conflict. However, for girls, going out is the number one problem (17.1%), next is the character incompatibility or mood (15.8%), and then household chores (11.8%). Their parents add to that list differences in opinions, and money.

Money is indeed a strong irritant, as the majority of young adults are economically dependent - 87.3% of boys and 93.8% of girls regularly receive moneys from their parents. 65.4% of boys and 74.2% of girls admit not to have any income except money given to them by their parents, while 19.2% of boys and 15.5% of girls claim to have income irregularly, and only 15.4% of boys and 10.3% of girls have a regular source of income. Out of these latter, 46.7% of boys and 74.2% of girls admit to spend their independent income mostly on themselves. It is interesting to note that parents overestimate such spending of their sons and underestimate the spending of daughters – the parents of 64.4% of boys and the 64.2% of girls' parents believe that their children spend income on themselves.

While economically strongly dependent upon their parents, their family role is quite secondary - 72.2% of boys and 67.7% of girls state that they do not have clear-cut responsibilities at home, while most parents (74.5% of boys' and 68% of girls' parents) agree. We see that slightly bigger share of girls, than boys have responsibilities at home. Most often these responsibilities include domestic chores and looking after the younger children.

Abovementioned dependency would not cause much distress among the majority of young adults, as it seems. 64.6% of young males and 50.5% of young females are satisfied with the degree of freedom they have at home. Overall, 72.2% of boys and 52.6% of girls feel themselves to be fairly independent. Gender difference was found in this respect (Chi-square 8.4  $p < .05$ ) not only in the perception of young adults themselves, but also that of their parents - 79.4% of boys' parents and 68.9% of girls' parents admit that their offspring are quite independent. Here again we see that higher proportion of boys perceive themselves to be more independent than girls, and so do their parents. At the same time, parents tend to overestimate the independence of their children, particularly of their daughters. Even more surprising under such conditions is the satisfaction with the own independence - boys by 14.1% more frequently than girls are satisfied with the degree of independence he or she enjoys, while the difference in perceived independence is significantly higher and amounts to 19.6%.

## **LIFE IN THE FAMILY: PRACTICES AND NORMS**

It is natural that indicators of the state of individual freedom include both its perception and the actual practices. Also, there are differences in different aspects of family practices. Young adults do not feel their families to be strongly restricting their freedom of opinion or of choice. 83.5% of adolescents (confirmed by 90.9% of their mothers and 88.5% of fathers) stated that they are able to freely express their opinion to other family members even when it contradicted the opinion of their parents. The majority in all respondent groups pointed that parents did not interfere in such issues as the choice of a friend by young adults.

However, while opinions may be freely expressed, or choices made, it is acknowledged that there is much less freedom for action. Respondents have indicated to more limitations in such issues as living apart from the family. About 40% of adolescents think that their families would not allow them to live alone. This reflects the real and universally shared attitude, as on this issue again the opinions of young respondents and their parents do not differ much. Even more restricted are students in the possibility to live apart from the family together with an intimate person (a boyfriend or a girlfriend). At the same time, only 20% of adolescents and the same proportion of parents consider this possible, even although only 15.9% of adolescents (20% of their mothers and 13.7% of fathers) think that their family restricts them in the choice of their love object.

Gender differences become increasingly important from the viewpoint of actual practices. Everywhere society continues to have different expectations and norms about boys' and girls' sexual roles and relations, and different social mechanisms for maintaining these. Gender related double standards are commonplace. With the only exception regarding freedom in the choice of friends, almost in all practices that were tackled by the questionnaire, girls perceive themselves, and are granted by parents as reported by the latter, much less freedom than boys. Especially significant are differences in relation with living separately, going for a vacation or bringing a boyfriend or a girlfriend home without preliminary agreement. Much smaller proportion of girls, compared to boys, think that they have freedom to live alone. In all aspects, except the freedom in the choice of friends, parents assume that their daughters have more freedom than is experienced by the daughters themselves. However, in case of boys such difference is much smaller – both boys and their parents have the same perception of freedom of the former to express opinions, to choose a girlfriend, to bring the beloved one home and freedom to live alone. High percent of male young adults point to the freedom to choose love object (89.9%), to express opinions contradicting the parents' views (88.6%) and to bring beloved person home without preliminary agreement with parents (80.8%). In all this cases boys perceive to have more freedom than admitted by their parents.

**Table 1**

Actual freedom as perceived by young adults and their parents

	Issue	Young adults		Parents of	
		Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
1	Freedom to express opinions contradicting to those expressed by parents	88.6	79.4	89.2	89.2
2	Freedom in the choice of love object	89.9	79.4	89.8	77.7
3	Freedom to bring beloved one home without preliminary agreement with parents	80.8	48.4	83.3	56.7
4	Freedom to go for a vacation with beloved	71.8	13.4	61.4	27.8
5	Freedom to live alone with beloved	41	3.1	36	5.7
6	Freedom in choice of friends	60.8	61.5	51.6	40.4
7	Freedom to live alone	53.2	27.8	52.2	32.5

As can be seen from the Table, Univariate Analysis of Variance revealed significant difference among generations in the perception of the age of young male and female adults, regarding the issue of at what age it is possible to go for a vacation without parents, and to live apart from the family alone or with boy/girl friend. In all these cases parents' estimation of the respective age is higher than that expressed by the young adults. The age, at which girls should be free to decide to go for a vacation or live alone, is perceived both by young adults and their parents (of any gender) as higher for young females than for males.

**Table 2**

Age at which young people get independent

			Young adults			Parents			Difference
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	Freedom to go for a vacation with peers for boys	<i>M</i>	17.2	17.9	17.6	18.6	18.7	18.7	Generation $F=32.6$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	1.7	1.7	1.9	2.4	2.1	2.2	
	Freedom to go for a vacation with peers for girls	<i>M</i>	18.9	18.2	18.5	20.2	19.5	19.9	Generation $F=29.4$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	2.7	2.1	2.4	2.8	2.5	2.7	
2	Possibility to live alone for boys	<i>M</i>	21.2	21.2	21.2	22.9	23.1	23.0	Generation $F=32.6$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	3.1	3.3	3.2	3.3	3.6	3.5	
	Possibility to live alone for girls	<i>M</i>	23.1	22.1	22.5	25.1	24.6	24.8	Generation $F=34.9$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	3.9	3.6	3.7	4.2	4.1	4.1	
3	Possibility to live with a girl-friend for boys	<i>M</i>	23.6	24.9	24.3	26.0	25.6	25.8	Generation $F=8.7$ $p<.005$
		<i>SD</i>	3.4	4.1	3.8	4.4	3.8	4.1	

4	Possibility to live with a boy-friend for girls	<i>M</i>	25.5	26.6	26.1	28.6	27.4	28.1	Generation <i>F</i> =7.7 <i>p</i> <.05
		<i>SD</i>	4.1	5.2	4.7	4.3	4.8	4.5	

As is evident from the above table, the generation-related difference is quite robust. It was found in regard of the age norms concerning freedom to return home any time without preliminary discussion with the parents, freedom of choice of the friend, freedom of sexual life, possibility to bring a girl/boy friend home and living with a girl/boy friend. Gender difference was found only in regard of freedom of sexual life, males setting higher age for females than females themselves and females setting higher age for males than males for themselves. Again, like the existing practices older generation sets higher age than the young generation. Age norms for girls are higher in all respects than for the boys.

As young people in western societies today are delaying marriage; they are more likely to be cohabiting. One of the largest growing types of sexual relationships among adolescents is monogamy without marriage.<sup>6[6]</sup> However, in Georgia this is rarely a case, and although there is increasing freedom of sexual relations as compared to tradition of highly valued virginity (among girls), it is very seldom that a couple would live together in cohabitation, and in most cases families would not approve this.

In most cases there are expectations from a surrounding culture determining age-appropriate norms and a respective timetable (“social clock”). This would include developing a career, getting married, or separating from a family. Comparing the perception of the age at which young people can live apart from the family with their/boy/girl friends with the admitted norm demonstrates the dissatisfaction with the existing practice. If the age at which boy can live separately with a girlfriend, is estimated by young adults as 24.3 and by parents as 25.3, the norm these generations set is correspondingly 22.9 by young and 24.3 by older adults. For the girls, existing separation practice is estimated at the age of 26.1 by young and 28.2 by older adults, while the norm is set at 23.0 and 25.3 by young and older adults correspondingly.

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<sup>6[6]</sup> Defined by Sorenson as, “. . . a relationship between two people of uncertain duration and to which both partners generally intend to be true. Either partner, however, may depart when he or she desires, often to participate in another such relationship” (R. Sorenson. Adolescent sexuality in contemporary America. New York. World. 1973. p. 219).

**Table 3**

Age setting of the norm for independence of young adults

			Young adults			Parents			Difference
			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
1	Freedom to return home any time for boys	<i>M</i>	20.2	21.5	20.9	23.1	23.5	23.3	Generation $F=41.5$ $p<.001$ Gender $F=5.1$ $p<.05$
		<i>SD</i>	3.6	3.6	3.7	4.2	4.1	4.2	
	Freedom to return home any time for girls	<i>M</i>	23.1	22.7	22.9	25.9	25.6	25.7	Generation $F=36.2$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	5.5	4.2	4.8	4.8	4.8	4.8	
2	Freedom in choice of friend for girls	<i>M</i>	15.6	16.6	16.1	17.1	17.8	17.5	Generation $F=11.2$ $p<.005$
		<i>SD</i>	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.3	3.8	4.1	
	Freedom in choice of friend for girls	<i>M</i>	16.3	16.5	16.4	17.5	17.9	17.7	Generation $F=8.9$ $p<.005$
		<i>SD</i>	4.3	4.6	4.5	4.4	4.4	4.4	
3	Freedom of sexual life for boys	<i>M</i>	16.1	16.7	16.4	16.9	17.4	17.1	Generation $F=9.5$ $p<.005$ Gender $F=5.6$ $p<.05$
		<i>SD</i>	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.4	2.7	2.6	
	Freedom of sexual life for girls	<i>M</i>	22.3	21.3	21.8	24.9	23.9	24.4	Generation $F=30.2$ $p<.001$ Gender $F=4.3$ ; $p<.05$
		<i>SD</i>	5.6	4.9	5.2	4.3	4.3	4.3	
4	Possibility to bring girl/boy friend home	<i>M</i>	18.2	18.6	18.4	19.1	19.0	19.0	Generation $F=6.9$ $p<.05$
		<i>SD</i>	2.9	2.1	2.5	2.6	2.4	2.5	
	Possibility to bring girl/boy friend home	<i>M</i>	19.2	18.8	19.0	20.1	19.5	19.8	Generation $F=32.6$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	2.9	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.5	2.8	
5	Living with a girl-friend for boys	<i>M</i>	22.8	23.0	22.9	24.1	24.5	24.3	Generation $F=10.7$ $p<.005$
		<i>SD</i>	3.2	3.4	3.3	3.4	3.5	3.5	
	Living with a boy - friend for girls	<i>M</i>	23.2	22.9	23.0	25.7	25.0	25.3	Generation $F=15.2$ $p<.001$
		<i>SD</i>	3.6	3.5	3.5	3.6	4.9	4.3	

Both the existing practice and the norms point to the late acquisition of freedom by young adults.

### GENERAL VALUES

Values are defined as measures of relative importance of various ideas, events, actions or material things, and they clearly influence and define almost every facet of our lives and action. Although cohorts may differ in many aspects, still in Georgia there is also a strong and surprising, taking into consideration ongoing dramatic changes in all aspects of social life, continuity, particularly in the general value system.

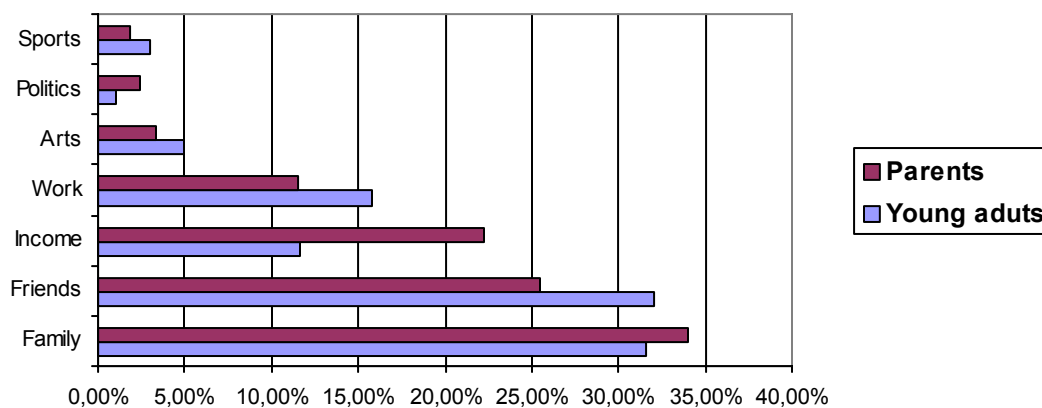
In our survey, we have used the instrument measuring “Materialist” and “Post-materialist” value orientations (Inghelhart 1977). Respondents were requested to indicate their first and second priorities from a scale comprising of four items of materialist/post-



materialist values. Two items of the scale correspond to materialist ('maintain order in the nation' and 'fight rising prices'), and the other two to post-materialist orientation ('give people more say in government decisions' and 'protect freedom of speech'). Accordingly, on the basis of their choice, respondents can be grouped in having materialist, post-materialist or mixed orientation, i.e. having chosen one materialist and one post-materialist item. Remarkably, the biggest share of the respondents, youth as well as their parents, chose order - 43.8% of adolescents, 43.2% of mothers and 44.6% of fathers. But generations differed in their second choice. Biggest portion of them - 23.6% choose "freedom", while the parents' the most frequent second choice was the "say" - 21.6% among mothers and 25.0% among fathers. In fact mixed values were the predominant choice (68.2%), i.e. respondents most frequently chose one materialist (most often order in the country) and one post-materialist value (most often people have a say in decisions), and the actual difference was in the choice of a post-materialistic value; 25.4% adhered to materialist and only 6.4% to post-materialist values. Neither gender nor generation differences were found to be significant.

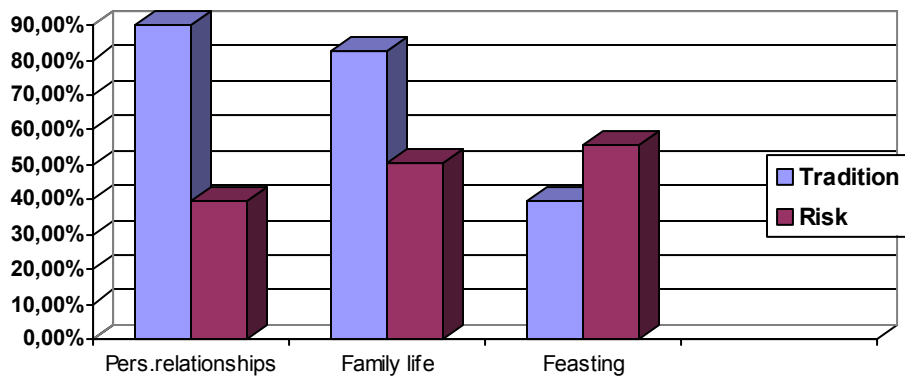
It is interesting to observe this continuity regarding such issues as economic equality. The majority of all groups of respondents support egalitarian principle in economy - 54% of young respondents, 63.6% of their mothers and 61.4% of fathers state that all people should be economically more or less equal. In concrete case of education this shows even more strongly – so, only 13% of adolescents, 7.4% of mothers and 8% of fathers supported the existence of private universities.

Further, respondents were asked to choose three most important issues from the listed seven. As can be seen from the diagram below, - family, friends and income were chosen the most often. While the difference among generations is not substantial regarding "family", "income" constitutes much higher value for the parents' generation, while "friends" is relatively more important for the young adults.



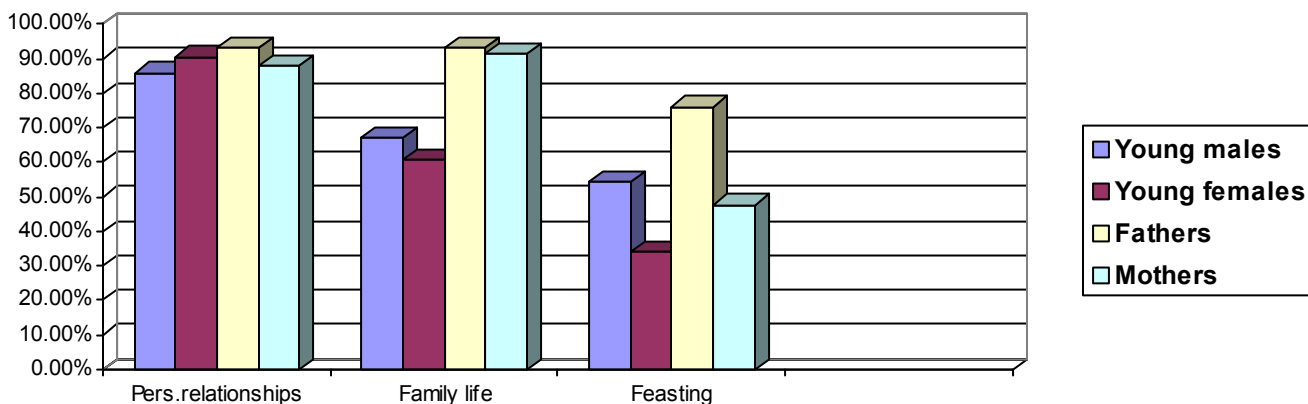
**Pic. 1** The most important aspects of life

The importance of the three traditional areas of social interaction, i.e. those of family life, friendship and personal relationships, and feasting, were measured along with the risk of losing respective tradition in next ten years.



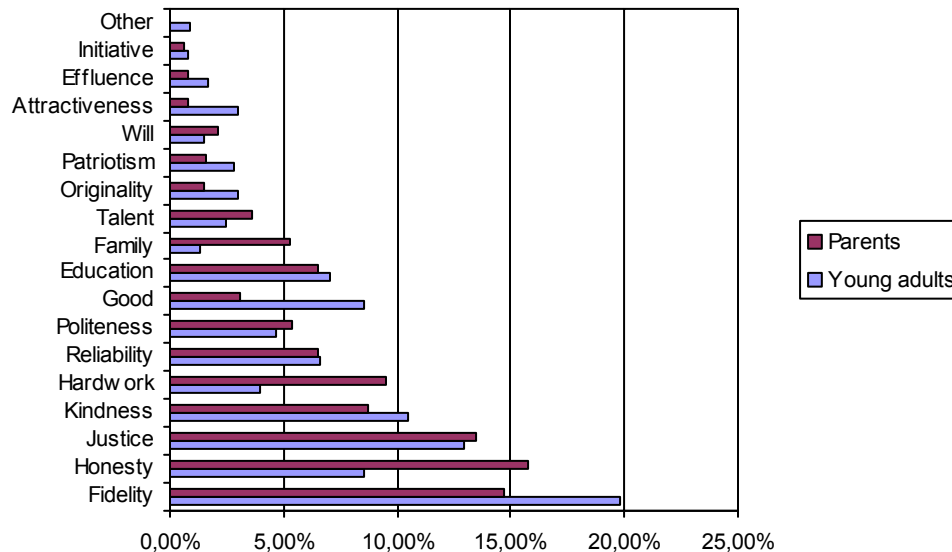
**Pic. 2** The importance of existing traditions and the perceived risk of their loss. The existing pattern of personal relationships/friendship was taken as the most valued tradition and, at the same time, respondents estimated the risk of its loss as the lowest. Males of different generations differed in the evaluation of significance of personal relationships (Chi-square 12.3  $p < .005$ ), higher proportion of fathers than of sons evaluated this tradition as very important, although no significant gender differences have been observed.

The two generations, both males (Chi-square 29.6  $p < .001$ ) and females (Chi-square 38.3  $p < .001$ ), differed significantly in their assessment of the importance of family life, - more parents than their children estimated family as of top importance. It is interesting to note that males ascribe more importance to family, even if the gender-related difference is not really significant in this case.



**Pic. 3** Relative importance of the three traditions of social interaction. Significant generational difference was found among men in the evaluation of the importance of feasting (Chi-square 12.3,  $p < .005$ ). Much higher proportion of fathers than their offspring considered it as very important. Of course, as traditional feasting is as a rule male-dominated; women are much less enthusiastic in assessing it highly.

In addition, respondents were asked to select three most important items out of the list of 17 personality features. Fidelity, honesty and justice appeared to be the most popular qualities. Generations differed in some of the choices. Fidelity, kindness, good character and physical attractiveness were more valued by the young adults, while parents valued more such qualities as honesty, hard work, family orientation and talent.



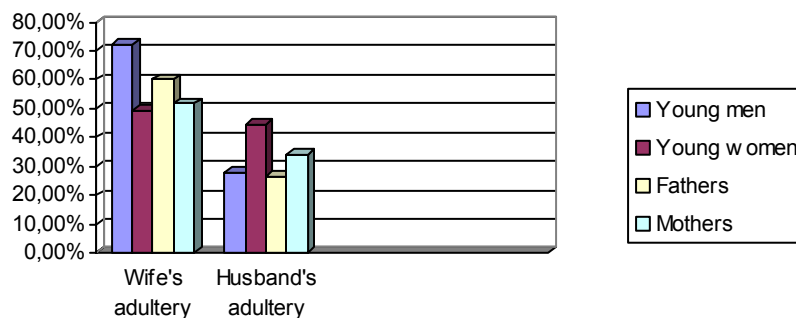
**Pic. 4** The most important personality features

Adolescence and early adulthood comprise the period used for exploration and self-determination, especially in sex and sexual identity. Adolescent sexuality and sexual values are an ever-changing cycle. Gender relations, marriage and sex are the issues where in all societies there is a great gap between the attitudes of different generations, both due to age and to cohort-related factors. As a rule, the younger generation is more liberal, or even more libertarian, in its attitudes.

However, our findings are still very far from either libertarian or liberal attitudes. 55.1% of the young adults and 84.4% of the older respondents expressed their rejection of premarital sex for women, with significant generational differences regarding this issue were found among both genders (Chi-square 27.3  $p < .001$  among men and Chi-square 29.2  $p < .001$  among women). According to 59.7% of young men, and 87.5% of male parents, young women should retain virginity until marriage. Less young women opt for this norm, but still 52.6% of young women and 81.3% of their mothers support it. At the same time, only 1.7% of young adults and 3.1 of older respondents supported the norm prohibiting premarital sex for men. This norm should apply to men according to 1.3% of young men and 4% of their fathers, 2.1% of young women and 2.3% of their mothers. Divorce and adultery are other important issues. While in the case of women the norm prohibiting adultery is much stronger, once again it is more liberal in the case of males. 36.9% of young people and 30.1% of parents admit that divorce is appropriate in case of a husband's adultery. The generational difference in this case was found among females (Chi-square 11.9  $p < .005$ ) - 44.3% of young and 34.3% of older females are supporting

divorce under such circumstances. Gender difference on this issue was quite significant among the young adults (Chi-square 19.0  $p < .001$ ) - 27.8% of young men and 44.3% of young women would opt for divorce.

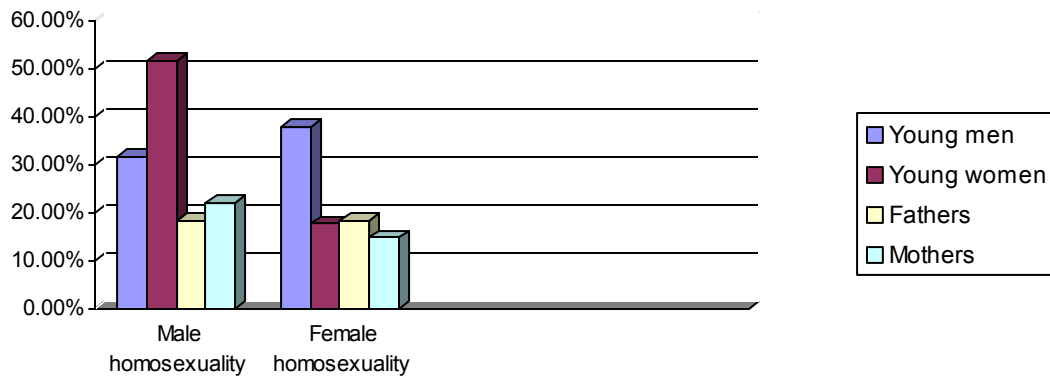
However, 59.7% of young adults and 56.0% of parents would opt for divorce in case of wife's adultery. Gender difference was again found among the young adults (Chi-square 11.4  $p < .005$ ) - 72.2% of men and 49.5% of women would support divorce. It is interesting to note that this is the only norm observed by us where younger generation is more categorical and strict than the older one, probably related to less life experience and more idealism when thinking of their own marriage.



**Pic. 5** Divorce due to adultery

Another important dimension is the attitude toward sexual minorities – gays and lesbians, traditionally strongly marginalized by the society. Today, 42.6% of young people and 20.2% of parents demonstrated tolerant attitude toward male homosexuals, while 43.2% of young adults as compared to 19.3% of parents were tolerant toward lesbian women. Generation difference was found in regard of male homosexuality among women (Chi-square 29.6  $p < .001$ ) – much higher proportion of young women (51.5%) than mothers (22.2%) expressed tolerance in this case, while gender difference in tolerance toward male homosexuality was found among both generations (Chi-square 16.3  $p < .001$  among young and Chi-square 6.4  $p < .05$  among older generation), females being in general more tolerant than males: 51.5% of young females compared to 31.6% of young males, 22.2% of older females compared to 18.2% of older males are tolerant. Attitude towards lesbian relations differed between generations, both among male and female respondents (Chi-square 13.8  $p < .005$  among men) and (Chi-square 23.6  $p < .001$  among women): 38% of young and 18.2% of older men and 47.4% of young and 20.5% of older women expressed tolerance.<sup>7[7]</sup>

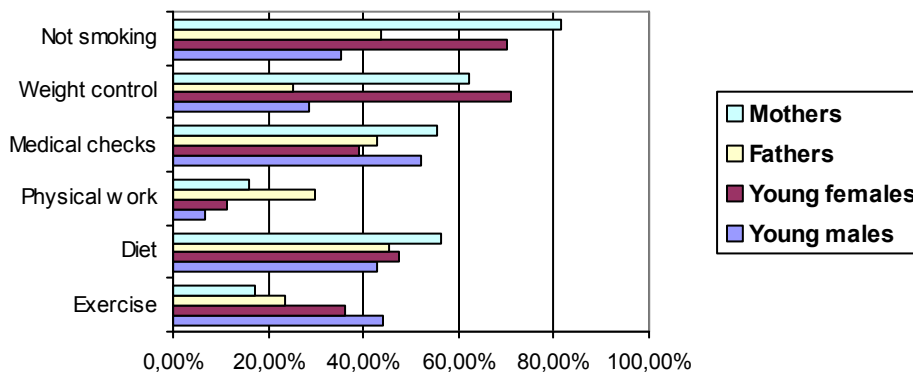
<sup>7[7]</sup> Cnf. “Most adolescents view homosexuality as an acceptable sexual relationship among partners who consent and want such behavior, although most say they have no interest in homosexual behavior for themselves” (R. Sorenson. Adolescent sexuality in contemporary America. New York. World. 1973)



**Pic. 6** Tolerance towards homosexuals

While tolerance toward sexual minorities show gradual increase in tolerance by younger generations, religious tolerance demonstrate different pattern. For example, tolerance toward “Jehovah witnesses” (one of the most controversial religious groups active in Georgia) was expressed by 14.9% of young and 14.3% of older respondents.

One of the most serious problems of contemporary Georgia is deteriorating health status, mainly due to unhealthy life style. This is to certain extent explained by the low quality of life, but also by little awareness regarding the issue. Respondents were asked to check practicing six aspects of a healthy life-style.



**Pic. 7** Aspects of healthy life-style

One of the worst factors is increasing addiction among the young persons to intensive smoking, particularly noticeable among girls. Respectively, generational difference was found among women in regard to smoking (Chi-square 4.7  $p < .05$ ), - more young females than their mothers smoke. In general, 45.7% of young adults and 37.2% of parents smoke cigarettes, although the frequency may be less. Young people smoke on average 17.1 ( $SD=12.4$ ) and the older ones 20.2 ( $SD=2.0$ ) cigarettes a day. The younger cohort also start to smoke earlier – the young respondents reported that they had begun to smoke

from 7 to 20 years of age ( $M$  16.1;  $SD=8.7$ ), while the parents as a rule used to start smoking later ( $M$  18.5;  $SD=3.5$ ).

Georgians tend to be strongly identifying themselves with their national culture, or their perception of it. When respondents were asked to choose two (out of four) cultural traditions that they felt to be closest to them, the first choice for overwhelming majority - 88.6% of youth, 96% of mothers and 96.6% of fathers - was Georgian. About 60% of all respondents equally named European culture as their second choice, while 15.8% of youth (8% of their parents) named American culture as such. About 12% named oriental culture as their choice. In fact, generations differed mainly with regard to American culture, adolescents showing higher preference to it than their parents.

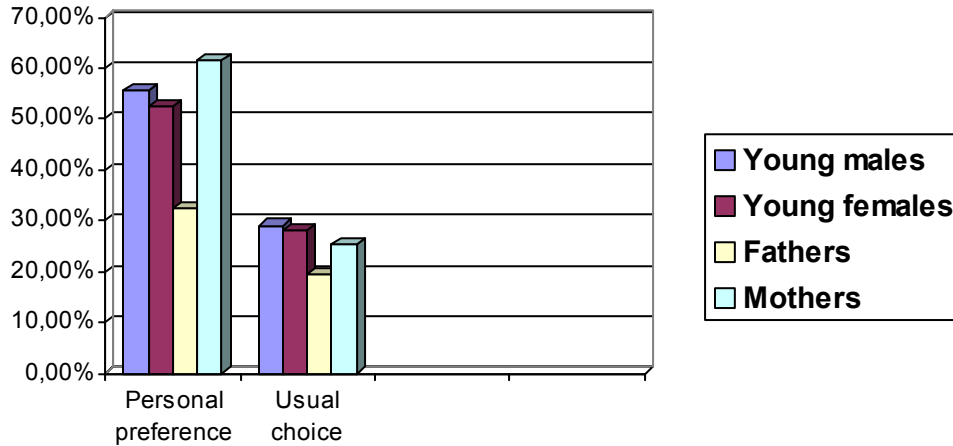
When requested, respondents named 18 countries as their model states. Adolescents named the most frequently: USA (32.4%), UK (9.7%), France (8.5%), Italy (6.8%) and Germany (6.3%). (The mothers' preferred countries were as follows: USA (17.7%), France (8%), Germany (5.7%), Italy (2.9%) and Switzerland (2.9%), while fathers chose: USA (21.7%), Austria (9.1%), Russia (8%), UK (4.6%) and Germany (2.9%). 22.7% of youth, 53.1% of mothers and 43.4% of fathers did not express any preference.

## ***SOCIETY***

Transition to adulthood, among other things, implies stronger integration into the society, while the family links get gradually weakened. One of the most important aspects of such integration is employment. In Georgia, higher education is a popular choice for the majority of young persons, particularly in urban environment. This causes certain delay in employment, although there is a general difficulty as well for a young person to find a job. Indeed, among the young generation only 19.7% is employed, while among the older respondents the rate was 77.2%. The structure of employment is also different. Among those young adults who work, the majority of 38.7% work as state employees; 32.3% works in a private organisation/business, while 12.9% found their job at an international organization. At the same time 56.9% of the parents' generation are state employees, 28.1% work in a private organization, 6.4% have their own business, and none of them worked at a foreign organization. Such employment structure is reflected in the plans and intentions. Respectively, the majority of young respondents (41.5%) would like to work at a foreign organizations (where salaries are much higher, as a rule), 23.3% want start own business, 15.3% intend to work as a state employee and 12.5% at a private organization/business (7.4% chose "other" option). As for the older adults, 39.5% of them would like to have own business, 25.6% - to work for the state, 15.9% at a private and only 14.2% at a foreign organization, 4.5% chose "other".

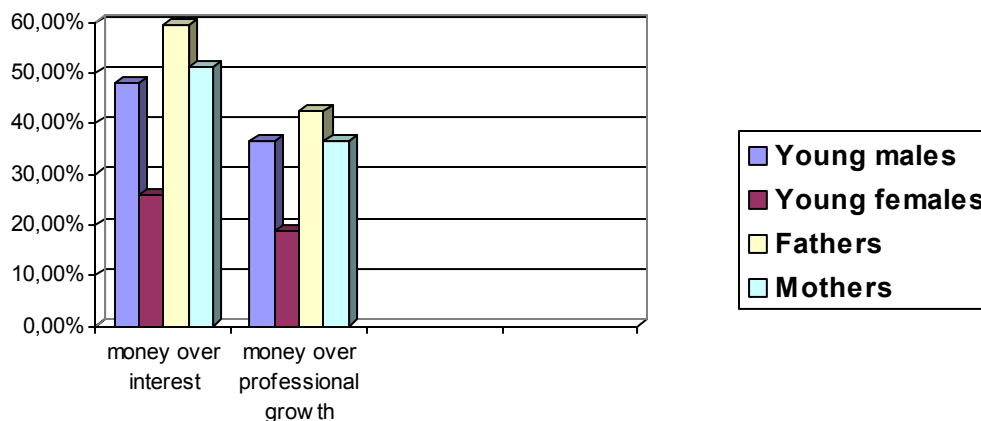
Gender is an important factor of employment, although again it is not the numbers but the types of jobs that matter. Still, asked about the usual practice in Georgia regarding gender preferences, 22.4% of young adults and 26.4% of parents supposed that women would be preferred as employees. However, when asked about their personal preference to select male or female candidates as employees, 54.0% of young adults and 47.1% of parents expressed preference for women. The difference between generations was found among

men (Chi-square 12.1  $p < .001$ ) - 55.7% of young men compared to 32.6% of fathers preferred women employees. Gender difference was also obvious among parents - 32.6% of men and 61.7% of women expressed preference for women employees.



**Pic. 8** Personal preference and perceived common practice of choosing females as employees

The young adults seem to be more idealistic, or maybe less burdened by responsibilities, when choosing a job. When asked to express preference between money and interest in the work, 35.8% of young adults and 55.3% of parents expressed preference for money. Men are traditionally perceived as breadwinners. Respectively, young females are less motivated by income (Chi-square 9.4  $p < .005$ ); females are less materialistic - 74.2% of them choose interesting job against 51.9% of young men. Generation difference was found among women (Chi-square 16.5  $p < .001$ ), as preference of interesting job over high salary was expressed by much more young women (74.2%) than mothers (48.9%). As for the choice of high salary over professional growth, 26.4% of young and 39.4% of old adults preferred money. There was significant gender difference found among the young generation (Chi-square 7.0  $p < .05$ ), - 81.4% of young women compared to 63.6% of young men expressed preference for professional growth.



**Pic. 9** High salary vs. interest and professional growth

Higher education continues to be a preferred choice for the majority of young adults. In general, education is considered as important, and parents try their best to provide an opportunity to study to their children. 44.9% of young adults and 46.7% of parents think that education is a decisive factor for success in Georgia. The respondents assessed even higher the importance of education in 10 years' time – as expressed by 70.5% of young respondents and 70.1% of parents. No significant generational or gender differences were found in this respect.

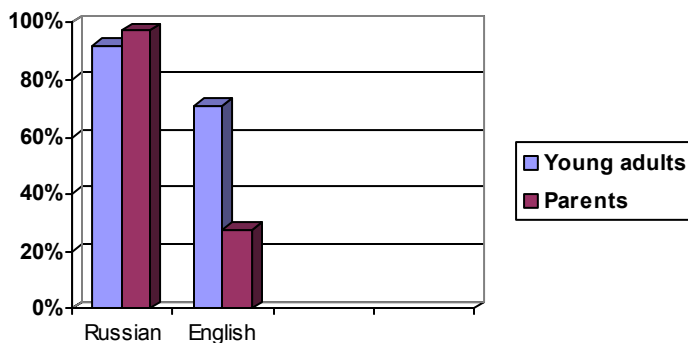
Certain optimism is quite characteristic of respondents. While they appeared to be highly dissatisfied by current situation in the country (only 25.7% of young adults and 19.4% of their parents believe that one can lead today a decent life by honest work in Georgia), almost every second respondent (48.9% of young adults and 47.1% of parents) expressed their strong hope of the possibility to live a decent life in 10 years by honest work.

The absolute majority of young respondents (81%) expressed their desire to study abroad, while less would want to work abroad for a period of about three years, or to emigrate. Men appeared to be more willing than women to work abroad and to emigrate. The gender difference was significant both among the young (Chi-square 7.4;  $p < .005$ ) as well as the older respondents (Chi-square 13.2  $p < .001$ ), - 63.6% of young men and 54.2% of young women, while 50% of fathers and 31.8% of mothers expressed desire to work abroad. The attitude towards emigration is negative in general, only 10.1% of respondents expressed desire to go abroad for good. Gender difference is significant among the young generation (Chi-square 8.2;  $p < .05$ ), - 25.3% of young men compared to 9.3% of young women would like to live abroad on permanent basis. Generational difference was also found among males regarding working abroad (Chi-square 7.9;  $p < .05$ ) and emigration (Chi-square 13.9  $p < .005$ ). Young males are more willing to work abroad than their fathers (63.6% vs. 50.0%). The corresponding figures for emigration were 25.3% for young respondents as compared to 8.0% of parents. Generation difference among women was found only in case of working abroad (Chi-square 15.3;  $p < .001$ ), again the younger women were more eager to work abroad (54.2%) than the older ones (31.8%).



When respondents were asked to name the country they would like to live, young adults most often listed USA (25.6%), Italy (12.5%), UK (10.2%), France (6.3%), and Spain (4.5%), while their parents chose USA (11.7%), Russia 4.6%, France (4.0%), Germany (2.9%), and Italy (2.6%). 33% of youth and 68.2% of their parents did not name as an option any other country than Georgia. There is clear preference for USA as expressed by the youth, who don't show any interest toward going to Russia, while there is a weaker preference toward Russia as expressed by parents.

Such preference is well reflected in the fact that generations differ in linguistic skills. While the foreign language known by the majority of respondents is Russian, higher proportion of parents (97.2%) than youth (92.0%) knows it, although it is not so much the headcount itself but rather the level of knowledge of Russian that is also falling, according to other sources. At the same time, English is increasingly known among the youth – 71.0% of young adults as compared to 27.6% of their parents speak English.



**Pic. 10** Command of languages

The youth is less interested in politics. Generational difference among males was found in regard to the readiness to take part in parliamentary elections (Chi-square 19.1  $p < .001$ ), almost twice as many fathers (58.3%) as sons (30.8%) intended to vote. Respectively, the young show less interest in following political news – significant generational difference was found in watching TV news both among male (Chi-square 44.0  $p < .001$ ) and female respondents (Chi-square 24.3  $p < .001$ ). Higher proportion of parents (74.4% of fathers and 60.2% of mothers) than young adults (32.1% and 30.9%) watched regularly TV news. Equally, higher proportion of fathers (61.4%) than sons (34.2%) would read newspapers.

The majority of respondents (62.3% of young adults and 63.3% of parents) were unanimous in thinking that the problems that their country faces can be solved only through active participation of the population. However, only few respondents could envisage an opportunity for such participation. Only 4.6% of young adults and 5.7% of parents expressed their opinion that an ordinary person can have an influence on the actions and decisions of the government. Parents seem to be more law-abiding than their offspring - more young adults than their parents think that the laws can be violated. The difference was found both among man and women (Chi-square 8.7  $p < .005$  among men

and Chi-square 15.1  $p < .001$  among women) - 78.2% young men compared to 59.1% of older male respondents admitted that laws could be violated, while corresponding numbers for women are 74.2% and 50.0% correspondingly.

Young people are more vulnerable toward certain social risks. Actually, very high proportion of respondents of both generations perceive the threats for young men to become drug addicts, criminals or alcoholics, while the perceived risk is much less for young women. More parents than young adults admit such threats. For example, 63.9% of parents and 48.3% of young adults admitted the risk for young men to become alcoholics. At the same time, such risk is much less associated with young women - it is perceived as a risk by 9.7% of parents and 5.7% of young adults. Equally high is the perceived threat of drug addiction - 74.4% of parents and 67.0% of young adults admit the seriousness of such risk for young men, while for young women this is believed to pose a risk by 17.0% of parents and 10.8% of young adults. The risk of become a criminal is also believed to be much higher for young males - it is perceived as a risk by 65.9% of parents and 68.5% of young adults, while for young women only by 13.1% of parents and 6.3% of young adults.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Summing up, it can be said that economic and social transition caused dynamic of change in generational, gender and family patterns, gradually shifting them towards western norms and lifestyle, and respectively influencing the process of transition to adulthood, among other factors through creating increasing cultural gap between different cohorts of the population, but also dividing the generation of young adults themselves. What is surprising, however, not the change but rather inertia and the continuity in values (apart of such as related to sexual minorities) characterising the sample, which we have studied. In general, resistance of traditional values is still very strong among the poorer, rural and small-town communities, social institutions such as the kinship system experienced little damage continuing to play an important role in the communities. Traditionalism is gaining force among the educated layers as well, as a reaction to the threats of globalisation. Seemingly, what is emerging as a new pattern of social dynamic and texture is closely related to that in South-East Europe rather than observed in the North. However, paradoxically, transition to adulthood in Georgia has accelerated as compared to previous circumstances, probably a temporary trend with the pendulum moving back in the case of new cohorts approaching the social scene. Within the limitations of our study described in the introduction, our results show that the Georgian society shows trends somewhat different from observed in the western countries. In some cases it is clear that there is certain time lag, and the forces of globalisation along with economic development will bring change in the same direction, particularly with regard to more sexual freedom among young adults and more gender equality, or achieving economic independence at younger age. Nevertheless, it seems that the Georgian society will not become fully westernised in foreseeable future but preserve to significant extent its cultural identity, and like other social phenomena here, the transition to adulthood will continue to show specific mixed characteristics of both East and West. It is clear that in

the short term at least strong continuity in values will take place, and the Mediterranean tradition of close emotional relationships within extended family, the importance of kinship, parent-child interdependency, and certain modesty in sexual relations will stay.

Our observations have demonstrated stronger difference between generations than between genders, and at the same time stronger generational difference among males than among females. Following the tradition, females are achieving personal independence at older age as compared to young males. The younger generation is more liberal, and at the same time more radical in its opinions, shows less respect toward the law. Youth by far prefers fidelity to honesty, and prioritises friendship and personal relationships. It is more oriented toward the West, having lost interest toward Russia, accompanied by loss of respective linguistic skills. But is still keeping in high respect national culture, and tradition of close interpersonal relationship.

## Notes

[1] Henrik Urdal, "The Devil in the Demographics: The effect of youth bulges on domestic armed conflict, 1950-2000", International Peace Research Institute, Oslo. 2001.

[2] Gullone and K. Moore define that risk-taking "is the participation in behaviour which involves potential negative consequences (or loss) balanced in some way by perceived positive consequences (or gain)" (2000, p.393). One can view risk-taking as either positive, or "socially approved" behaviours and negative or "deviant" behaviours.

[3] "People do change as they get older. They learn more, fill new roles, and seek new means of coping with new circumstances in their lives. By and large, however, people remain basically the same in how they think, handle interpersonal relationships, and are perceived by others. For better or worse, adults tend to display many of the same general personality characteristics and the same relative level of adjustment that they did as adolescents." (Kimmel & Weiner, 1995)

[4] "During adolescence, as teens develop increasingly complex knowledge systems, they also adopt an integrated set of values and morals. During the early stages of moral development, parents provide their children with a structured set of rules of what is right and wrong, what is acceptable and unacceptable. Eventually, the adolescent must assess the parent's values as they come into conflict with values expressed by peers and other segments of society. To reconcile differences, the adolescent restructures those beliefs into a personal ideology." (G. M, Ingersoll. Normal adolescence. Bloomington. 2003).

[5] Of course, we are well aware of the importance of the issue of parental accord or economic status – so, for instance, many researchers have observed that there are higher levels of parent/adolescent conflict in families experiencing divorce, economic hardship and other stressors (e.g. J.G. Smetana. Conceptions of parental authority in divorced and married mothers and their adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 3(1), 19-39, 1993).

[6] Defined by Soreneson as, “. . . a relationship between two people of uncertain duration and to which both partners generally intend to be true. Either partner, however, may depart when he or she desires, often to participate in another such relationship” (R. Soreneson. *Adolescent sexuality in contemporary America*. New York. World. 1973. p. 219).

[7] Cnf. “Most adolescents view homosexuality as an acceptable sexual relationship among partners who consent and want such behavior, although most say they have no interest in homosexual behavior for themselves” (R. Soreneson. *Adolescent sexuality in contemporary America*. New York. World. 1973)

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