Women Politicians and Parliamentary Elections in Ukraine and Georgia in 2012

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Abstract: Post-communist countries undergoing social transformations in the last twenty years needed to implement political and economic reforms. Changes also had to support the principles of equality in the access to power, specifically gender quotas in executive and legislative branches of government and within political parties. The events in Ukraine and Georgia in 2004-2005 known as the "colour revolutions" gave impulse to the promotion of equality and implementation of reforms. However, the number of women participating in national politics in both countries remains low. This paper proposes an analysis of gender equality principles during the parliamentary election campaigns in Ukraine and Georgia in 2012 from the perspective of women's participation in politics and their self-representation as politicians. This empirical study covers public attitudes towards women in politics and examines networks of female parliamentarians. The findings raise hopes for better representation of women in politics as female politicians promote them from the top down, and mass public perception of gender equality principles set the ground for bottom-up activism.

Keywords: Gender Equality, Women Politicians, Public Attitudes, Social Network Analysis (SNA)

INTRODUCTION

Ukraine and Georgia as post-Soviet countries have been transitioning toward democracy, facing, among other issues, gender problems. Gender equality measures the access of men and women to various social resources and their ability to defend their interests in the public sphere. The collapse of the Soviet Union was followed by a decline in the number of women in elected office as the region moved from Communist Party rule to multiparty competitive elections. Ukraine and Georgia appeared at the time to be the countries with the lowest percentage of women in top political positions (IPU Database 2013). About a decade later, during the 2004-2005 "colour revolutions," the promotion and implementation of equality principles became part of the reform agenda. Another decade later, the question that needs to be answered is whether both counties have managed to empower women, particularly in their national legislative institutions.

This paper analyzes how gender equality principles played a role during the parliamentary elections of 2012 in Ukraine and Georgia from the perspective of women's participation in politics. In addition, in view of the common Soviet past, it assesses if it is possible for women in parliaments to create an experience of solidarity and provide mutual support. The first part of the paper outlines the legal framework and general conditions for gender equality in Ukraine and Georgia, including how the public perceives women in politics. The second part is a comparison of the parliamentary election results in 2012, with a focus on women as members of parliaments (MPs). Finally, we look at networks of parliamentarians in both countries and the presence of women in them to assess their embeddedness in male networks and their cohesion among themselves. At the end, we summarize the empirical findings and point out the structural constraints and opportunities for women to be better represented in national politics thanks to top-down support and bottom-up activism.

WOMEN REPRESENTATION ON THE TOP LEVEL OF POLITICS

In post-Soviet countries, women's access to power has been a critically debated issue during the process of democratization and liberalization (Kuehnast & Nechemias 2004; Matland 2003). The institutional and human obstacles preventing women from entering politics (e.g., political institutions, clientelistic parties, lack of training, etc.) have been dissected and discussed. Given these interests, it is appropriate to look at the comparative international situation of Ukrainian and Georgian women, especially their access to top political positions. Ukraine and Georgia demonstrate similar scenarios of transformation, having moved from a rather high level of women's participation (even if mostly symbolic) during the period of Communist Party rule to negligible involvement in the early years of independence. During the Soviet period, the republics had a rather positive record in terms of female education and labour force participation.

The annual *Global Gender Gap Report 2012*, published by the World Economic Forum (Hausman et al.), provides a comparative international picture of gender equality levels as of 2012. Gender-based gaps in four fundamental categories (economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment) are measured for 135 countries. Nordic countries (Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden) and New Zealand are among the top-five in eliminating the gender gap, scoring more than 80% out of a possible 100%. Data about Ukraine and Georgia are provided in table 1.

Table 1. The Gender Gap in Ukraine and Georgia

	Ukraine		*Georgia*	
	2012	2014	2012	2014
Global Gender Gap Index Rank	64	56	85	85
Economic Participation and Opportunity Subindex Rank	34	31	57	66
Educational Attainment Subindex Rank	22	29	89	80
Health and Survival Subindex Rank	34	74	129	115
Political Empowerment Subindex Rank	119	105	109	94
GDP (PPP) Per Capita	6,029	8,332	4,552	6,702

Source: Hausman, et al. *The Global Gender Gap Reports 2012 and 2014*
Note: The Gender Gap Index of 2012 is more relevant for this paper, given our other data. The Gender Gap Index of 2014 is added for comparative purposes.

While Ukraine and Georgia were ranked differently in the general Global Gender Gap Index in 2012 (as well as in all other subindexes), the situation with political empowerment was very similar. Demonstrating better equality implementation in education, health and labour markets, Ukraine ranked lower than Georgia when the number of women in top political positions is considered. As stated in the report, "Ukraine is one of the 20 lowest performing countries on the political empowerment subindex" (Hausman et al. 23). In 2014 Georgia's ranking remained unchanged in terms of the global gender gap index, while Ukraine's position improved by 8 points: from 64 in 2012 to 56 in 2014. In 2014 both countries show improvements in their political empowerment rankings, although Ukraine still scores lower than Georgia (105 vs. 94).

As members of the OSCE region, Ukraine and Georgia proved to be at the bottom of the list in terms of the proportion of women in the lower houses of parliament (Norris and Krook 12). According to the Inter-Parliamentary Union database "Women in Parliaments," Georgia held 103rd place in 2013, while Ukraine was ranked 115 among 190 countries, classified in descending order by the percentage of women in the lower or single House of Parliament. As a result of parliamentary elections held in both states in 2012, Georgia had increased the percentage of women at the top political level to 12%, but Ukraine remained behind at 10%.

Therefore, the question is why Ukraine and Georgia rank so low in terms of women's presence in highest politics. We propose searching for an answer specifically by studying the situation from the perspective of legislation (at the state level); the point of view of political elites (at the party level and analysis of elite networks); and from the viewpoint of mass public attitudes (public perception of women's participation in politics). We do not cover women's activism in non-governmental organizations, although this aspect of women's empowerment cannot be underestimated.

LEGISLATION ON GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Over the last ten years both countries have managed to develop institutional mechanisms of gender equality implementation on the formal level that includes legislation and state bodies responsible for their control.

First of all, both countries ratified the primary international document on gender equality, the Convention of Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and obliged themselves to report on progress and problems. Secondly, Ukraine and Georgia implemented specific gender legislation, which means that the equality of women and men is officially recognized by the state as a value to be respected. The Ukrainian Parliament adopted the law On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women (№ 2866-IV) in September 2005, which came into effect on January 1, 2006. In 2011, another law, On Gender Equality, was also adopted in Georgia. Both laws declared and guaranteed equal voting rights and participation of women in public life.

In Georgia, the Commission on the Elaboration of the State Policy for Advancement of Women ceased de facto existence after the Rose Revolution of November 2003. In October 2004 the Gender Equality Advisory Council under the Speaker of Parliament was established on the basis of broad participation, including not only MPs but representatives of the Government and the NGO sector, as was reported by Ketevan Makharashvili in her speech at the 36th session of CEDAW in 2006. Moreover, the State Concept on Gender Equality recognized the principle of gender equality in all spheres of life and provided a framework for introducing and implementing measures for prevention and elimination of all forms of discrimination. The other important legislation connected to gender equality adopted in Georgia included the law On Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance of Domestic Violence Victims, and the law On Fighting against Human Trafficking, both adopted in 2006.

Ukraine followed a similar legislative process with regard to gender equality implementation. The Government of Ukraine ratified the Decree On Adoption of the State Program of Ensuring Gender Equality in Ukrainian Society for 2006-2010. It developed another one for 2011-2016. Ukraine was the first post-Soviet country to approve domestic violence legislation more than ten years ago (the law On Prevention of Domestic Violence). Moreover, legislation on the prevention of human trafficking, an important gender problem, was adopted in 2011.

In short, *de jure* gender equality is supported by national institutional mechanisms and legislation. However, *de facto* there are legislative gaps that become constraints for gender equality. For instance, the International Election Observation in Ukraine reported in 2012 that the provisions of

Article 15 of the law On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men (regarding equal opportunities for men and women in the electoral process and gender representation on candidate lists) are not reflected in the electoral law. Regarding Georgia in 2012, the International Election Observation concluded that the new Election Code of Georgia incorporated some important recommendations of previous OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy statements. Specifically their recommendations for a voluntary gender quota on candidate lists were included in the law. At the same time, the International Election Observation noted that despite the positive voluntary quota, the majority of parties, including the United National Movement and the opposition coalition Georgian Dream, did not attain a more balanced gender representation. Major political parties were not ready to use affirmative action to increase women's access to top politic levels.

According to comparative data on legislative and party quotas in OSCE states, both Ukraine and Georgia have only voluntary party quotas (Norris and Krook 15-16). In Ukraine, none of the popular political parties introduced voluntary party quotas before the elections in 2012 (even though party leaders discussed the possibility during the 2012 election campaign). Political leaders expressed the view that party quotas for women candidates are unpopular and an undemocratic tool reminiscent of totalitarian regimes.

There were approximately ten legislative attempts to introduce gender party quotas in Ukraine—and all failed. Article 1 of the law On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Men and Women (Law № 2866-IV) defines the term "positive actions" as "special temporary actions designed to overcome the imbalance between opportunities for women and men to implement equal rights given them by the Constitution and the Laws of Ukraine," but offers no specific quotas for eliminating the gender imbalance.

In general, despite numerous proposals, legislative attempts, and governmental programs in Ukraine and Georgia, few have been implemented in terms of tangible policies. Therefore, we now turn to an assessment of how the political elite supports gender equality implementation.

Political parties and female candidates in parliamentary elections in 2012

Among "the main sites of women's interventions into parties," Joni Lovenduski mentions programmatic change, organizational change, rhetorical strategies, positive actions and positive discrimination (Lovenduski 6). Recent research into gender equality at the top politic

levels in OSCE counties proposed a six-step action plan to promote gender equality in elected office. This includes constitutional rights for women and men, reform of the electoral system, legal quotas, party rules and recruitment procedures, capacity development (strengthening the skills and resources of women in the pipeline for elected office, with initiatives from parties, the media and NGOs, including knowledge networks, mentoring programs, skills training and funding for women candidates), and, finally, parliamentary reform (Norris and Krook 6-7).

Clearly, there is a range of positive actions that parties can take to empower women. At the same time, during election campaigns in Ukraine, concerns were raised about the lack of interest among parties to promote female candidates. Few women had been included among high and other eligible positions on party candidate lists. A woman headed only two party lists (out of 22).[1] Only three parties registered four female candidates among their top ten candidates;[2] two parties had three women among the ten leading candidates,[3] while three parties had no women among the first ten candidates.[4] The total number of party nominated female candidates in both the nationwide district and in single-mandate districts was around 18%, which was not a sign of gender equality (IEO in Ukraine 2012). The OSCE/ODIHR made the following recommendation:

> Political parties could be encouraged to promote gender equality and take resolute actions to put forward gender-balanced candidate lists, to increase visibility of female candidates during election campaigns and to integrate gender issues into their platforms. The introduction of a gender requirement for nomination of party lists could be considered as a temporary measure. (IEO in Ukraine 2012)

Nevertheless, the women's lobby in Ukraine witnessed some visible changes to its organizational forms during 2012. In May 2012, several NGOs—the Women's Consortium of Ukraine, Women's Democratic Network (WDN) in Ukraine, the NGO Women's Choice and the Institute of Democracy and Social Processes—launched a gender election monitoring initiative

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[1] The Party of Natalia Korolevs'ka, "Ukraine – Forward!"; Korolevs'ka was at the head of the party list. The Radical Party of Oleh Liashko (Lyashko), with Oksana Shevchenko as head of the party list.

[2] Vitaliy Klychko's party, UDAR; the Radical Party of Oleh Liashko; and the People's Labor Union of Ukraine.

[3] The Socialist Party of Ukraine; and the All-Ukrainian Association "Community" (*Hromada*).

[4] The All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" (*Batkivshchyna*); the All-Ukrainian Union "Freedom" (*Svoboda*); and the Party of Pensioners of Ukraine.

during the 2012 parliamentary elections by creating a Network for Public Control of Adherence to Gender Equality (Merezha hromads'koho kontroliu za gendernoiu rivnistiu na vyborakh 2012). It was an attempt to track, discuss and promote the presence of women in politics.

In the Georgian elections of 2012 approximately twice as many female candidates (around 29%) were nominated (appearing on party lists and majoritarian ballots) as in the Ukrainian elections of 2012. This could be attributed to the affirmative action of the Election Code mentioned above. At the same time, despite the innovative legislation about party quotas, only six of the 16 electoral parties met the voluntary quota. Two major Georgian political parties—the United National Movement (UNM) and Bloc Georgian Dream (GD)—did not opt for voluntary party quotas. On the proportional ballot UNM had 10% of women on its party lists. GD had 17%.

Georgian NGO activists believe that "women's passivity in public and political spheres… is caused by economic hardship, on the one hand, and the patriarchal norms existing in the country, on the other" (Japaridze 21). Feminization of poverty could be one of the explanations preventing women from involving themselves in the decision-making process that takes place in the public and political areas to resolve social issues.

Thus, despite formal gender equality legislation, the major gatekeepers that prevent the complete empowerment of women both in Ukraine and Georgia are the political parties.

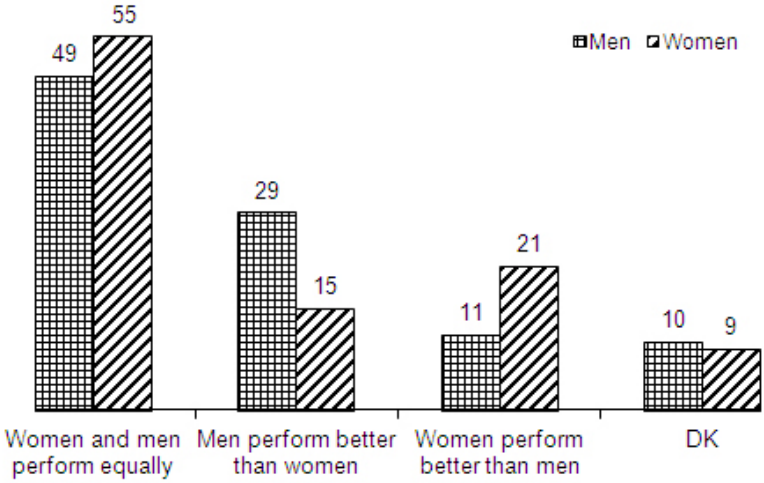
Public perception of women in politics

Despite the poor showing in international comparative data on the gender gap (mentioned above), Ukraine and Georgia fare relatively well in opinion polls that survey public attitudes towards women's participation in politics. Although men and women in politics are not perceived identically, positive attitudes towards women politicians dominate over negative ones. These conclusions are based on empirical data from representative surveys conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (KIIS), the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (IS NASU), the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and Baltic Surveys Ltd. The Gallup Organization surveys are also used here to analyze Ukrainian and Georgian public attitudes towards women in politics.

During the last two decades of independence there has been a gradual increase in the perception of women as being equal actors to men in politics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, 38% of Ukrainians disagreed with the statement, "It is better to do without women in politics"; now support for this opinion has decreased by half to 14%-16% according to the

IS NASU data (Vorona et al. 191). Moreover, the share of Ukrainians who disagree with the statement, "Politics is better off without women" increased from 45% in 1992 to 71% in the first decade of the twenty-first century. There was been a rapid and significant change in the attitude of the Ukrainian public toward women's participation in politics. Politics is perceived as one of the most important spheres of social life and it remains mostly available to men. Nevertheless, the populations of Ukraine and Georgia see female politicians as the norm—not as an exception or deviation from the rule.

Figure 1. Comparing performance of men and women in elected office (Georgia)



The survey question: "Generally, comparing the performance of men and women in elected office, what do you think?" DK ("Don't Know").
Adapted from: Navarro, Luis, and Ian T. Woodward. *Public Attitudes in Georgia: Results of a November 2012 Survey Carried Out for NDI by CRRC.*

Such attitudes about the necessary participation of women in politics do not correlate with actual numbers, particularly in Ukraine and Georgia, where female parliamentarians constitute, respectively, 10% and 11% of the total (IPU Database 2013). The small number of women among politicians could be explained by the perception that women politicians are less qualified than men. One in five respondents of public opinion polls in Georgia and Ukraine perceive men as potentially better politicians (CRRC 2012; KIIS Databank 2012). However, a majority of Georgian and Ukrainian women perceive female politicians as equally qualified and capable of effective political work as males (CRRC 2012; KIIS Databank 2012). According to a CRRC survey conducted in November 2012, over half of

Georgians agreed that elected female officials could be as professional as men (fig. 1).

As figure 1 shows, this attitude is more common among women than men (55% vs. 49%). Over a quarter of Georgian male respondents (29%) believed that men can perform better than women. Among women, one in five (21%) assess the work of women politicians better. Consequently, although skepticism about female politicians is real among Georgians, women are seen, nevertheless, as capable politicians. At least half of Georgians sees no difference in the performance of men and women in elected positions.

In Ukraine, women are also considered sufficiently qualified to participate in politics. According to a 2005 survey, only 17% of Ukrainians believed that men were more qualified for this job (see table 2). A majority of Ukrainian adults (57%) expressed the view that women are not less qualified than men, but that women's abilities are underestimated and derided in a system dominated by men. Half of male respondents (50%) and the majority of female respondents (62%) shared that opinion. Clearly, most of the adult population in Georgia and Ukraine consider women just as qualified and effective in politics as men.

Table 2. Performance of men and women in Ukrainian politics

Q. Which statement best reflects your opinion?	*Men*	*Women*	*Avg.*
Men are more qualified than women to be politicians because men dominate legislative and executive power.	22%	13%	17.5%
Women are not less qualified than men, but female abilities are being underestimated and derided in politics dominated by men.	50%	62%	56.0%
Women are not less qualified than men, but they choose not to work in the legislative and executive bodies.	21%	16%	18.5%

Source: KIIS survey "Public Opinion of the Ukrainian Population about Democracy," April 2005 (cf. Oksamytna 2005).

Moreover, according to a KIIS public opinion survey conducted in September 2012, the majority of Ukrainians (56%) supported the statement that "women's participation in politics would improve the situation in the structures of power" (KIIS Databank 2012). Most women (65%) agreed, as well as did many men (45%). More men had doubts about this statement than women (27% vs. 12%).

According to a CRRC survey conducted in September 2011, a year before the elections in Georgia, people demonstrated a sufficiently broad readiness to vote for women candidates in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. Overall 68% of Georgians said they might vote for a female candidate. Only 15% of respondents would not support a female candidate and about the same number (17%) did not have an answer to this question.

Women supported the idea of a female politician significantly more (72%) than men (63%). Georgians showed this type of commitment to vote for women when they were specifically asked about female candidates.

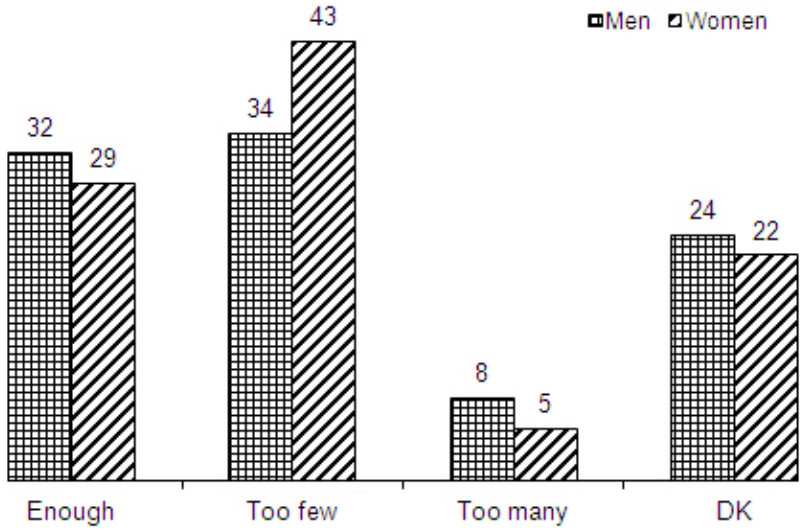
Nevertheless, it is too early to say that for the vast majority of Georgian voters gender is irrelevant in a candidate for parliament or that most Georgians are equally ready to support men and women. When a question does not specify the gender of the candidate and respondents are being asked which candidate they would vote for, one finds a slightly lower willingness of Georgians to vote for women (CRRC 2011).

A Georgian National Study conducted in November 2012 indicated that 46% of Georgians would definitely vote for a man; only 6% would vote for a woman. For about half of the electorate the gender of a candidate did not matter. This means that female candidates would find potential support only among half of the voters of Georgia, even if they had the same professional qualifications as male candidates. The other half of Georgians generally gave preference to men (IRI 2012).

In the previous Parliament of Georgia, that is, before 2012, there were only 9 women members (6.6%) out of a total of 150 MPs. This was the smallest number of female MPs among all European countries. As the CRRC survey conducted in September 2011 revealed, 39% of Georgians believed that this number was too small (see fig. 2 below). More women held this view (43%) than men (34%). But about 31% of all Georgians considered this small number of women in parliament sufficient (there were no significant differences between men and women in this response). In short, in September 2011 fewer than a half of Georgian women believed that the number of women in the parliament was too low, although, as noted earlier, a majority of Georgian women thought that female elected officials were capable of working on the same professional level as males.

As mentioned above, in 2011 the Georgian government amended the law On Public Associations, giving parties 10% more public funding if at least 20% of their candidates were women. As a result, after the parliamentary elections of October 2012, Georgian women constituted 10.8% of MPs. This was 60% more than in the previous parliament, although the number continued to be small relative to other European countries. In 2013, according to the database "Women in National Parliaments," Georgia was ahead of such European countries as Armenia, Ukraine and Hungary in terms of the number of women in parliament. Did Georgians considered this sufficient?

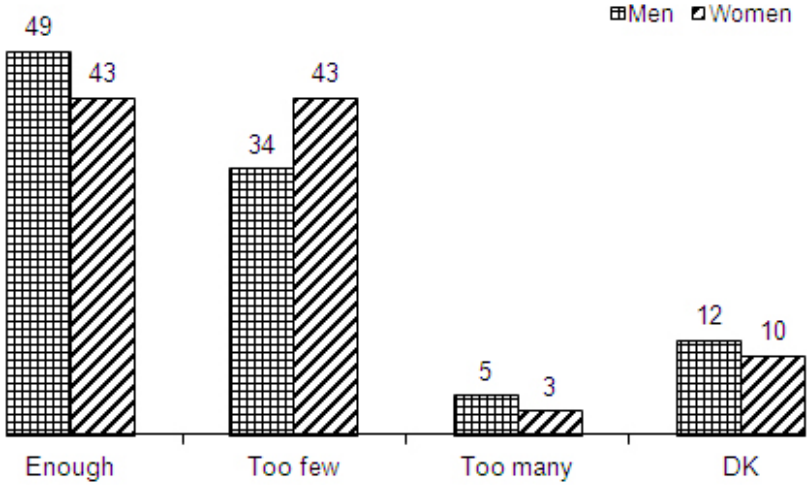
Figure 2. Attitudes toward the number of women in parliament (Georgia 2011)



Survey question**:** "Currently there are 9 (6%) women members in parliament out of 150 [MPs]. Do you think this is…?" (DK="Don't know")
Adapted from: Caucasus Research Resource Centers. "*Surveys on Voting and Political Attitudes in Georgia*." Wave 8, September 2011.

Post-election survey data indicated that the proportion of men and women who continued to believe that the number of women in the Georgian parliament was too small remained the same: 43% and 34% respectively (see fig. 3). There was, however, a significant increase in the number of Georgians (men and women) who now believed that the female membership of parliament was sufficient (an average of 46%). Almost half of all Georgian men (49%) believed that it was enough to have approximately 11% of women in parliament. Georgian women (43%) mostly support this view as well. A year earlier, the share of women who thought that there were "too few" women parliamentarians outstripped those who considered the number adequate (43% vs. 29%).

Figure 3. Attitudes toward the number of women in parliament (Georgia 2012)



Survey question: "Currently there are 16 (11%) women members in the parliament out of 150 [MPs]. Do you think this is…?"
Adapted from: Navarro, Luis, and Ian T. Woodward. *Public Attitudes in Georgia: Results of a November 2012 Survey Carried Out for NDI by CRRC.*

In elections to the Ukrainian Parliament in October 2012, there were 43 women who won seats; this represented 9.7% of the 450 MPs. Of all European countries only Hungary had fewer women in parliament according to the database "Women in National Parliaments in 2013." Nonetheless, for Ukraine this was the largest number in two decades of independence.

There is no Ukrainian data that speaks to public perceptions of what constitutes an appropriate number of female deputies in parliament. However, we know the opinion of Ukrainians on how many women should be in the Parliament. Almost a third of respondents (30%) agree that about half of Parliament should be female, with women supporting this statement more than men (see table 3).

Table 3. Attitudes toward the number of women in parliament (Ukraine 2010)

In your opinion, how many female members should there be among deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine?	*Men*	*Women*	*Avg.*
More than half	4%	7%	6%
Around half	23%	37%	30%
One third	20%	20%	20%
One fourth	13%	9%	11%
One tenth	9%	5%	7%
None	10%	4%	7%

Source: Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS). Regular "Omnibus" Survey, Oct. 2010.

About 20% of men and women believe that women should constitute one third of parliament. The vast majority of Ukrainian women (64%) believed that the Ukrainian Parliament should have more than one third of women MPs; male respondents believed in this significantly less (47%). Only 7% of Ukrainians might have been satisfied with the gender composition of the Parliament of Ukraine after the elections in 2012, since only that percentage in 2010 believed that female deputies should represent about one tenth of all MPs.

PUBLIC OPINION ON GENDER QUOTAS

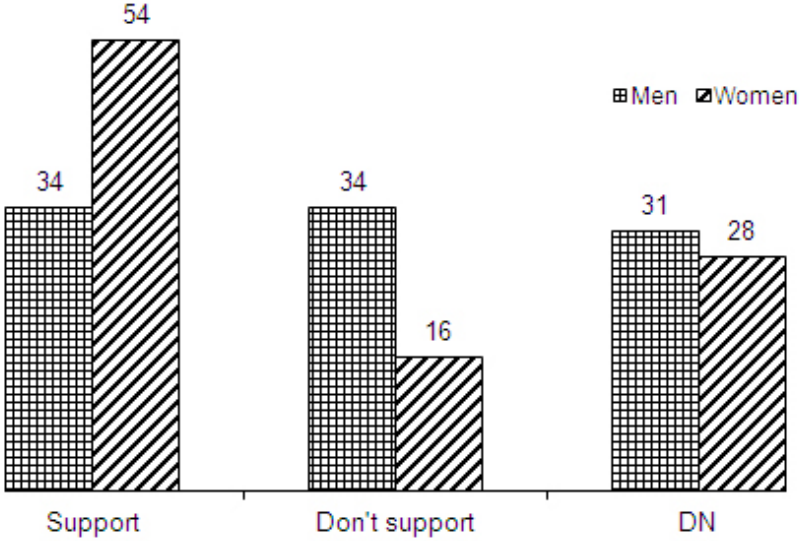
It is well known that one of the institutional mechanisms for achieving de facto gender equality is positive action, which for decades has been successfully implemented in European countries (Pippa and Krook 2011). Affirmative action in the form of gender quotas has helped to rectify quickly a situation in which women have equal civil rights, high education, but are actually deprived of participation in governance and decision-making at the highest level. In Ukrainian society the question of gender quotas was not been discussed either among politicians or citizen-voters even before the parliamentary elections in 2012. The media also avoided discussions about introducing gender quotas for political parties. This topic is generally considered irrelevant and far from the political interests of ordinary citizens, whose contradictory ideas are sometimes presented as "genuine" electoral democracy (UWF 2010).

Results of several surveys in Ukraine indicate that public attitudes toward gender quotas are controversial, but generally more positive than negative—especially among Ukrainian women. On the eve of the last parliamentary elections (September 2012) 45% of Ukrainians generally supported the idea of using gender quotas for party lists to increase the number of female deputies in Ukraine's parliament (see fig. 4).

On average a quarter of the Ukrainian population is opposed to gender quotas. There is also a striking difference between the attitudes of men and women. Men support and oppose gender quotes in the equal numbers (34%). Women's support for quotas is more than three times higher (54%) than opposition to them (16%).

The inclination to support gender quotas by almost half the adult population of Ukraine has remained constant over the last decade, confirmed by studies from 2005 (see fig. 5), despite the fact that trend has been downward, especially among men. There is growing disparity on the issue among women and men. In general, however, support for quotes remain high. Nevertheless, during the last parliamentary elections, not a single political party adopted them for their own electoral party lists.

Figure 4. Public support of gender quotas (Ukraine 2012)



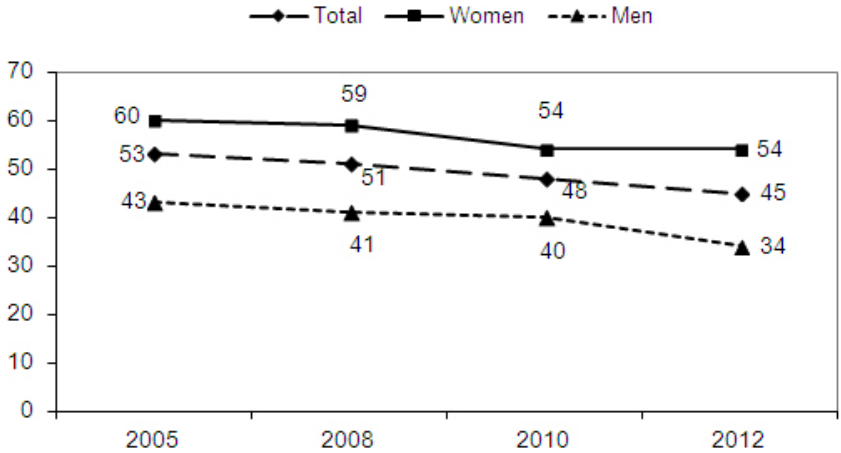
Survey question: "In order to increase the number of women among the deputies of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, it is proposed that party gender quotas be implemented. What do you think of such a proposal?" DN (Don't Know).
Source: Kiev International Institute of Sociology (KIIS). Regular "Omnibus" Survey, Sept. 2012.

Unlike the Georgian government, the Ukrainian does not encourage political parties to increase the number of women on their lists. While the research results clearly indicate that the average Ukrainian citizen is positively disposed toward introducing gender quotas, representatives of political parties, regardless of ideological orientation, strongly avoid even discussing the issue.

In summary, the data of numerous public opinion polls in Ukraine and Georgia indicate that the attitudes of citizens toward women's participation in politics is ambiguous but generally positive. More than half of Ukrainians and Georgians perceive women as equals to men both in qualification and ability to engage effectively in political activity. Moreover, male and female respondents are willing to vote for female candidates in elections. About half of Ukrainians believe that at least a third of the parliament should be composed of women—and they support the idea of introducing gender quotas for parties. In both countries, there are significant differences between men and women on the question of women's participation in politics. Women are much more positively disposed not only on the question of their inclusion but also on gender quotas. Obviously, there is

great potential support among voters for such initiatives but political parties in Ukraine and Georgia are reluctant to discuss them. In both countries, parties remain semi-closed organizations for men that struggle for power among themselves—unwilling to involve women in political activities, especially not at the highest levels.

Figure 5. Support (%) for gender quotas among men and women in Ukraine



Source: Vorona et. al.

EMBEDDEDNESS OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL NETWORKS

We now turn to an analysis of social networks, arguing that the importance of women in the parliaments of Ukraine and Georgia still depends on their embeddedness in male subgroups. As we saw from public opinion polls, there is some support for women in politics among the population, but polls do not reveal the internal cohesion among women in the two parliaments. This internal cohesion is another potential resource for women's empowerment and may be even more important than public (electorate) support. Women who are already in parliament can influence state legislation and create more opportunities for other female candidates to gain parliamentary seats. Thus, in applying network analysis we focus on the impact of social capital on members of the elite and their potential to recruit women for political leadership via networks.

Social network analysis (SNA) is widely applied in the studies of business and political communities in Western societies, primarily in the United States (Domhoff; Allen; Useem; Mintz and Schwartz). The SNA approach was deemed relevant in studying political and policy networks

(Knoke). However, previous studies that focused on biographical profiles analysis (Moore and Vianello) did not take into consideration the advantage of the SNA approach in comparing men and women within economic and political elite groups. Therefore, we propose applying SNA while focusing on biography-based connections not only to assess the cohesion of parliamentary networks in Georgia and Ukraine, but also to provide a new research approach for assessing women's embeddedness within political elites, taking into account their social capital, evaluated as patters of connections and position within particular network structures.

We compare parliamentary networks in two countries on the basis of biography-based connections. We coded all the biographies of MPs in Georgia and Ukraine and then traced their overlapping life experiences (e.g., education, employment). Official and public biographies of MPs were taken from official web pages of political parties and parliaments. These contained detailed information, such as the educational institution from which MPs had graduated and their employment in the public and private sectors prior to assuming a parliamentary seat. Individuals who attended the same faculty of the same university at the same time; individuals who were or are co-owners of the same company; individuals who were members of the same civic organization were therefore judged to be connected, sharing a common past on the political, economic, civic, or education level.

We compiled two network datasets of MPs in Ukraine and Georgia who served during the previous parliamentary terms, namely, during 2007-2012 (Ukraine) and 2008-2012 (Georgia). The Ukrainian dataset included 461 actors, among them thirty-eight women; the Georgian dataset consisted of 152 actors with 9 women among them. Visualizations of both networks is included in the Appendix to this paper (see diagrams A and B). All calculations and visualizations were performed in the UCINET for Windows software package (Borgatti et al.).

In order to assess network cohesion between and within subgroups of men and women in the respective parliaments, we calculated their network density.[5] In the Ukrainian parliament, 358 deputies (86% of all MPs, both men and women) were linked through the biography-based connections. In Georgia 70 deputies were connected (53% of all MPs). Thus, MPs in both states were well-connected into cohesive networks based on their common biographical experiences: the overall density for Ukraine's network is 3.5%;

[5] Density is a basic network measure that shows the share of present ties to all possible ties in the overall network, within a subgroup, between subgroups, etc.; if calculated for subgroups (men and women, for instance), it demonstrates connectedness both within and between these subgroups.

the density for Georgia's is 13.5%. The densities within the subgroups of women and men in parliaments is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4. Network density in men's and women's subgroups in Ukraine's and Georgia's parliaments, calculated in relation to a shared 'common past'

	Ukraine		*Georgia*	
Subgroup by gender	Men	Women	Men	Women
Men	2.2%	1.9%	3.3%	7.1%
Women	1.9%	1.4%	7.1%	5.6%

Note: Higher density values demonstrate higher cohesion within or between subgroups.

The main conclusion of this comparison is that the cohesion of the female subnetwork is lower than that of the male in Ukraine's parliament (1.4% and 2.2%, respectively), but it is higher in the Georgian (5.6% and 3.3%, respectively). This means that Georgian female MPs were connected more tightly in 2008-2012 than Ukrainian female MPs in 2007-2012. There was a higher potential and more opportunities for other Georgian women to become parliamentarians in 2012. After the 2012 elections, the share of women in the Georgian Parliaments increased from 6% to 12%. It would be an oversimplification to argue that such an increase resulted only from the cohesion among Georgian women in Parliament, however, it could very well be one driver among a range of factors.

Our data shows that women are better connected through common biographical experiences with men than through connections with other women: density within the female subgroup is lower than within the general networks for both countries: 1.4% among women alone and 1.9% among women and men together (Ukraine); 5.6% and 7.1%, respectively, for Georgia. This outcome proves that female parliamentarians are better embedded into male networks. Taking into account the type of connections that we analyze—biography-based tie—we conclude that women as MPs have more common biographical experiences with men. This, in turn, allows us to assume that they were recruited by male MPs or male party leaders.

To illustrate the close network environment of female parliamentarians, which might represent a recruitment circle, we created egocentric network profiles for the most central women in both legislatures and presented them as graph visualizations in the Appendix. The list of key MPs—including women—was defined through a network measure called degree centrality, also known as local centrality in the network.[6] In both

[6] Degree centrality is a network measure calculated as a number of direct ties that every actor in the network has to his/her neighbouring "alters."

countries only two women appeared in the top twenty most central actors: Olena F. Bondarenko and Kateryna Vashchuk in Ukraine, and Elene Javakhadze and Khatuna Gogorishvili in Georgia.

Bondarenko and Vashchuk are very experienced Ukrainian deputies and were MPs in previous Ukrainian parliaments. In 2007, Bondarenko won a seat as a member of the All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" (Batkivshchyna; later, the Bloc of Yuliya Tymoshenko) and chaired a subcommittee on international legal issues and gender policy in the Parliamentary Committee on Human and Minority Rights. Vashchuk was elected as a member of Volodymyr Lytvyn's Bloc and became Chair (*sekretar*) of the Parliamentary Committee on Tax and Customs Policy. Neither Bondarenko nor Vashchuk submitted legislative initiatives related to gender equality during the period 2007-2012; they were not active in promoting gender equality principles or in developing a legal framework for women's empowerment during their legislative life as MPs.

Javakhadze and Gogorishvili in the Georgian Parliament were elected through the party list of the Unified National Movement—for Victorious Georgia (established by Mikheil Saakashvili) in 2008. Javakhadze worked in the Tbilisi City Hall and administration offices of various ministries before becoming a parliamentarian. Gogorishvili worked in the Parliament of Georgia as a head of the staff department and was an MP during 2004-2008; in 2008-2012 she chaired the Committee On Procedural Issues and Rules, on which Javakhadze was also a member.

Bondarenko and Vashchuk were over 55 years old in 2007 when they were re-elected as MPs. Javakhadze and Gogorishvili were much younger (44 and 35, respectively) in 2008 when they won their seats as MPs.

What do the egocentric network structures for these four female MPs reveal?[7] As the graphs illustrate (diagrams C to F in the Appendix), men (represented by the grey lines) prevail among the "alters" in the women's biography-based connections. This tells us that the women who were the most central actors in parliament also had many more common biographical experiences with male parliamentarians than with their female counterparts. They were embedded in men's networks, and their higher political profile can be also explained by their embeddedness in these male networks.

Considering the age and party affiliation of Georgian female MPs, we can assume that party lists with female quotas yield better results for

[7] An egocentric network, or ego-network, is a type of a network structure in which one actor (ego) serves as the center of the network and is connected to surrounding "alters." Alters form their own ego-network, creating a social network (Borgatti et al. 2013, 262).

women. This can also serve as an additional argument for implementing and enhancing party gender quotas in Georgia and Ukraine, since they can serve two goals: 1) a recruitment mechanism that helps women enter parliament; 2) a networking tools for women to establish horizontal connections with female colleagues, thus eliminating the need for women to be a part of male networks in order to succeed in politics.

CONCLUSION

Ukraine and Georgia are European countries with the lowest proportion of women in parliament. Their representation at the highest levels of political power has been insignificant since independence. In fact, all crucial laws and institutional decisions for both countries were and are made by men. Under these conditions, the thoughts, beliefs, needs and interests of women are not properly taken into account, despite the fact that women make up just over half the population, half of the workforce and have levels of education comparable to men.

Gender equality is enshrined in legislation *de jure*. But *de facto* there are some gaps that create obstacles to gender equality. It is crucial that the political elite provide support for the implementation of gender equality, using the range of tools available to promote women's empowerment. Despite the situation of the last two decades in Ukraine and Georgia, where women were underrepresented among leaders and top-ten candidates on party lists, the parliamentary elections did bring some change in the distribution of political and legislative power. For instance, gender election monitoring was established in Ukraine as an initiative of the women's lobby on the national level and this will extend into the regional elections of 2015. Approximately twice as many female candidates participated in Georgian elections than in the Ukrainian. And we can assume further improvement in the situation in Ukraine and Georgia if political parties, as the main gatekeepers, decide to support women's empowerment.

Looking at public perception, we conclude that a range of attitudes is common among the population towards women in politics. A considerable share of Georgian men (about 30%) in 2012 believed that men do a better job in politics than women. In Ukraine fewer men believe this more recently and certainly fewer and fewer women. According to recent public opinion surveys, at least half of the population in Georgia and Ukraine has positive attitudes toward women's participation in politics. This is partly confirmed by the willingness to support women candidates in parliamentary elections. In 2012, the vast majority of Ukrainian women believed that at least one third of the Parliament should be composed of women, and about half of the male population also supported this statement. In Georgia, a post-election

survey in 2012 demonstrated that despite the increase in the number of women in the Georgian Parliament (from 7% to 11%), more than 40% of women and one third of men thought that there were still too few women among MPs. This suggests that there is a good chance of gaining support for such affirmative action as parliamentary quotas among the Georgian and Ukrainian populations. Generally, people demonstrates greater support for gender quotas than political parties or parliaments in either country are willing to implement through legislative action.

Finally, we assessed the cohesion of networks consisting of parliamentarians in Ukraine and Georgia and defined the central actors in these networks. We used biographical data to show how parliamentarians have common affiliations with political, economic and no-profit institutions in their past (what we called their "common past" connection) and analyzed all the MPs from the 2008-2012 parliament of Georgia and the 2007-2012 parliament of Ukraine. We concluded that Georgian female MPs were connected better as a group, and we obtained the opposite picture for the Ukrainian female network. However, in both countries women MPs are connected with male MPs through their "common past" more so than to each other. There were only two women among the top-twenty central actors in both parliaments. And the ego-networks of these women have similar structures: they have much more men as alters (i.e., neighboring actors), proving that they are better embedded in male networks than the female. We hypothesize therefore that the best strategy for woman to gain access to the highest levels of legislative power is by being embedded in male networks, since men are dominantly represented on the top levels of political power in both countries.

The conditions for further women's empowerment in Georgia and Ukraine are rather encouraging in terms of legislation and public support. But there is still not enough support for affirmative action when it comes to gender quotas among political parties and among parliamentarians who are in a position to proceed with legislative initiatives. Moreover, those women who are currently in parliament are embedded in 'men's networks,' meaning that they might be in a position to use informal rather than formal strategies for gaining power. However, the last notion remains a subject for further research.

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Appendix

Network nodes in Diagrams A through F are coded by gender: grey (men) and black (women)

Diagram A. Network of the Ukrainian Parliament (2007-2012)

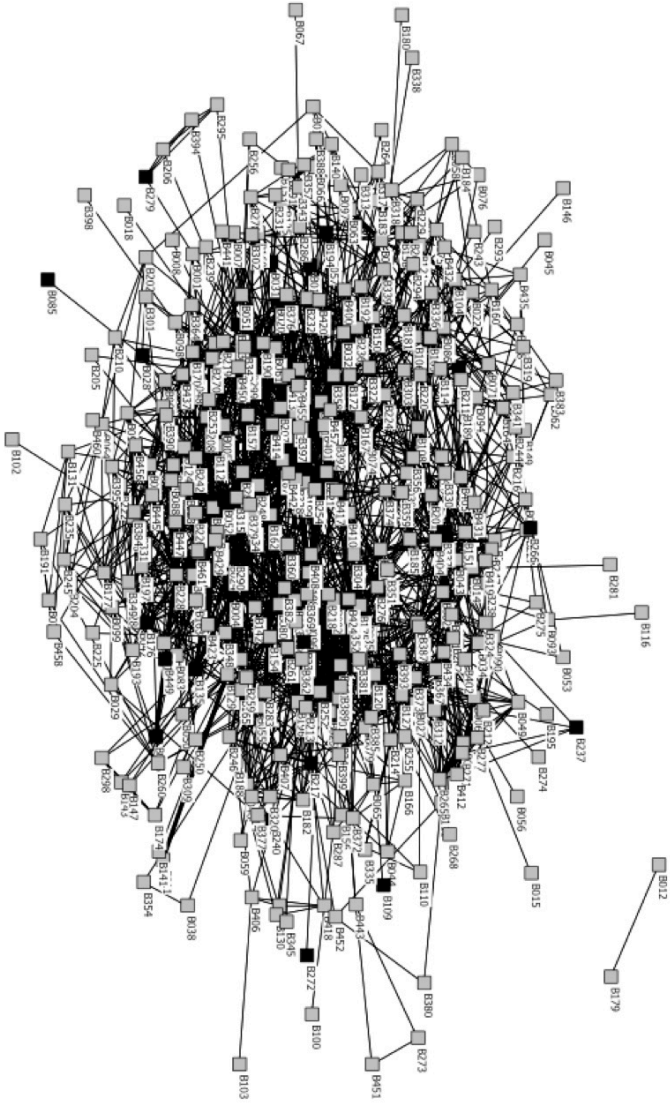

Diagram B. Network of the Georgian Parliament (2008-2012)

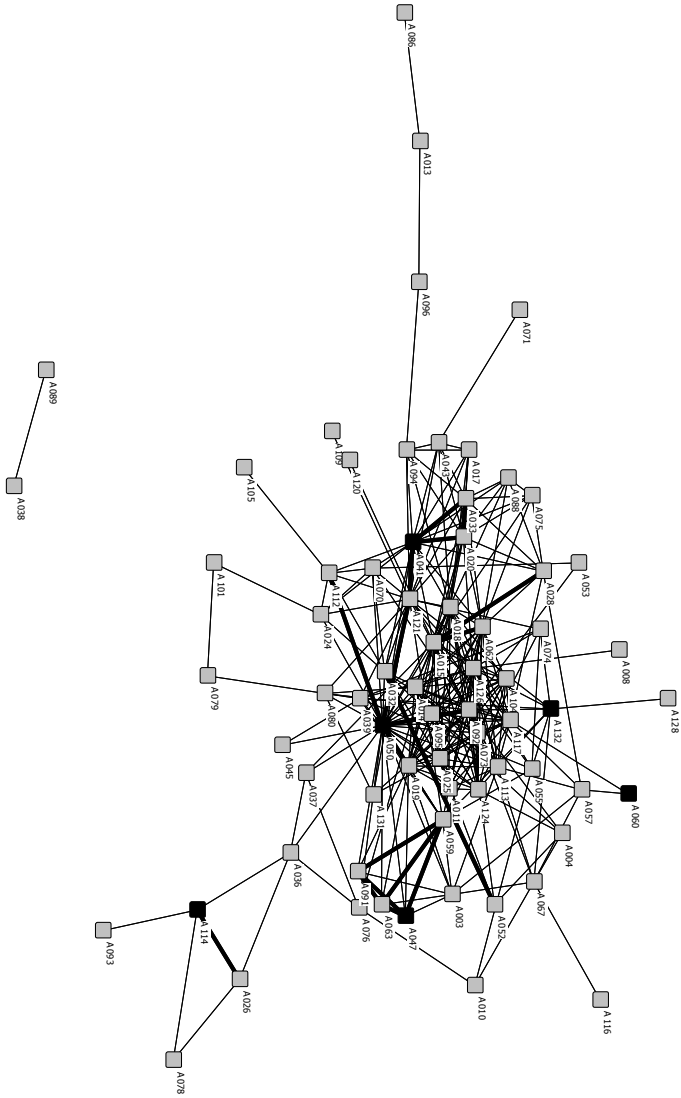

Diagram C. Ego-networks of Olena F. Bondarenko

Diagram D. Ego-networks of Kateryna Vashchuk

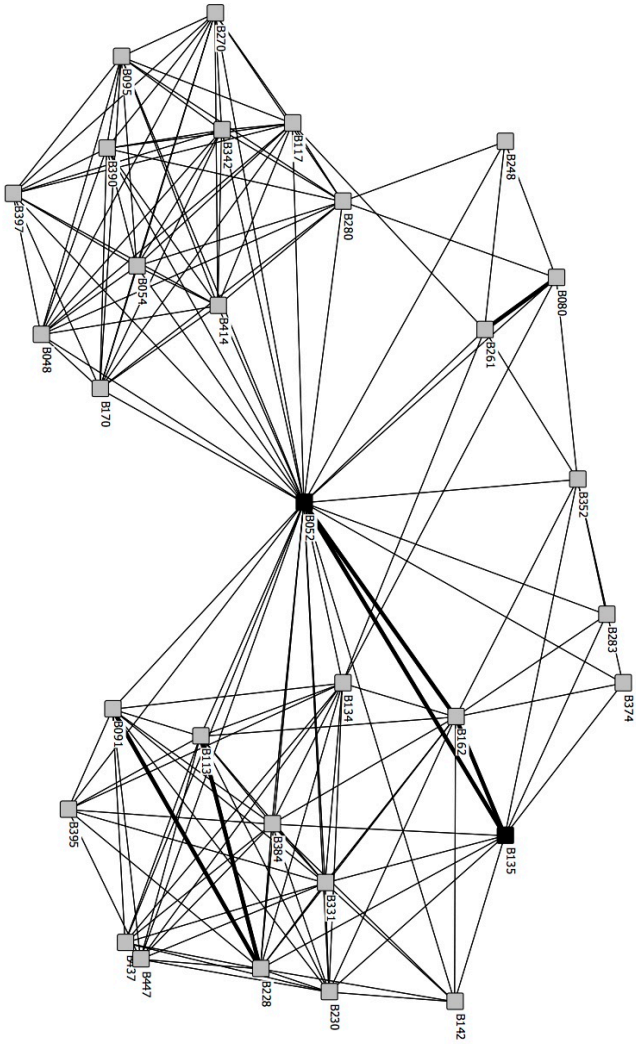

Diagram E. Ego-networks of Elene Javakhadze

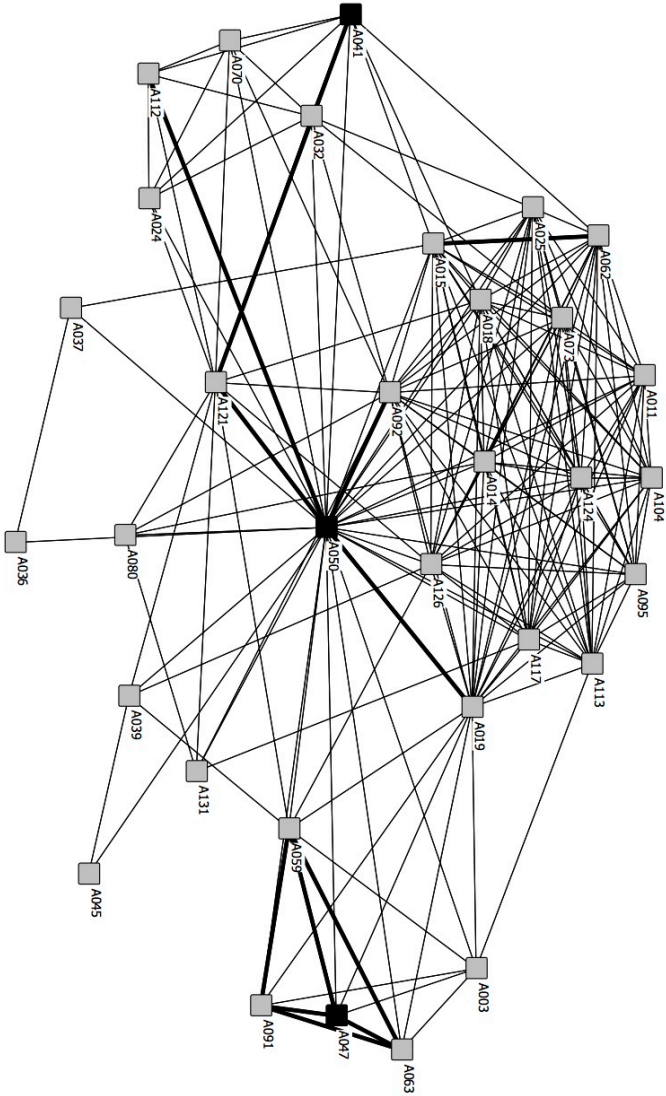

Diagram F. Ego-networks of Khatuna Gogorishvili