Chapter 4: Data collection and analysis

> The anthropologist creates a doubling of consciousness. Therefore, anthropological analysis must incorporate two facts: first, that we ourselves are historically situated through the questions we ask and the manner in which we seek to understand and experience the world; and second, that what we receive from our consultants are interpretations, equally mediated by history and culture. Consequently, the data we collect is doubly mediated, first by our own presence and then by the second-order self-reflection we demand from our consultants (Rabinow, 1977, p. 119).

It is not enough to keep this "double mediation" of data in the backs of our minds when interviewing, analyzing data, writing about data and reading other people's studies. It is also necessary to make the situatedness of the collected data transparent and to reflect the position(s) of the researcher in all interactions.

This Chapter introduces the *what* and *how* of the research process. In Section A. I will discuss the type of semi-structured interview I used and briefly introduce the topics discussed in the interviews. In Section B. I will introduce theoretical and practical considerations regarding the sample. In Section C. I will clarify how I found people to interview and reflect on the way any researcher constructs the field and changes it simply by being there. Finally, in Section D. I will explain the process of transcription, annotation, analysis, and written presentation of the interviews.

A.   The semi-structured interview

Anthropological and ethnographic accounts have always put great emphasis on *participant observation*, which – like no other method – can lead to a holistic understanding of the community or situation in question. This is what Geertz (1973) has famously called "thick descriptions", i.e. accounts that situate whatever they describe in the lifeworld of the consultants and communities written about. While it is theoretically possible to record many encounters during a participant observation, this would lead to a corpus of nearly unmanageable size, containing perhaps only a few instances of the type of material the researcher needs to answer her research questions. Although this can be countered by collecting a number of more structured interviews in addition to the participant observation, the main difficulty with this method

is that it is very time consuming. A further difficulty lies in the fact that the researcher significantly alters the social setting of all encounters observed or participated in, at least until she has "truly" become a part of the observed community – and it remains debatable whether this is actually possible (cf. Fox 2014; Rabinow 1977). The "unnaturalness" of interview situations is therefore not necessarily avoided. Furthermore, while everyday sense-making happens in and through everyday practices, this does not automatically make them easier objects of analysis (Kern, 2000, p. 21). A final problem for the present study arises from the multilingualism of the community in question. As mentioned before, the members of Georgia's Greek community speak a large variety of languages in their daily lives – ranging from Urum or Pontic Greek, to Russian, Standard Modern Greek (SMG) and Georgian. An analysis of such "natural" data would have therefore been limited by my personal language competences, which include Russian and some Georgian but neither SMG nor Urum or Pontic Greek.

Although interviews have long been one of the core means for eliciting information in all kinds of disciplines and on a host of topics, they are increasingly seen as the least preferred option in terms of gathering information on people's everyday life, perceptions and (self-)representations; particularly in ethnographic settings and in conversation analysis. This is mainly because interviews are a very special conversational context, and one that allows consultants to adopt different roles and to take different stances from those they might take in other, less formal, more familiar, everyday contexts. The "well reflected" and non-prejudiced persona a consultant may present to an interviewer, for example, may (or may not) contradict her (verbal) behavior in everyday interactions. Therefore, the focus has shifted to settings that more readily form part of consultants' daily lives: accounts of quotidian community activities (Kesselheim, 2009), dinner table conversations (Ochs / Taylor, 1995), classroom talk (Rellstab, 2014), doctor-patient interactions (Spranz-Fogasy, 2014), encounters in civil service institutions (Kesselheim, 2009; Rosenberg, 2014), all manner of workplace settings, and so on.

Still, interviews enable the elicitation of comparable and recorded data in a manageable span of time. Crucially, consultants can be asked to explain otherwise implicit structures of knowledge that guide their everyday presumptions and interactions (Rabinow, 1977). A conversation analytical focus on the interaction between the participants in the special conversational setting that is an interview can help to mitigate the danger of drawing "wrong", merely content-based inferences from the data (Deppermann, 2013b, p. 60).

In view of the previous Chapter's approach, an interview type encouraging consultants to tell bigger and smaller stories is paramount. Semi-structured interviews are ideal for this purpose for a number of reasons. The researcher complies with the expectations many consultants have regarding the interview situation as one where one person typically asks questions and another person answers them (cf. Wengraf 2001). The framework is both structured enough to elicit comparable information, and open enough to allow a "real" (if at least gently steered) conversation to take place with all the detours, cross-references, explanations, and jokes this may entail. The challenge is that the interviewer has to remain open to all the possible routes the interview may take on the way to covering all topics, and be quick-thinking and skillful enough to make use of the openness this approach allows (Flick, 2007, p. 223f.).[1]

In the interviews, we discussed (not necessarily in this order):

- Narratives of how "the Greeks" first came to Georgia, how the consultant's grandparents had lived in their youth, how life was during the Soviet Union, the changes in the years since the end of the Soviet Union and Georgia's independence;
- Whether there had been any discrimination on ethnic grounds during the Soviet Union or after;
- Explanations for the massive Greek emigration out of Georgia and personal and family experiences thereof;
- The (conflict prone) internal migration to Ts'alk'a in the early 1990s and the situation there today;
- Language competence, use and evaluations of the consultants, in their families, their community and "the society";
- The consultant's sense of belonging and perception of inter- and intra-communal boundaries; and
- The consultant's and the community's religious and cultural practices.

Interviews generally started with attempts to elicit narratives in a roughly chronological order and then moved to the more abstract topics aiming for more detail about the construction of belonging. The interview was followed by a sociolinguistic survey covering and clarifying those variables not touched upon in the preceding conversation.

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1 It is therefore not wholly surprising that Marcus (2009, p. 3) speaks of anthropologists as "participating in a culture of craftsmanship", thereby stressing that such "craftsmanship" has to be acquired.

B.   *Who to speak to?*

Two main considerations helped me decide who to interview. The first is the oft-mentioned divergence in language use, which led me to label one "group" as *Urum Greek* and the other as *Pontic Greek* (cf. Chapter 1). In order to establish whether any differences exist between these two putative groups or whether the difference lies in the researcher's assumptions, I had to treat them separately in the process of data collection. The second consideration is the importance of location that emerged clearly from previous research on the Georgian Greek community (Höfler, 2011; Sideri, 2006). I therefore treated rural and urban contexts as distinct sites with potentially differing experiences leading to divergent needs in establishing belonging to a certain community. Besides these considerations, age has proven to be an important factor (Höfler, 2011; Zoumpalidis, 2013). I tried to cover all ages starting from 18, but finding consultants under 30 proved challenging. Gender did not play a major role in my previous study, but I tried to balance the interviews. I also strove to cover a wide range of educational backgrounds and socio-economic positions, in order to get "extreme" as well as "typical" cases (Wengraf, 2001, p. 102f).

I envisaged a total of 40 interviews: 10 Urum Greeks in Tbilisi, 10 Urum Greeks in Kvemo Kartli (Ts'alk'a and Tetrits'q'aro region), 10 Pontic Greeks in Tbilisi and 10 Pontic Greeks in rural Ach'ara. While there were no problems finding enough Urum Greeks in Tbilisi and especially in the Ts'alk'a region, Batumi had to be exchanged for Tbilisi as the urban centre for Pontic Greeks. There are almost no Pontic Greeks living in the Ts'alk'a region anymore (there used to be three villages: Santa, Gumbati and Khareba), but quite a few still live in the Tetrits'q'aro region, with whom we managed to establish contacts. There are, thus, six unplanned interviews with Pontic Greeks in Kvemo Kartli. I did not interview fewer Pontic Greeks in rural Ach'ara because I expected the experiences of Georgian Greeks to be similar in Kvemo Kartli across the languages used and to differ from rural Ach'ara, where migration from the Ach'arian highlands to lower lying villages had occurred in far smaller numbers. However, I counted the four interviews with self-identifying Pontic Greeks in the isolated village of Tsikhisjvari in Samtskhe-Javakheti together with the seven of rural Ach'ara. Again, this followed the assumption that those villages, which had received much less, and less sudden, in-migration would provide similar environments and that accounts of out-groups would be comparable.

I interviewed a total of 49 self-identifying Georgian Greeks. 23 of them still speak or have a family history of speaking Urum as heritage variety. The interview locations break down into 10 in Tbilisi and 13 in the Ts'alk'a region of Kvemo Kartli. The age range is 19-77, with an average age of 43.9. 13 consultants were female, 10 male. 26 consultants still speak or have a family history of speaking Pontic Greek. Interviews were conducted in the following places: 6 interviews in the Tetrits'q'aro region of Kvemo Kartli, 9 interviews in Batumi, 1 interview in Tbilisi and 11 interviews with Pontic Greeks in the villages Dagva, K'virike and Ach'q'va in rural Ach'ara and the village Tsikhisjvari in Samtskhe-Javakheti. The age range for Pontic Greeks is: 19-81, with an average age of 50.5. 14 consultants were female, 12 male. Depending on the talkativeness of the consultants, interviews lasted 30-90 minutes.

All interviews were collected during two field trips: Four months in Spring 2013 and two months in Spring 2014, followed by a month-long trip to Greece and Cyprus. Map 4.1 shows the research sites, a table with sociolinguistic metadata on all consultants is found in Appendix A. I extended my second research trip with a stay in Thessaloniki, Greece, and Nicosia, Cyprus, because I felt compelled to see and feel for myself what life in Greece for Georgian Greek immigrants might be like. The informal conversations I had with Georgian Greeks and Greek Greeks in my three weeks in Thessaloniki and one week on Cyprus completed the picture.

C.   Constructing and entering the field

Wherever researchers deal with empirical data that is not collected in some kind of a laboratory, they consider themselves to be "doing fieldwork". While this seems straightforward and unproblematic in geology or biology, it becomes at least a little odd when the research centers on the lifeworlds of fellow human beings. What exactly constitutes "the field" is in most cases entirely up to the researcher and not to the communities that have "research done to them". In the present case, the construction of the places I went to in order to "do fieldwork" is particularly striking: Without my poking around and asking questions about their language use, people that I labeled "Urum" for the sake of keeping two speech communities separate in my head and on these pages would not have been made aware that some academics with little knowledge about their lives were referring to them by this label (cf. Chapter 1). They certainly did not need yet another label emphasizing that

Figure 4.1: Research Sites. Map compiled by Nika Loladze (Loladze, 2019, p. 12).

the Greekness they claim for themselves may strike outsiders as a little odd and even cause them to come to their villages and "do fieldwork" on them. This is not to say I was not welcome. Quite the contrary, apart from the oddness I personified as someone with no family ties to the community or even to Georgia who still wanted to find out more about their way of life and seeing the world, the vast majority of my consultants appeared happy or even proud about this interest. In this Section, then, I want to make as transparent as possible what happened during my trips to the cities and villages that I consider to be "my field", how I encountered people to interview and how we collaboratively established the communicative event interview.

The single most beneficial factor for my research was my participation in the VolkswagenStiftung (VW) funded research project *The impact of current transformational processes on language and ethnic identity: Urum and Pontic Greeks in Georgia* led by Konstanze Jungbluth and Stavros Skopeteas. In addition to the many useful contacts it made available to me and the almost constant exchange on preliminary findings, difficulties and inspirations, it allowed me to work, travel, collect data and think together with Nika Lo-

ladze, a human geographer working on the various Greek migrations in the project (cf. Loladze 2016, 2019). Our collaboration enriched this study in the following ways:

– My questionnaire was designed to make consultants explain many contexts to me, the outsider, in a thorough way. This outsider status also established the need to explain more complex socio-political processes. Having an "ethnic Georgian" participate in the conversation, who shares consultants' understanding of the local contexts at least to a certain point, made them trust that I would not end up with the "wrong picture".
– Our consultants always had someone of their own gender they could turn to in order to be "understood".[2]
– Nika speaks Georgian, Russian and English either as native language or at a very high level, which helped balance my insecurities in Russian and especially in Georgian.
– Having grown up in Georgia, Nika was also far better than I in complying with the cultural norms stipulating how and when to approach potential consultants and how to approach and assess difficult topics or conversational situations. Again, there were topics I could address more easily without causing offense.

Employing the friend-of-a-friend or snowball method to encounter potential consultants has some disadvantages, for example that the researcher can never be sure whether she has covered "the field" broadly enough or whether the opinions represented are only those of a rather small circle of acquaintances (Flick, 2007; Wengraf, 2001). In every setting, we therefore used a variety of "entry points".

In Tbilisi, Violeta Moisidi was the enabler of the majority of interviews. Others were found via the Greek department at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU) and the *Federation of Greek communities of Georgia*. In Ts'alk'a, due to the large number of Urum Greeks still living there, it was comparatively easy to encounter potential consultants. Our first point of entry was with employees of the district administration. We then had the luck of finding an incredibly knowledgeable and helpful taxi driver. He turned into something of a professional: if we asked him to speak to an Urum Greek woman of not more than 30 years, he would know which village to take us to and who to talk to. For me, his way of stopping in front of a house in a

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2 Apart from this potential orientation to putatively shared understanding on the basis of shared gender, gender was not usually made relevant in our conversations.

tiny village, beeping the horn of his car until someone came out and then starting a conversation that would last up to two hours with an *erti ts'uti* 'one minute' went against any politeness norm I had so far internalized in my life. Surprisingly few people turned down his request to talk "to these young students" "writing a book", though, and the ensuing interviews invariably turned out to be very interesting.

In Beshtasheni in the Ts'alk'a area, in Tsikhisjvari and in the Ach'arian villages (K'virike, Dagva and Ach'q'va) we often went into the (sometimes only) shop and asked where it would be good for us to start. In Batumi, a representative of the local Greek federation was our vital first entry point, while Nino Inaishvili of Batumi's Shota Rustaveli University and our Batumi host in 2014 provided us with contacts to Pontic Greeks who did not even know of the federation's existence.

A question arises concerning the motives of the people supporting us in finding interview partners. I did (and still do) take displayed helpfulness as exactly that: people trying to help us find somebody that would be interesting for us to talk to, combined with us providing a welcome distraction and perhaps lending some air of importance to our intermediary. Relying on others to introduce us requires, in turn, establishing who exactly would be interesting for us and quite a few of our contacts' ideas differed markedly from our own. Unsurprisingly, we were often directed first to the older and "more knowledgeable" people in the community, and to the ones that were felt to be "representative" in a positive way, and expected to make a good impression on us. A notable instance of the former occurred in Batumi in 2013, where we were initially directed to speak with a 93-year-old woman. She was delightful, showed me all the important photographs on display in the living room, made sure I always had enough food and drink, and the like. However, it was next to impossible to engage her in a more structured conversation. She either did not understand the question or could not find an answer, and I also found her Russian very hard to understand.[3] In 2014, I spoke again to the contact who had recommended me to speak to the elderly lady and she was taken aback by the fact that I had not "properly" interviewed her: the old lady was so knowledgeable, she said, it was a crime not to use her information. To save face, we quickly settled on the old lady not having

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3 In keeping with the firmly established gender roles common in Georgia, Nika Loladze was at that point smoking with the men and witnessing my being fed and led around the room with growing amusement.

been too well over the past year, which would have made the conversation too difficult for her.

There was, of course, a bias towards those people that had enough time on their hands to talk to us.[4] We tried to balance this by conducting interviews whenever it would suit our consultants. Still, especially in the villages further out, we would be there mainly during the daytime. Additionally, both interview collection trips took place in spring, a time when most young men living in Ach'arian villages are engaged in seasonal migration to Turkey or Greece.

The interviews were held mainly in Russian with some in Georgian, if consultants felt more comfortable in Georgian. The main choice of language lay with the consultant and if they did not have a preference, we spoke Russian, due to my personal language constraints. Depending on their competence in Georgian, consultants who had chosen Russian as the main interview language switched more or less frequently. In more monolingual communities, this variety of languages could be interpreted as potentially inhibiting the consultants' (self-)presentation and -positioning. In dealing with such multilingual communication communities where two or three languages are routinely used, however, it is fairly safe to assume that my consultants all had the necessary experience of negotiating these issues in the languages they chose for the interview context.

There are important concerns about the *communicative hegemony* (Briggs, 1986, p. 90) asserted by the interviewer on her consultants by setting the topics and deciding at which point to move on. At the same time, unless the interviewer adopts the adequate manner of speaking in relation to the norms of the community, she may not get answers to her questions, unless she learns to phrase them "correctly". Communicative competence in the variety of the community is, therefore, paramount (Briggs, 1984, p. 21). Briggs (1984;

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4 Negotiating suitable times for interviews was another thing I mostly left up to Nika Loladze and (in Tbilisi) Violeta Moisidi, especially after one memorable interview in the beginning of my first trip in spring 2013. Violeta had told Nika and me that there was a lady we could speak to, but only in the morning and only until a certain time because she would be busy afterwards. To me, the time span offered appeared much too short for a relaxed interview and I was very reluctant to agree to it. By the time I turned on the recorder after tea, sweets and pleasant small talk, there was only about half an hour left – much too little time for the interview. Nobody else seemed particularly troubled by this lack of time, so I chose to see where the situation would take us. Two hours later we finally finished the interview and neither our consultant nor her husband had either voiced a lack of time or appeared in any way hurried.

1986) relates how he only got the information for which he had come to New Mexico after a lengthy process of becoming part of the community. In my case, this was somewhat alleviated by the fact that most interviews were conducted in Russian which, even though it still serves as a *lingua franca* in many contexts, is not usually mastered to perfection by its speakers on Georgian soil. This means that most of the time I was the only person troubled by my level of Russian. Everybody else would try to guess what I was on about and be as supportive as possible in answering my questions.

The age of the individual consultant would usually determine whether they tried as hard as they could to find out what exactly it was we wanted to know and frequently inquire whether they were helpful; or whether they would proceed in a more expert-like fashion to lecture "the naïve young girl from outside" on "what's what" and what topics I *should* be interested in. Unsurprisingly, the former were usually younger consultants and the latter usually our older consultants. Most of the time, they merely emphasized things that interested me anyway or preempted a question I had planned to ask. Therefore, I was more than happy to be treated like a naïve adolescent, as this ensured I would get lengthy explanations on everything I wanted to know.[5] Being put in the conversational role of treating them as experts on how they navigate their social world also made it even easier to ask for clarifications and explanations of certain points. Furthermore, their detours back to topics previously discussed at length merely underscored the importance of some topics to them, which is exactly what I need to analyze issues such as the importance of language competence for their sense of belonging.

D.   From interview data to written analysis

After the mostly enjoyable fieldwork, the researcher's task then turns to the transcription, annotation (or coding) and analysis proper of the corpus, the latter demanding reflection on how to (re-)present consultants when writing up the analysis. Importantly, analyzing does not begin only after annotation but is already present in the decisions one has to make about the transcription and is part and parcel of the process of annotating or coding (Glaser / Strauss, 2007; Lucius-Hoene / Deppermann, 2002; Wengraf, 2001).

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5 Cf. Faubion (2009, p. 146) on the importance of "a considerable thickness of skin" necessary for any type of fieldwork.

Interviews were transcribed in the *Partitur Editor* of the software package EXMARaLDA, since it supports not only the transcription but also the subsequent annotation, comes with a corpus manager and an elaborate search tool (Schmidt / Wörner, 2009). Note that in this book, Russian is the language most often used in the excerpts. Segments in Georgian or SMG are marked by putting (kat) or (ell) after the speaker abbreviation.

As explained in the previous Chapter, an analysis of identification, belonging and boundary work in interaction relies on a detailed transcription of the interaction in question. To repeat the fundamental tenet once again, every utterance is ultimately co-constructed within the interview situation:

> narrative interviews are ultimately interactional data in which the researcher is very much part of the narrative telling, and his/her role should be not just reflected upon but also all contributions by the researcher, whether verbal or non-verbal, should be fully transcribed. (Fina / Georgakopoulou, 2008, p. 382)[6]

After completing *finely grained transcripts* following the convention and levels of elaboration laid out in the *Gesprächsanalytische Transkriptionskonvention 2* (GAT 2) (Selting et al., 2009) of seven interviews and the note-taking and reflection this involved,[7] I narrowed the parts I finely transcribed down to those parts that appeared more directly relevant to my research questions.

Annotation and the development of (initially content based) categories started on the basis of the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, the semi-structured questionnaire discussed in Section A., and the observations and notes taken during the interview and transcription process. This accommodates the main focus of the study and precludes any pretensions that the researcher were without presuppositions. It is, however, crucial to *reflect on* and test one's assumptions on the data (Geertz 1973, p. 28; Wengraf 2001). In order to allow for the emergence of issues relevant to consultants, one must constantly ask: could it be different? What did I not take into account? For instance, in about half the interviews I was told, without having asked, that the ancestors of Georgia's contemporary Urum Greek community were made to "choose" between keeping either their language or their religion without having asked about it. This points to the importance of this narrative

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6 Non-verbal material is excluded here, apart from a very select few instances.
7 Detailed step-by-step introductions are given in Lucius-Hoene / Deppermann (2002); Wengraf (2001).

for how members of Georgia's Greek community trace their identification through this mythical "answer" (cf. Chapter 5).[8]

Writing up the analysis poses a number of challenges in terms of (re-)presenting the material and consultants. The first concerns how to name consultants in the excerpts. Assigning random names is a difficult task, unfortunately, as both forenames and surnames are highly coded for national affiliation in the Southern Caucasian context. My consultants' first names are drawn from a number of sources: some consultants have very Georgian (Giorgi, Nugzar, Ani, Lika, Nana, Rimma), some very Greek (Akhiles, Aida, Elena, Afina, Violeta, Ioanis), some very Russian (Igor, Evgenia, Iveta, Iuriy, Ksenia, Fyodor, Ol'ga, Pavlik), some "international" Christian (Maria) names. In the Georgian context, there is no such thing as a neutral name – especially when assigned by an outside researcher. Whatever names I would have chosen, I would have portrayed my consultants "as something". Also, choosing a "corresponding" name, i.e. a "Greek" name if the consultant's actual name is "Greek" was not really feasible, both due to my possibly wrongly attributing a certain name to a certain tradition and due to there being many names whose "belonging" is not as easily established as with Sokratis or Giorgi. I therefore chose to assign random acronyms to consultants, putting them on equal footing with Nika Loladze (NL) and myself (CH) in presenting the interview excerpts.

The second challenge of (re-)presentation lies in how to adequately represent all consultants in citing interview excerpts. The goal is, of course, to make as many voices as possible read, and to draw a complex and perhaps ambiguous picture about the positions taken by members of Georgia's Greek community. This challenge is one of quantity as well as "quotability". Quantitatively, it is impossible to relate everything every consultant has said – hence the analytical task of condensing positions and drawing conclusions for the reader. In terms of "quotability", consultants vary in expressivity, e.g. finding illustrative examples, or coming up with punchy conclusions to their argument. It is, of course, always easier to quote and analyze these clearest and most memorable excerpts. Throughout the analysis, I do try, however, to let the less eloquent consultants be read as much as possible without compromising the clarity of the analysis.

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8 Technically, I wrote an xml-stylesheet, which ensured that the categories I used were the same across the corpus, and allowed for fast and type-free input of the categories into added annotation lines in the transcription file.

I found some parts of the analysis difficult to write, sometimes surprisingly so. These mostly concern moments where I felt I had to protect consultants from rash generalizations and inadequate ascriptions by readers: of great divides between Pontic and Urum Greeks, for instance, of being read as racist and Islamophobic, of being viewed in an essentialist vein and/or as monolithic entity, i.e. not a diverse set of individuals. Difficulties also arose in writing about moments and events that were painful for consultants: the end of the Soviet Union, the civil war and turmoil of the early 1990s in Georgia, experiences of being left behind by emigrating relatives (Chapter 6), or having to deal with perceived and real injustices over land and/or belonging in Ts'alk'a and Greece (Chapter 7). The very first step in dealing with these difficulties was to acknowledge these emotions as relevant for my position as researcher and writer of these pages.[9]

There are two ways in which my emotional concerns are written into this book. Firstly, where I felt the need to protect the people that so generously allowed me an insight into their life and perception of the world, I took great care on the one hand to relate the breadth of positions held in the community rather than generalize the "majority opinion" – while on the other hand making sure this breadth would be recognizable not only to the most well-intentioned readers. This effort enabled me to stop myself from policing interview excerpts. Instead of excluding certain excerpts that I felt might "expose" consultants unfavorably, the awareness of this protectiveness made me question my choices of excerpts and include some I might otherwise have not.

Secondly, in beginning to write about the profound transformations discussed in Chapter 6, I became aware of a method of evasion I had already noticed many consultants using back in 2010. It consists of saying as little as politely possible and/or referring to common knowledge about "that time", usually the early 1990s in Georgia, then changing the subject.[10] In writing

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9 Emotions and affects on part of the researcher have long been viewed as at best suspicious, if not a danger to achieving an "objective" analysis. In recent years this has been increasingly questioned and particularly anthropologists have started to develop approaches that make the researcher's affects productive not only in the reflection of the fieldwork but also in the analysis of the data (Stodulka, 2017; Stodulka et al., 2019).

10 Self-identifying members of Georgia's Greek community are not alone in this, many of my friends and acquaintances of a certain age speak – or rather: do not speak – about this period in exactly the same manner, referring to the knowledge they ascribe to me about "that time". It is their children, now in their late-twenties to late-thirties who have been very eager to provide me with most of the ethnographic knowledge I

about that time, I acknowledged the unexpected emotional challenges this posed not only to many of my consultants but evidently also to myself. Taking inspiration from Nobel Laureate Svetlana Alexievich, in whose powerful literary collages of interviews people narrate their lives in the Soviet Union and afterwards (Alexievich, 2016), I then set out to explore these liminal phases. These must be analyzed with great care, as so much of how members of Georgia's Greek community position themselves and their community today hinges on these events and their traces in contemporary Georgia. The emotional charge of these sequences, even or especially in their brevity, demands great attentiveness, since explicating links to larger societal discourses and "common" knowledge is paramount. Recognizing and countering my urge to "move on quickly", I instead focused on these sequences in detail, which turned out to be very productive. In this way, awareness to my own emotional reactions have led me to write a more nuanced and thicker analysis of identification and belonging in Georgia's Greek community.

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have about what it meant to live in Georgia at that time, many times without me even asking them about it. Cf. also Mishler (2006) for people choosing not to speak about the more difficult events in their lives.