Identity styles in the Georgian context and associations with parenting dimensions

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ABSTRACT
Information-oriented, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles represent social-cognitive approaches used by young people to seek and process self-relevant information. The present study is a first investigation of identity styles and their association with parenting dimensions in Georgia – a context that is considerably understudied in identity research. Previous research has indicated that identity styles, along with identity commitment, are linked with maternal and paternal parenting dimensions. In the present investigation we used SEM analysis to study this relationship. We used data from 650 Georgian emerging adults between the ages of 17–30 (46.6% male) using the Identity Style Inventory-5 (ISI-5) and scales for parental support, behaviour control, and psychological control. Findings indicated that the normative and diffuse-avoidant identity styles are positively correlated with each other and negatively correlated with the information-oriented style and with commitment. Only the information-oriented style was positively associated with commitment. Perceived parental support and maternal behavioural control were positively associated with the information-oriented style, whereas both parents’ behavioural and psychological control were more highly correlated with the normative style. Both parents’ psychological control was positively correlated with the diffuse-avoidant style. These results, which indicated considerable differences from the research results in other countries, are discussed in the light of the Georgian context.

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KEYWORDS
Identity style; parenting dimensions; Republic of Georgia

Introduction
Identity formation is a key developmental task of adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2012). Erikson (1968) emphasized that identity formation is characterized by person-context interactions (see also Adams & Marshall, 1996; Bosma & Kunnen, 2001). As a number of authors (e.g., Henrich, Heine, &
Norenzayan, 2010) have indicated, Western and non-Western contexts often differ greatly in terms of the prominence and importance of family bonds, prioritization of individual desires vis-à-vis the needs of others, and societal support for individualized decision-making. Schwartz (2016) has suggested that identity development may be more of an individual project in Western contexts but a more collective project (e.g., decisions are made by the family rather than by the individual) in non-Western countries (see Gelfand et al., 2011; for supportive empirical evidence). In the present study we examine identity styles and their relation with life satisfaction and perceived parenting dimensions in Georgia, which is situated at the border between Europe and Asia. It is not known how the identity style model, or its relationships with life satisfaction and family processes, would operate in the Georgian context, which is considerably understudied in identity literature (Skhirtladze, Javakhishvili, Schwartz, Beyers, & Luyckx, 2016).

Identity styles

According to Erikson, identity formation among adolescents and emerging adults requires sorting through a range of choices before making commitments in various life areas such as interpersonal relations, career, and religion. Berzonsky’s (2011) identity style model views people as active agents in the process of defining who they are and the reality in which they live. People differ in the ways they handle identity-relevant information and make identity-related decisions – with these differences labelled as identity styles: information-oriented, normative, and diffuse-avoidant (Berzonsky, 2011).

The information-oriented identity style implies consciously searching for and evaluating identity-relevant information, critical thinking, and openness to new alternatives. Individuals primarily utilizing the information-oriented style tend to score higher on openness, conscientiousness, empathy, personal expressiveness, self-awareness, and the use of problem-focused coping strategies compared to individuals primarily utilizing other styles. The information-oriented style is linked with values that transcend self-interest, such as justice, tolerance, empathy, and openness-related ideals such as personal freedom, originality, and novelty seeking (Berzonsky, 2011; Berzonsky & Papini, 2014; Dunkel, Papini, & Berzonsky, 2008; Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman, & Dunham, 2000).

The normative style implies a passive, non-critical internalization of important others’ norms, values, and beliefs as part of the process of identity formation and is positively associated with need for closure, prejudice, authoritarianism, conservatism, and defensiveness. It is related to values that emphasize security and tradition, firm goals, and commitment (Berzonsky & Papini, 2014; Duriez & Soenens, 2006).

Finally, the diffuse-avoidant style implies reluctance to face and address identity-related issues, accompanied by procrastination until situational
demands and consequences dictate that one must respond. The diffuse-avoidant style is associated with emotion-focused and avoidant coping strategies, other-directness, limited commitment, external locus of control and values that underline self-interest (Berzonsky, 2011; Berzonsky & Papini, 2014).

Although limited research points to cross-cultural generalizability of identity styles (Berzonsky, 2011), this generalizability has been studied primarily with regard to North American and Western European samples. Meta-analytic findings (Bosch & Card, 2012) suggest that commitment is positively linked with the information-oriented and normative styles, but negatively linked with the diffuse-avoidant style. Further, the information-oriented style was positively correlated with the normative style and negatively correlated with the diffuse-avoidant style. The normative and diffuse-avoidant styles are generally negatively correlated.

**Parenting dimensions and identity styles**

Identity styles likely have their roots in social contexts such as family and parenting. Conceptualizations of parenting outline a number of component dimensions such as support, behavioural control, and psychological control (Janssens et al., 2015). Support refers to the affective, nurturing, and bonding behaviour that parents display toward their children. Behavioural control refers to parental regulation and discipline through monitoring and communication of expectations. Psychological control implies covert methods used by parents to influence children's emotions and behaviour, including tactics such as manipulation and instilling guilt and shame (Barber, Stolz, & Olsen, 2005; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010).

As a primary context for development, parenting would be expected to influence young people's approach to identity formation. There is considerable empirical research conducted to study parenting-identity style associations (Berzonsky, 2004; Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Luyckx, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Goossens, & Berzonsky, 2007; Smits et al., 2008; Soenens, Berzonsky, Dunkel, & Papini, 2011). Again, however, these associations between identity styles and parenting were studied in Western contexts. It should be kept in mind that many Western cultural contexts favour an individualized (information-oriented) approach to life decisions, whereas non-Western cultural contexts may be more likely to favour a conformity-based, normative approach (Gelfand et al., 2011). As a result, the interrelationships among the styles and their relation to parenting may differ between Western and non-Western contexts.

**The Georgian socio-cultural context**

Georgia was a Soviet republic and has been independent only since 1991. Georgian society has been undergoing rapid socio-cultural changes in the past
25 years, and these changes are reflected in the life situations of emerging adults (Roberts & Pollock, 2009; Roberts, Pollock, Manasyan, & Tholen, 2008). According to the recent national study, 70% of young people live with their parents and economically depend on them, and about 35% report to be employed (Friedrich Ebert Shtiftung, 2017). According to the National Statistics Office of Georgia, the number of university students increases annually (National Statistics Office of Georgia, 2016). Most of the young people finish higher education and start work by age of 23–25, this is the average age for marriage as well.

Georgia is a collectivist society where people rely heavily on extended family and friends as the main sources to make decisions, and valuing social ties and displaying respect towards others are considered as the most desirable personality features (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004; Sumbadze, 2012). Earlier cross-cultural investigations have found that, among 55 countries studied, Georgia was ranked among the highest on cultural embeddedness, importance of social relationships, group identifications, and participation in shared ways of life (Schwartz, 2006). A recent study conducted on students in European countries indicated that 73% of Georgian students live with their parents, which places Georgia among the top three countries in Europe in this regard (Hauschildt, Gwosc, Netz, & Mishra, 2015). For all of these reasons, one might expect that, in Georgia, results for identity styles, and their links with family processes, might differ from those found in Western European and North American studies. For example, remaining normatively oriented, and respecting important others’ opinions and views, might be important for successful adaptation in this cultural context.

The present study

The objectives guiding the present research were threefold: (1) to investigate factorial validity of identity styles in Georgia; (2) to study relations among identity styles and commitment and their association with life satisfaction as a way of establishing concurrent validity; and (3) to study how identity styles are associated with parenting dimensions. Considering the collectivist, family-oriented character of the Georgian cultural context, we anticipated some differences in the ways identity styles operate in Georgia in comparison to prior Western findings. As our first hypothesis, considering Georgian more collectivistic, tradition-oriented cultural context, we expected that the normative identity style might be positively associated with the information-oriented and diffuse-avoidant styles. Given the role of parental authority in Georgian culture, our second hypothesis posits that parenting control dimensions (behavioural and psychological) will be more strongly associated with the normative style than with the other styles. In addition, as existing research suggests different associations of paternal and maternal parenting on children (e.g., Beyers & Goossens, 2008),
we analyzed emerging adults’ perceptions of maternal and paternal parenting dimensions separately.

**Method**

**Participants and procedure**

Data were collected from 650 Georgian late adolescents and emerging adults between the ages of 17–30 ($M = 23.4$; $SD = 2.95$; 46.6% male). The vast majority (80.8%) of the sample lived with their parents. Roughly half (47.4%) of the sample consisted of students from the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, and the remainder were employed. The sampling procedure was based on a non-random, convenience approach. The sample was recruited via e-mail and social networking sites by Master’s students through their personal connections. Participants were directed to the electronic link for the survey. All of the measures were administered as a single online survey.

**Measures**

**Identity style inventory (ISI-5)**

The Identity style inventory (ISI-5) (Berzonsky et al., 2013) includes three subscales for information-oriented (e.g., ‘It is important for me to obtain and evaluate information from a variety of sources before I make important life decisions’), normative (e.g., ‘When I make a decision about my future, I automatically follow what close friends or relatives expect from me’), and diffuse-avoidant identity styles (e.g., ‘I try not to think about or deal with problems as long as I can’). The measure also includes a 9-item commitment subscale (e.g., ‘I have clear and definite life goals’). Each item was answered using a response scale ranging from 1 to 5. The scales were translated and back-translated before the final Georgian versions were created.

**Parenting dimensions**

Parenting dimensions included scales for support (Schaefer, 1965; Schludermann & Schludermann, 1988), behavioural control (Barber, 2002), and psychological control (Barber, 1996). Each item was answered using a response scale ranging from 1 to 5. The scales were translated and back-translated before the final Georgian versions were created. They were administered for mothers’ and fathers’ perceived parenting dimensions separately. Results indicated good factorial validity for the translated instruments (Skhirtladze, Javakhishvili, Schwartz, & Luyckx, 2017).

The support scale includes five items (e.g., ‘My mother/father is able to make me feel better when I am upset’). Cronbach’s alphas for mother and father scales were .84 and .87, respectively. The behaviour control scale initially included subscales for behaviour expectations (8 items; e.g., ‘My mother requires that I
behave in certain ways’) and for behaviour monitoring (8 items; e.g., ‘My father asks me questions about how I am behaving outside the home’). Following previous research (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Luyckx, & Goossens, 2006) we created a composite score for behavioural control computed by taking the mean of all 16 items assessing parental expectations and parental monitoring. Cronbach’s alphas for both mother and father scales were .87. The psychological control scale includes 8 items (e.g., ‘My mother/father is less friendly with me if I do not see things her/his way’). Cronbach’s alphas for mother and father scales were .83 and .87, respectively.

**Analysis**

Our analytic procedure consisted of the following steps: First, we randomly divided the sample in half, and with the first half-sample we conducted confirmatory factor analyses on the ISI item responses. The analysis was performed by using Mplus 7, employing maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR). We compared different solutions of measurement models. In evaluating the fit of these factor-analytic models to the data, we used standard structural equation modelling fit indices and cutoff values: the chi-square index should be as small as possible, the comparative fit index (CFI) should be at least .90, and preferably .95. The root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) should be below .08, and preferably below .06 (Kline, 2014).

Second, we examined bivariate correlations among identity styles, commitment, and life satisfaction in the full sample. Third, on the second half-sample, we estimated structural equation models where parenting dimensions were specified as predictors of identity styles and of commitment. Separate models were estimated for perceptions of mothers and of fathers. Finally, we conducted a series of multigroup SEM evaluating the extent to which the associations between parenting and identity styles would be consistent across gender, age (below and above age 24), and living conditions (with or separately from parents). If the fit of the unconstrained and constrained models was not significantly different, the structural associations of parenting with identity styles and commitment can be assumed to be equivalent across gender, age, and living arrangements. The null hypothesis of invariance is tested by comparing the CFI and RMSEA values between the constrained and unconstrained models. The null hypothesis of invariance can be retained provided that the differences in CFI and RMSEA values between models are both less than .01. The chi-square difference test is reported, but not used in interpretation, because it tends to produce a significant result even when the differences in the fit indices themselves are trivial (Dimitrov, 2010).
Results

Factor structure of the Georgian ISI-5

Given the factor structure that Berzonsky et al. (2013) found for the ISI-5, we examined a 3-factor model including each identity style subscale as a separate factor, and a separate one-factor model for the commitment subscale. We did this because commitment is likely to be strongly related to the normative style, and strongly inversely related to the diffuse-avoidant style – and therefore the commitment items might be expected to cross-load onto the normative and diffuse-avoidant factors, and vice versa.

Using the first half-sample, the identity style model with all items loading on their respective identity style-factors provided a poor fit to the data, \( \chi^2 (374) = 833.849; p < .001, \text{CFI} = .71, \text{RMSEA} = .06). Eight items had loadings below .40. Three items (‘Talking to others helps me explore my personal beliefs’ [information-oriented], ‘I spend a lot of time reading or talking to others trying to develop a set of values that makes sense to me’ [information-oriented], and ‘It doesn’t pay to worry about values in advance; I decide things as they happen’ [diffuse-avoidant]) loaded poorly on their respective factors (.21, .28, and .29, respectively) in both our study and in Berzonsky et al. (2013). To improve model fit, items with loadings below .40 were removed. After removing these problematic items, model fit improved considerably. Fit indices for the three-factor model with two error correlations allowed (between the items ‘My life plans tend to change whenever I talk to different people’ and ‘Who I am changes from situation to situation’; and between ‘I strive to achieve the goals that my family and friends hold for me’ and ‘I think it’s better to hold on to fixed values rather than to consider alternative value systems’) were \( \chi^2 (147) = 247.605, p < .001; \text{CFI} = .90; \text{RMSEA} = .05). Factor loadings ranged from .40 to .80. We compared one, two, and three factor models. Across all indices, the three factor model provided considerably better fit to the data. Table 1 provides the results for the five models, and Table 2 provides the items and corresponding loadings of three factor model. The reduced scale included 5 items for the information-oriented identity style, 6 items for the normative style, and 7 items for the diffuse-avoidant style. Correlations between the original and reduced scales were: information-oriented style, .89; normative style, .94; and diffuse-avoidant style, .96.

The commitment scale with 9 items provided poor fit to the data. Three items with below .40 loadings were removed, and two error-correlations allowed between similarly worded items. The subsequent model showed good fit: \( \chi^2 (7) = 12.678; p = .08, \text{CFI} = .98, \text{RMSEA} = .05). Cronbach’s alphas were .70 for information-oriented style, .74 for normative style, .77 for diffuse-avoidant style, and .75 for commitment.
Bivariate correlations

Correlations in the total sample among identity styles, commitment, and life satisfaction indicated that the information-oriented style was not related to the normative style, negatively associated with the diffuse-avoidant style, and positively associated with commitment and life satisfaction. The normative and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fit indices</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One factor model</td>
<td>All items specified on one factor</td>
<td>$491.142$ (134) .09 .61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two factor model</td>
<td>Information-oriented style and combined normative-diffuse-avoidant style</td>
<td>$272.958$ (132) .06 .84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two factor model</td>
<td>Diffuse-avoidant style and combined information-oriented-normative style</td>
<td>$452.167$ (132) .09 .65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two factor model</td>
<td>Normative style and combined information-oriented and diffuse-avoidant style</td>
<td>$419.770$ (132) .09 .69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three factor model</td>
<td>Information-oriented style, normative style, diffuse-avoidant style</td>
<td>$247.605$ (147) .90 .05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. Items and factor loadings of revised Georgian versions of identity style inventory.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Information-oriented style
When making important decisions, I like to spend time thinking about my options  .42
It is important for me to obtain and evaluate information from a variety of sources before I make important life decisions .53
When making important decisions, I like to have as much information as possible .64
When facing a life decision, I try to analyze the situation in order to understand it .80
I handle problems in my life by actively reflecting on them .55

Normative style
I think it is better to adopt a firm set of beliefs than to be open-minded .53
I think it’s better to hold on to fixed values rather than to consider alternative value systems .52
When I make a decision about my future, I automatically follow what close friends or relatives expect from me .67
I prefer to deal with situations in which I can rely on social norms and standards .52
I never question what I want to do with my life because I tend to follow what important people expect me to do .52
I strive to achieve the goals that my family and friends hold for me .65

Diffuse-avoidant style
When personal problems arise, I try to delay acting as long as possible .48
I’m not sure where I’m heading in my life; I guess things will work themselves out .61
My life plans tend to change whenever I talk to different people .53
Who I am changes from situation to situation .54
I try not to think about or deal with problems as long as I can .60
I try to avoid personal situations that require me to think a lot and deal with them on my own .40
When I have to make a decision, I try to wait as long as possible in order to see what will happen .60
I am not really thinking about my future now, it is still a long way off .61
diffuse-avoidant styles were positively interrelated. The diffuse-avoidant and normative styles were negatively associated with commitment. The normative style was positively associated with life satisfaction, and the diffuse-avoidant style was not significantly related to commitment (see Table 3).

The information-oriented identity style was positively correlated with both maternal and paternal support and negatively associated with both parents’ psychological control. The normative identity style was positively associated with both parents’ behavioural and psychological control. The diffuse-avoidant identity style was positively associated with both maternal and paternal behaviour and psychological control and negatively associated with both parents’ support. Commitment was positively correlated with both maternal and paternal support and negatively associated with psychological control (see Table 4).

**Structural equation modelling**

To examine the unique predictive value of the parenting dimensions vis-à-vis the identity styles, we estimated four SEM models using the second half of the sample: two models separately for maternal and paternal parenting dimensions predicting three identity styles, and two models predicting commitment, respectively. Fit indices for the model with maternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles were: $\chi^2 (175) = 276.147; p < .001, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .05$;
and for the model predicting commitment, $\chi^2 (22) = 36.34; p < .05$, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .05. The fit indices for the model with paternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles were $\chi^2 = 265.578 (175); p < .001$, CFI = .93, RMSEA = .04; and for the model predicting commitment, $\chi^2 = 30.43 (22); p < .001$, CFI = .99, RMSEA = .04. Inspection of path coefficients indicated that maternal and paternal support were positively associated with the information-oriented style, whereas only paternal psychological control was negatively associated with this style. Paternal behavioural control, and both parents’ psychological control, were positively associated with the normative style. Maternal and paternal psychological control were positively associated with the diffuse-avoidant identity style and negatively associated with commitment. Only maternal behaviour control was positively associated with commitment. Standardized path coefficients are presented in Table 5.

Finally, we estimated a series of multigroup models evaluating the extent to which the associations between parenting and identity styles would be consistent across gender, age (defined below and above 24 as a mean age of marriage and starting a job in Georgia), and living conditions (with or separately from parents). The fit of constrained models (with all paths from parenting dimensions to identity styles and commitment set equal across gender, age group, and living conditions) was compared to the fit of unconstrained models (with all paths from parenting dimensions to identity styles and commitment allowed to vary across gender, age group and living conditions). Results indicated that no significant differences emerged between the unconstrained and constrained models, indicating that paths from parenting dimensions to identity styles and commitment were equivalent between men and women, between younger and older emerging adults, and between emerging adults living with and separately from parents. Across the twelve model comparisons, all differences in CFI and RMSEA values were less than .01. Results are summarized in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Information oriented style</th>
<th>Normative style</th>
<th>Diffuse-avoidant style</th>
<th>Commitment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother support</td>
<td>.45***</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother control</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother control</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.23*</td>
<td>.61***</td>
<td>-.44***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father support</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father control</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father control</td>
<td>-.37***</td>
<td>.29***</td>
<td>.63***</td>
<td>-.19***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Standardized path coefficients describing relationships between identity styles, commitment and parenting dimensions.

*p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001.
Discussion

The present study was conducted to validate a Georgian version of the Identity Style Inventory, and to examine the extent to which perceived parenting is associated with identity style variables. Berzonsky (2011) suggests that identity formation represents a continuing process of adjusting one's self-constructs to the demands of one's context. Contexts might differ considerably across place and time (Baumeister & Muraven, 1996) – especially in settings that are undergoing rapid social and cultural change. Further, empirical research has indicated that identity processes unfold differently in Western vs. non-Western contexts (e.g., Berman, Yu, Schwartz, Teo, & Mochizuki, 2011; Skhirtladze et al., 2016).

In the present study, we examined identity styles and their relationship with parenting in the Georgian context, a post-Soviet country where identity has not been widely studied. Georgia has also been undergoing rapid sociocultural change since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Our results indicated that the identity style model proposed by Berzonsky (1989, 2011) fit the data with some modifications. Although we dropped several items that did not load well (almost half of which also did not load well in the original English version), dropping these items did not appear to result in a great loss of information. Indeed, correlations between the original and shortened subscales in the present sample ranged from .89 to .96. However, our results deviated from prior findings in terms of the links among the identity styles, and between commitment and the identity styles. A recent meta-analytic study (Bosch & Card, 2012) on identity styles, using studies conducted primarily in Western contexts, indicated a positive association between the information-oriented and normative styles, and a negative association between the diffuse-avoidant and normative identity styles. Our Georgian results suggested a different

Table 6. Multi-group comparisons across gender, age, and living conditions (with or separately from parents).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Δχ² (df)</th>
<th>ΔRMSEA</th>
<th>ΔCFI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles</td>
<td>17.25(9)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal parenting dimensions predicting commitment</td>
<td>10.37(3)</td>
<td>.009</td>
<td>-.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles</td>
<td>22.41(9)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal parenting dimensions predicting commitment</td>
<td>3.27(3)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles</td>
<td>4.50(9)</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal parenting dimensions predicting commitment</td>
<td>3.41(3)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles</td>
<td>10.98(9)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal parenting dimensions predicting commitment</td>
<td>2.47(3)</td>
<td>-.002</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles</td>
<td>87.73(53)</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>-.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal parenting dimensions predicting commitment</td>
<td>3.57(3)</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal parenting dimensions predicting identity styles</td>
<td>5.75(9)</td>
<td>-.001</td>
<td>-.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paternal parenting dimensions predicting commitment</td>
<td>1.35(3)</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Δχ² (df), ΔRMSEA, and ΔCFI denote the difference between constrained and corresponding free models.
pattern of associations: there was no correlation between the information-oriented and normative styles but a high positive correlation between the diffuse-avoidant and normative styles. This result partially supported our first hypothesis, which postulated that, based on the Georgian cultural context, the normative style might be strongly associated with both information-oriented and diffuse-avoidant styles. The expected association between the diffuse-avoidant and normative styles emerged, but the association between the information-oriented and normative styles did not. Western, individualistic contexts are characterized by loosening of societal guidelines, restrictions, and pressures (Côté & Levine, 2016; Gelfand et al., 2011). In contrast, the cultural context of Georgia is collectivistic and is based on interdependence, close family, and strong kinship relationships. Considering these conditions, young people scoring high on the diffused–avoidant identity style might be guided, and sometimes pressured, to comply with expectations put forth by their families and implied within wider societal expectations and prescriptions. In a collectivist society, individuals who lack direction regarding identity issues might feel compelled to follow cultural guidelines.

In terms of associations with commitment, the diffuse-avoidant and normative identity styles were similarly and negatively associated with commitment. One of the hallmarks of the normative style in Western research has been its strong links with commitment. In Georgia, use of the normative style may be associated with external pressure (from family and other cultural institutions). It is therefore possible that such reactive internalization might not be associated with long-term commitments. Based on the present results, we might conclude that, in the Georgian context, only the information-oriented approach appears to be associated with identity commitment. Apart from this, the information-oriented style showed a stronger positive link with life satisfaction than the normative style, while the diffuse-avoidant style did not show any association with life satisfaction. One possible explanation for this pattern might be that young people in Georgia are living in a time of cultural transition. Substantive changes that have occurred in the post-Soviet world during the last 25 years or so (transitioning from state to market economy, opening borders with other countries) have created new challenges for the current generation of emerging adults (Macek, Jezek, & Vazsonyi, 2013). Although Georgian society is predicated on collectivism, the younger generation has been more heavily influenced by Western values, creating some fissures in the traditional Georgian value system. These fissures, coupled with socioeconomic and political instability, may require young people to be more information-oriented, to use more self-reflective strategies, and to be less dependent on early authority figures and ways of life. It may be more difficult to base one’s values on traditional cultural mores that are being undermined by globalization.

We surmise that conditions of cultural transition create some polarized tension between (a) ‘new ways’ of life which require young people to be more
reflective, critical, and open to new information and (b) ‘traditional’ reliance on norms and authorities. This might be the reason for the lack of association between information oriented and normative styles. On the other hand, traditional cultural values, which are known to change quite slowly (Bardi, Lee, Hoffmann-Towfigh, & Soutar, 2009), still influence the context in which young people live. It is possible that normative approaches are used passively only for situational and short term decisions Indeed, in another sample of Georgian emerging adults (Skhirtladze, Javakhishvili, Schwartz, Beyers, & Luyckx, 2014), we found that ‘carefree diffused’ individuals (those who are not interested in identity issues) scored highest on use of the normative style. The use of normative style might not lead to long-term commitments, but rather might be used to a sense of stability to facilitate positive adjustment.

The next aim of our study was to examine how parenting dimensions were related to identity styles. The information-oriented identity style appeared to be positively related to maternal and paternal support and negatively related to paternal psychological control. On the other hand, the normative identity style was positively linked with psychological control from both parents and with paternal behaviour control. The present findings suggest that, in the Georgian context, parents’ control of emerging adults’ behaviour and decisions is strongly related to adopting existing normative expectations and standards. In line with previous research (Smits et al., 2008), use of the diffuse-avoidant identity style is positively predicted by psychological control from both parents. This pattern of associations supports our second hypothesis, which states that the normative identity style would be more strongly associated with parenting dimensions than would the information-oriented or diffuse-avoidant styles.

Although directionality is often assumed where parenting processes predict identity, some research has indicated that identity processes can also predict parenting approaches to some extent (Beyers & Goossens, 2008; Luyckx et al., 2007). For example, although high levels of parental control may encourage passivity in emerging adults, high parental control might also be displayed as a response to a young person who displays passivity and avoidance regarding identity issues. Additional longitudinal work is necessary to tease out the directionality in the relationships observed in our study.

Overall, the present results provided evidence for some context-specificity in the identity formation process. Although the factor structure of identity styles appeared similar in our Georgian results as compared to prior Western findings, intercorrelations among the identity styles, as well as their associations with parenting dimensions, evidenced some differences from previously published results obtained primarily in Western contexts. The majority of discrepancies between the current results and prior findings involve the normative style. The lack of association between the normative style and commitment raises questions about how adaptive the normative style may be within the Georgian context. Further, the link between parental control dimensions and the normative
style may represent parents’ attempts to exert influence over their emerging adult children in the face of dramatic socio-economic and social changes. It is important for future qualitative and mixed-method research to further examine how the normative style functions among Georgian emerging adults and their families.

Limitations and directions for future research

The present findings should be considered in light of at least five important limitations. First, we used a convenience sample, and our study does not represent the population of Georgian emerging adults. However, it was important for us to conduct this study to provide insights into the functions of identity styles within the Georgian context. Future research should include more representative samples and/or recruit from specific sub-groups of Georgian emerging adults (e.g., students from different universities, workers from different professions) to increase generalizability. Second, unfortunately we do not have information on non-response and reasons for refusal. It is important to collect ‘refusal bias’ information (e.g., gender, age, socioeconomic status) from individuals who decline to participate. Third, the cross-sectional study design did not allow us to test directionality or causality among the study variables. Future longitudinal research is necessary to examine potential bidirectional effects between identity styles and parenting dimensions in the Georgian context. Fourth, all measures were self-report. Especially in case of parenting and other relational processes, the use of multiple informants may be advantageous. Such work has recently been conducted on identity processes in Western Europe (Luyckx, Schwartz, Rassart, & Klimstra, 2016). Fifth, our findings can be safely generalized only to emerging adults, and not to adolescents (who may also be confronted with identity issues). Results may have been different had a younger sample been used.

In conclusion, despite these limitations, our study has demonstrated that the identity style construct generalizes to Georgia, a cultural context that has not received much attention in the identity literature. Similar results might emerge from other post-Soviet countries. Given the massive reconfigurations of national identity that have been ongoing in former Soviet republics since the fall of the Soviet Union, identity is an extremely important construct to examine in these contexts. Further, given that many parents grew up under communism whereas emerging adults did not, examining the intergenerational influences on identity development in post-Soviet countries is an essential research direction (Macek et al., 2013). We hope that the present study will inspire further work in this direction.
Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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