



General Comparison of ethnic Georgians' attitudes towards Armenians and Azerbaijanis

Center for Social Sciences

Foreign Policy & Security Program

Irine Osepashvili, Researcher

Lia Tsuladze, Academic Supervisor

Based on the data gained from 16 focus-groups (8 in Tbilisi, 4 in Marneuli da 4 in Akhaltsikhe) we can identify certain differences between Georgians' perception towards Azerbaijanis and Armenians. Despite the topic is Azerbaijanis for half of the focus groups and Armenians - for another, each includes additional part of discussion over another significant minority, Armenians in Azerbaijani-themed focus-groups and Azerbaijanis in Armenian-themed focus groups. Therefore this additional part also serves as some kind of brief examination of the data that was gained in same-themed focus groups.

General observation of everyday situations shows that Armenians are perceived far more negatively than Azerbaijanis. Media, which on one hand feeds the opinions of the society and on the other hand is fed by those opinions, covers Armenians more frequently compared to other ethnic minorities and often uses term 'Armenian' as a swear word¹.

The same attitude is also apparent among our focus-groups.

First of all, compared to Azerbaijanis Armenians are more familiar for participants (apart from Marneuli groups naturally, where local Azeris could be considered as ethnic majority). This can be explained by the comparative number of those minorities itself. While generally the number of Azerbaijanis exceeds the number of Armenians in Georgia, the situation is not the same in the capital. In Tbilisi Armenians make 7.6%, while Azeris – only 1%. Consequently Tbilisians, especially younger groups, mostly find it harder to talk about Azeris than about Armenians. Most of them have Armenian acquaintance while they do not know any Azeri. In Akhaltsikhe, where although Armenians are not majority but their number is still significant (37%), there are only few who have met any Azeri either. In contrary, in Marneuli which is mostly populated by Azeris participants are very familiar with Armenians.

Secondly, talking very generally, in all three places (Tbilisi, Akhaltsikhe and even Marneuli) Azeris are perceived more positively than Armenians. The most widespread contradictory perception is connected with trustworthiness – while Azeris are considered very trustworthy, Armenians are considered very untrustworthy.

For more detailed comparison, I will discuss the data loosely based on capitals proposed by Bourdieu, used for designing the focus-group guides for all groups. Starting with general information, I will focus on associations, perceived differences and similarities with Georgians and how participants see minorities' attitudes toward ethnic Georgians, and later cover economic, social, cultural, political and symbolic capitals related with Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Georgian society.

¹ Chachua, Tabagari, "Monitoring of media coverage: Ethnic, religious and sexual minorities in Georgian printed media", 2nd quarterly report, Addressing hate speech in Georgia: A Litmus test for human rights and social tolerance, 2011

First of all the associations refer to the spheres where Georgians stereotypically see above-mentioned minorities are employed. For Armenians it is service sphere, such as being hairdressers, repairers, artisans. On the other hand, Azeris are perceived as land-workers and market-sellers.

Characteristics, Armenians and Azerbaijanis are associated with, also differ. From first-hand associations, at least in two category groups (related with either age or place), Azerbaijanis are perceived as hardworking, friendly, respectful towards Georgians and trustworthy. Apart from that, participants name traits such as: law-obedient, honest, less educated (apart from Baku), hospitable, rich, good at calculating, cohesive. On the other hand when it comes to Armenians the most frequent association is misappropriating/claiming Georgian cultural heritage, loving money/being misers. Traits such as cheaters, cohesive, ambitious, being traitors were also named among Tbilisi participants. On the other hand, Akhaltsikhe participants emphasize different appearance and style and specific for region aspects such as speculating of being minority.

The further discussion over perceived differences and similarities clarifies above-mentioned associations even more and together with them certain trends can be distinguished.

- **Misappropriation**

‘Misappropriation’ of Georgian territories or culture generally appears to be very sensitive topic for Georgian participants. Although some respondents mentioned the dispute over David Gareja border considering it as Azerbaijanis trying to misappropriate Georgian territories, the term ‘misappropriator’ is much more commonly used for characterizing Armenians, mostly referring to misappropriating/claiming authorship over Georgian cultural heritage such as churches, writing script, dishes, literature etc. On the other hand ‘misappropriating’ refers to territorial claims as well. According to many participants Armenians are more ambitious in claims towards Georgia than Azeris having ‘Great Armenia’ in their head. In older group of Tbilisi the fear was expressed that Armenians and Azeris may reconcile on the expense of taking Georgian territories.

However it should also be noted that many participants consider local Armenians more ambitious towards Georgia and less civilly conscious compared to local Azerbaijanis.

- **More hardworking than Georgians**

All focus-groups showed that participants stereotype not only Armenians and Azerbaijanis but Georgians as well. Armenians and Azerbaijanis are both considered as hardworking, while respondents think Georgians are lazy and arrogant. As already noted Azeris are more associated with land-working and selling fruit and vegetables at the market. Many participants think that Georgians are lazy to work so much on agriculture and too proud/arrogant to sell own products, rather being focused on getting jobs. The same opinion is true when comparing Georgians with Armenians as well.

Armenians are basically perceived as artisans and hairdressers while Georgians are thought to be too proud/ arrogant to work in service sphere.

- **Money-oriented**

Both Armenians and Azeris are considered as money and profit-oriented, while Georgians see themselves as less experienced with money, more oriented on partying and wasting money. Azerbaijanis are generally perceived as rich, focused on accumulating too much money, building big houses, being fond of gold and cars. Being rich, directly mentioned when naming associations as well, is often linked with rich investors from Azerbaijan who invest money in serious business in Georgia. On the other hand although Akhaltsikhians mention that local Armenians are richer than Georgians, this is not emphasized as strongly as in case of Azeris. What is most frequently underlined is that Armenians are profit-oriented, adroit and misers. Although Azeris are generally perceived as more different from Georgians than Armenians, it was mentioned that Azeris like to show respect by paying for you and inviting you that is considered common for Georgians too, while Armenians would pay every cent exactly, not more, not less.

- **Style and appearance**

Participants distinguish Armenians and Azeris by the kind of clothes they wear and generally how they look. Neither Armenians nor Azeris are considered to be dressed tastefully according to Georgians' taste. Participants think that although Azerbaijanis are focused on gaining money, they don't spend it on clothes and appearance, not seeing any problem in walking around in old clothes and slippers. They are perceived as having some golden teeth, wearing lot of golden and glittering jewelry and colorful clothes. On the other hand Armenians are perceived as having big noses, wearing Kangol hats, striped sporty pants, slippers and socks, women loving sharper colors and using excessive make-up. In Akhlatsikhe it was also mentioned that Armenian women take care of themselves in beauty salons while Georgians look more casual. In contrary with glittering jewelry, colorful clothes, and lot of make-up, Georgians perceive themselves as having simplicity in when it comes to clothes and style.

- **Gender Equality issues and attitudes towards women**

Although Akhlatsikhe participants say that Armenians are far more patriarchal and restrictive towards women than Georgians, gender inequality is mostly emphasized to be characteristic for Azeris. Most participants note that there is more gender equality among Armenians and Georgians

compared with Azerbaijanis. All groups perceive Azerbaijani men as diminishing women's rights. Various examples were named, especially in Marneuli, such as giving priority to having son, restricting women from wearing the clothes they want, pushing underage girls to marry, polygyny, mostly women working, etc.

- **Being Cohesive**

Participants perceive Azeris and Armenians as more cohesive than Georgians, supporting each other financially as well as psychologically. According to participants Marneuli Azerbaijanis would rather go and buy what they need in fellow Azerbaijani's shop, rather than the one owned by Georgian. Exactly the same was mentioned regarding Akhaltsikhian Armenians. In both cases participants say that such behavior is not common for Georgians who would go to any shop which is more convenient for them. Sending financial support to local Azeris from Azerbaijan and employing each other on the basis of ethnicity was mentioned regarding Azerbaijanis, however cohesiveness and having strong sense of national identity is even more emphasized for Armenians. It was named in every category group and also by those groups who were asked about Armenians as an additional question. Apart from certain examples such as selling house only to Armenians, etc., participants often mention that while population is heterogeneous in Georgia, there are basically only Armenians in Armenia. Armenians usually having stronger Diaspora abroad was also mentioned.

- **Sociable/isolated**

Mostly Azerbaijanis are perceived as more closed, less sociable and less integrated in Georgia than Armenians, while Armenians are seen as more open, free and well able to begin interactions. There was only one opposing opinion among Tbilisian younger participants, considering Azerbaijanis freer and more sociable than Armenians of Tbilisi.

Similarities

Georgian participants perceive themselves more similar with Armenians than with Azerbaijanis (corresponding details regarding culture and religion will be covered later as a separate topic). However Caucasian is named as something common only in case of Azerbaijanis. When it comes to Armenians, only Tbilisi younger group mentions term "Caucasian" and even it is for explaining Armenians' hospitality as something common for Caucasians. Similarly if we glance at whole discussions generally "Caucasian" is more frequently used in groups talking about Azerbaijanis than about Armenians.

Although most participants consider Georgian hospitality traditions as superior, generally hospitality is perceived as common for Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Azerbaijanis as well as Armenians are considered very hospitable (perceived as characteristic for Caucasians), although for

some participants Azeris are seen as more open-hearted in this sense than Armenians. Some participants mentioned that Armenians' hospitality is rather for showing off than real, or they are less hospitable compared to other Caucasian countries.

Apart from the above-mentioned, according to participants Azeris as well as Georgians have sacred attitude towards own religion, on the other hand being nationalist and somewhat xenophobic was named as common trait of Georgians and Armenians.

Attitudes towards Georgians

Participants share quite mixed opinions regarding their perceived attitudes of Azerbaijanis towards Georgia. Tbilisi younger respondents say that Azerbaijanis might think Georgians are lazy, ambitious, and easy to fool; also they feel disadvantaged by Georgians. According to older Tbilisians Azerbaijanis are very positive and love Georgians. In contrary participants from Marneuli emphasize that local Azerbaijanis feel distrustful, inferior (or superior according to contradictory view), openly or latently aggressive (although friendly Azerbaijanis were also mentioned). On the other hand perceived attitude of Armenians does not differ that much across the groups. Although some say they are quite friendly, Armenians are mostly seen as competing with Georgians, missappropriating/claiming Georgians' heritage and historically traitors (reminding Abkhazian war, Georgia-Armenia war, UN resolution on returning IDPs; additionally Akhaltsikhians have fear Armenians are "winner-welcoming" people and ready to betray Georgians for the stronger party /Russia/). Once again it is worth to emphasize that while Armenians are seen as more similar with Georgians, the character of relations of Georgians and Armenians are seen as competing, unlike Azerbaijanis who are perceived at a certain distance.

Economic Capital

The difference between attitudes towards Azerbaijanis and Armenians is also clear when it comes to desire of financial relations. Although among all groups it was mentioned that it should be decided on the basis of personal characteristics and trust rather than ethnicity, in some groups certain traits are frequently attached to Armenians or Azerbaijanis. All discussions showed that Azerbaijanis are perceived as honest, trustworthy, loyal, law-obedient, rich, better at business, therefore having common business with them is mostly seen as desirable for Georgian participants. The views are divided in case of Armenians: on one hand Armenians are seen as prudent in finances, more-profit-oriented and more hardworking which makes such relations desirable but on the other hand they are also perceived as untrustworthy, sly and misappropriator which consequently reduces participant's wish to be involved in common business for instance. (However in Marneuli, as well as in

Akhalsikhe it was mentioned that local Armenians/Azeris are quite cohesive and prefer having common business with own ethnic group-member)

As participants, especially Tbilisians, mostly meet Azeris as market-sellers and Armenians as artisans/hairdressers, they were asked to compare them with Georgian ones. It is widely noted opinion that Georgians find it shameful and less prestigious to do such jobs. Some participants say that when it comes to service spheres, interaction is much pleasant with Armenians/Azeris than with Georgians who often look rude and depressed. It was mentioned that Georgians consider Armenian artisans/hairdressers as more professional. There was no unified opinion about differences in price of the service. On the other hand Azeri sellers are perceived as more honest (in contrary, more cheaters in Marneuli), setting cheaper prices and taking pleasure in bargaining.

Social capital

Number of population in Georgia

Opinions whether number of Armenians are increasing or decreasing in Georgia vary. While some participants think it is stable, others think it actually decreased because of 1990-s hardships, lowered birth rates compared to earlier times and adaptation to Georgians. In contrary it is also mentioned that the number of Armenians is increased in Javakheti (mentioned in Tbilisi), and Akhalsikhe (mentioned by mostly by younger Akhalsikhians). Opinions are more unified when it comes to Azerbaijanis. Most participants agree that the number of Azerbaijanis is increasing in Georgia (in Marneuli for Marneuli participants). Higher birth rates (and newly joined Azeris in Tbilisi) were named as common reasons. Those participants who discussed Armenians also mentioned that Azeris have higher birth rates compared to Armenians.

For most participants increasing number of Azeris or Armenians is considered as a problem. In both cases most reasons are general, connected just with different ethnic group rather than particularly Armenians/Azeris. Participants think that increasing number of others in Georgia is not good. The fear of Georgians becoming minority in own country and there is a risk of losing 'Georgianity', culture, values, etc. or even absolutely disappearing as a nation was also expressed.

On the other hand there was expressed fear connected with specific territories of Georgia, densely inhabited by the minorities of our interest. In Marneuli possibility of Azeris requesting autonomy was mentioned; on the other hand in case of Armenians Tbilisi participants express the fear of Javakheti separation, and Akhalsikhe older participants think Javakheti already belongs to Armenians anyway. In addition it should also be mentioned that when it comes to territorial matters, Armenians are seen as having the idea of restoring "Great Armenia" that they currently see as divided

among other countries. It was also noted that Tbilisi was basically inhabited by Armenians and as Georgians they feel being historically attached to the city and having ancestors here.

Another thing specifically about Armenians is that in case of increasing their number, they may have conflicts with newly settled Turks and Azeris in Akhaltsihe (opinion was expressed in Akhaltsikhe).

Apart from that, according to those participants who discussed Azerbaijanis, there are not enough resources even for Georgians. Participants expressed discontent saying that Azerbaijanis only employ fellow Azerbaijanis (Sokar was named as an example) while ethnic Georgians are left unemployed. However, the same (Armenians try to employ Armenians) was mentioned by older Akhaltsikhians as well but while talking about financial topic.

Participants' opinion about hypothetical situation of Georgia without Armenians/Azeris

Participants were suggested hypothetical situation where there are no Armenians/Azeris in Georgia. Compared to Tbilisi some of Marneuli as well as Akhaltsikhe participants openly reacted with happiness. In sum positive as well as negative effects of such hypothetical occasion were identified, which are not that different from each other. In both cases the most widely named positive reason is more jobs/opportunities available for ethnic Georgian while the negative one is connected with emptying the specific sphere where these minorities are perceived to be involved to earn for living. According to many respondents without Azeris lands would stay without cultivation and markets without vegetable sellers, while without Armenians there would be no artisans/hairdressers etc. as Georgians would find it harder to start less prestigious jobs. Marneuli as well as Akhaltsikhe participants mentioned that the city would be emptied. On the other hand, while in case of Azerbaijanis some respondents believe richer lands would go to Georgians' hands, in Akhaltsikhe it was mentioned that prices of apartments would decrease. Some general negative effects were also named such as losing Georgia's diversity, without other ethnic groups Georgians would become more nationalist, without Azeris/Armenians internal conflicts would start. It should be noted that in case of Armenians disappearing the threat of losing Javakheti region was also identified as a positive effect.

Neighborhood

As I already mentioned, Armenians are far more familiar for Tbilisians than Azeris, especially when it comes to younger participants. While they can easily remind own or acquaintance's Armenian neighbor, Azeri neighbor is not known for them at all. Younger Tbilisians (at some point younger Tbilisians too) were the ones who identified most characteristics and perceived peculiarities of Armenian neighbors. Older Tbilisians and Akhaltsikhians see no difference at all between Armenian and Georgian neighbors or see Armenians very hospitable and always ready to help, open and

sociable. Azeris are also perceived as very good neighbors (in Marneuli and by older Tbilisians). However in Marneuli it was noted that some Georgians get irritated by loud Azeri music coming from Azeri neighbors. Specific smell in their homes was mentioned in case of Azeris as well as Armenians. It should be emphasized that Akhaltsikhe older participants perceive neighborhood in Akhalkalaki and Tsalka differently from Akhaltsikhe, saying that while in Akhaltsikhe Armenians are expected to please Georgians vice versa is happening where Armenians are absolute majority.

Friendship

Although it was noted that if Armenians make friends with you they will never betray the traits of trustworthiness and being devoted is mostly associated with Azeris rather than Armenians. Even in groups discussing Azerbaijanis it was mentioned that while Azeris are not interested in personal gain through friendship, Armenians are with you if they need something.

Generally participants are positive towards friendship with Azeris as well as Armenians, although some mentioned obstacles such as different cultural and religious customs, also inability of speaking Georgian in case of Azeris. It was noted that Azeris who are friends with participants, speak good Georgian. The same way, participants say they are friends with educated, integrated and civilly conscious Armenians who speak Georgian naturally.

In Akhaltsikhe participants say that really close friendships is anyway seldom, usually Georgians make friends with Georgians and Armenians (although Tbilisians reminded some really close Armenian friends who are extremely well-integrated and could be identified as Armenians only by surname). Similarly, in Marneuli participants say Georgians and Azeri children who study together basically make friends with own group member. The reasons such as lots of differences (Armenians), natural tendency towards being together with similar people (Azeris) and not wanting to hear each other's language constantly (Armenians) was mentioned. In Akhaltsikhe participants say that in addition Armenians keep distance themselves.

Although in Marneuli some appeared to have close Azeri friend, some participants in both studies mention that it is Georgians who display somewhat arrogant and snobbish attitude towards Azeris as well as Armenians.

Marriage

In both cases, whether it is Armenian or Azeri, most participants do not welcome mixed marriage. The most commonly named reason is different traditions and culture that according to participants could be incompatible in the family. Another general reason of preferring ethnic Georgian is the

opinion that it is better to 'breed' Georgians than other ethnicities. It's not surprising that the matter of different religion is much more widely discussed regarding Azerbaijanis, also mentioning common children's fate due to religious confusion. According to participants another problematic issue with Azeris is greater gender inequality and restrictions for women, also tradition of marrying own relatives. The reasons some participants named as specifically connected with Armenians include Armenians' darker physical appearance that they find unattractive, genetically determined poor health (Tbilisi older group) and being chauvinists that is the family would be Armenianized (Akhalstikhe). Gender inequality issue was mentioned regarding Armenians as well but it is more widely discussed when it comes to Azeris.

Additionally participants were asked about their least preferable choice - whether they would prefer their son or daughter to marry above mentioned ethnic minority representative. In both cases most participants are more reluctant that their daughter married other one than their son. Mostly reasons are more gender-related rather than connected specifically with Armenians or Azeris (except greater gender inequality which participants connect with them, especially with Azeris). Most frequently named reasons are men dominating the family and having more influence on wife and children and kids having father's surnames, therefore participants prefer that the father was Georgian rather than Armenian/Azeri.

Akhalkalaki as well as Marneuli participants say that mixed marriages are very seldom. In Marneuli participants say if such marriage happens it is more common for Georgian girls to marry Azeri than vice versa because Azeris are economically better off than Georgians. On the other hand Akhaltsikhians remind Georgian boys marry Azeri girls because of the same reason. Nevertheless according to participants Armenians boys are more interested in Georgian girls than vice versa, considering Georgian girls more beautiful than Armenians.

Cultural capital

Culture

Although participants distinguish specific traditions of both, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, which they perceive as different from Georgians, still Armenians are seen as more similar people with Georgians than Azeris, especially when it comes to the culture. If we compare the data from two thematic focus groups, we could see that the participants perceive Armenian culture as more superior than Azerbaijani one. While Armenia is seen as a country of an ancient culture, architecture and the unique writing script, mostly participants say Azerbaijan is a newer country and its culture just follows Islamic pattern. Although religious difference is also mentioned in case of Armenians, according to respondents, religion is what drives Azerbaijani culture. Although few participants had tendency to consider Armenian culture as inferior compared to Georgian one, this happens more

often when discussing Azerbaijanis, in addition their cultural restrictions are seen as more outdated. Both Azerbaijani and Armenian people are considered as more traditional (i.e. keeping their traditions in everyday life) than Georgians. Even historically, while Armenia is perceived as closed country towards West and Azerbaijan under Muslim influence, participants consider Georgia as most special country in Caucasus, the crossroads of different cultures and having aspirations towards the West.

Intelligence/education

Generally participants do not think Azeris and Armenians are very educated. The emphasis is mostly on ethnic minorities of Georgia, especially ones who reside in specific regions. On one hand the problem is seen as general problem of region versus capital (distant villages vs city), intensified by non-Georgian secondary and pre-secondary education. However, according to another opinion, Armenians as well as Azeris are not as obsessed with higher education as Georgians – gaining profit/money is considered as more important for both nations. Azerbaijanis are perceived as businessmen, or land-workers and sellers, while according to the respondents, Armenians are basically oriented towards handcrafting and practical occupations. Despite that both Armenians as well as Azerbaijanis are considered as less interested in higher education there is a difference in perceived intelligence. Although some participants refused existence of some natural talent, others consider Azerbaijanis as naturally less talented and more rigid while Armenians are generally perceives as quite smart.

Language Problem

Based on both thematic focus-group data, the language problem is perceived as more genuine with Georgia's Azeri rather than Armenian minority. It is quite natural if we consider that Armenians make 7.6% of Tbilisi population, while Azeris – only 1%, also Armenians have long history of living in Tbilisi and they are well-integrated. For instance several participants identified some of their friends as Armenians only by surname. When Armenians are easier to find in Tbilisi, Azeris are mostly associated with fruit and vegetable sellers you mostly meet in the market. When it comes to regions, number of Armenians is much lower in Akhaltsikhe than Azerbaijanis' number in Marneuli. Marneuli participants say that majority of local Azeris rely on Russian or only speak Azeri. On the other hand Akhaltsikhians say that most Armenians in Akhaltsikhe know Georgian language but they do not speak it deliberately. According to them it is Akhalkalaki and distant villages where language problem really exists among Armenians.

The proposed solutions of the problem do not differ for Azeris and Armenians. Participants say that the state should create practical need for learning Georgian language as well as free language courses, mixed camps, exchange programs, etc. In both cases participants perceive that apart from the fact that minorities do not feel special need of learning Georgian, they also show disrespect by not speaking/learning the state language (although the perceived threat of losing identity was also mentioned in case of Armenians). However, in Akhaltsikhe, as well as Marnuli, participants say that the language problem has been improved lately as younger people are keener to learn and speak Georgian language.

In Marneuli as well as in Akhaltsikhe there are lots of Georgians who can speak Azeri or Armenian learned in everyday interactions with respective minorities. However while some participants can speak their language or wish they could speak, there are some who refuse to learn it in order to communicate.

The opinions about languages of public services in minority inhabited regions is also similarly varies in Azerbaijani-themed as well as Armenian-themed focus-groups. Some participants think it should only be Georgian, while others think both Azeri/Armenian and Georgian should be used. Additionally using Russian as a neutral language was also considered by some participants.

It should be mentioned that in Marneuli as well as in Akhaltsikhe participants expressed grievance that Georgians often get disadvantaged when it comes to job opportunities without knowledge of Armenian/Azeri or at least Russian.

Political capital

Most participants acknowledge the necessity of including Azeris and Armenians in Georgian politics at local as well as at central level, however many respondents think that non-ethnic citizens should not hold decisive positions or number of representatives. According to participants minorities are still better represented at local than at central level, although for instance Akhaltsikhians say that they are not given real tools. In both themed groups some participants mention that these minorities care less about politics as they are more interested in what they do for living, land-working/market for Azerbaijanis and handcrafting etc. for Armenians (however according to contrary opinion they try to be quite active, especially emphasized in Marneuli). Generally, low civil consciousness, lack of education and knowledge of Georgian language was also mentioned as the reasons of staying distant from politics.

Although opinions vary, most participants think in case of better inclusion Armenians as well as Azeris would be oriented on own rather than on Georgia's interests. In both themed groups, many participants are afraid of autonomy/separatism (mostly used interchangeably) in corresponding

regions. It should be mentioned that in case of Azerbaijanis Marneulian participants are more sensitive towards such issues, while in case of Armenians it is mostly Tbilisi participants who emphasize separating Samtske-Javakheti region. Nevertheless Akhaltsikhe participants also distinguish Akhalsikhe from Akhalkalaki (or Ninotsminda), which they do not perceive as Georgian-welcoming any more. They say that autonomy is what Akhalkalaki Armenians want.

To understand participant's perspective towards Armenian/Azeri voters they were asked whether these minorities are somehow influenced from Armenian/Azeri governments for whom to vote. Although few participants think such influence is possible, most participants think minorities are rather affected by Georgian government than by other one. Azeris as well as Armenians are considered vulnerable towards influence of Georgian government and unable to decide independently for whom they would want to vote. Participants say that it is the ruling party that usually gets the votes from them. Local Azeris as well as Armenians are thought to make their choice together as a group. In case of Azerbaijanis local "wise men" (informal leaders of the villages, known as Aqsakals) were distinguished who play important part in local Azeris' life and tell them for whom to vote while voters do not have any civil consciousness themselves, neither understanding of the parties and elections. On the other hand Akhaltsikhe participants mention that voting for the ruling party gives minorities (Armenians in this specific case) the feeling of stability, and they do not want to annoy the government. According to these respondents, situation is worse in Akhalkalaki, where Armenians are more isolated compared to Akhaltsikhe.

When talking about politics the tendency of discrediting Georgian politicians by blaming them in being Armenians while same is not true for Azerbaijanis was also mentioned. As an explanation participants noted that Georgians have rather negative opinions towards Armenians than towards Azeris; antipathy is related to "Georgian territories that are in Armenia currently" and "not so warm foreign policy towards Armenia"; also Armenians associated with "misappropriating" Georgian cultural heritage that according to participants really have a real basis. It was also mentioned that Armenians and Georgians always compete each other and there is an opinion that Armenian will not benefit Georgian, rather his fellow Armenian. In the same spirit participants also mention that "you Armenian" is considered as a derogatory term while nobody would say "you Azeri" if they wanted to insult you. (It should be also cause by above-mentioned tendency of associating Azeris with trustworthiness and Armenians with slyness).

When it comes to the state level political relations and orientation of between Georgia and Armenia/Azerbaijan, participants mention that Georgia is much more oriented towards Western values than Azerbaijan. On the other hand Armenia is seen as Russian-oriented. Georgian course is perceived as more radical, while Armenian – more neutral. Although David Gareja border dispute and disadvantaging ethnic Georgians in Azerbaijan was mentioned, most participants say that the relations with Azerbaijan are good and based on economic and political interests. On the other hand

opinions vary regarding Armenia. While some think Georgia and Armenia have friendly relations and common goals, others remind it voting against Georgia's initiated UN resolution regarding IDP's return in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Some also mentioned that Armenia needs Georgia much more than vice versa as it has bad relations with Turkey and Azerbaijan. It should be noted that many Georgian participants are quite afraid that Armenia as well as Azerbaijan desires to "swallow" Georgian territory.

Symbolic capital

Neither Armenians, nor Azeris are considered prestigious in Georgian society (as compared to "Western" foreigners). Less culture, less education/intelligence and less development was commonly named reasons in case of Armenians as well as Azerbaijanis. Additionally in Armenian-themed groups several other reasons were distinguished such as negative set of stereotypes associated with Armenians and more familiarity (compared to Westerners). On the other hand it was mentioned that the state attitude prioritizing English language and the wrong media approach has to be blamed in law prestige of ethnic minorities in Georgian society (Armenians in this particular group).

Bogardus Distance Scale

Prior to the discussions Bogardus Social Distance Scale was distributed among participants in each group. The scale intends to find out about respondent's willingness to have contact with certain group members (Armenians and Azerbaijanis in our case) at various degrees of closeness. The statements start from the most distant and end with the closest relations.

This is what our distributed scale looks like:

- I would approve Azeri/Armenian to be a visitor in my country
 - I would approve Azeri/Armenian to be the citizen in my country
 - I would approve Azeri/Armenian to be my co-worker
 - I would approve Azeri/Armenian to be my next door neighbor
 - I would approve Azeri/Armenian to be one of my close friends
- I would approve my son /daughter (neutral word) to marry Azeri/Armenian:
- I would approve my son to marry Azeri/Armenian
 - I would approve my daughter to marry Azeri/Armenian

Logically, if the respondent does not approve the very first statement, s/he would also reject the other ones that intend even closer relations than the previous one. However the scale is often criticized as perceptions of closeness could be quite subjective depending on culture or personality (for instance for certain people coworkers could be perceived at a closer degree than neighbors). I came across the same problem in our case. Although I tried to give as precise instructions for the test as possible, some responses either are not set logically at all or have some different logic. For instance some participants noted that they do not agree with the proposed order, or other reasons were mentioned such as not circling the first statement because “Armenians/Azeris are very welcome as citizens rather than just visitors” or participants may not want Armenian/Azeris to be citizens but friendship or working together is quite all right.

Nevertheless according to the summed data from all participants, Armenians always get higher approval at any degree than Azerbaijanis.

Overall there are 47 participants in Azerbaijani-themed groups and 48 participants in Armenian-themed groups.

	Azerbaijanis (47)	Armenians (48)
Approval to be a visitor in Georgia	36	40
Approval to be a citizen of Georgia	35	45
Approval to be one’s co-worker	36	41
Approval to be one’s next-door neighbor	26	42
Approval to be a one’s close friend	30	39
Approval to be the spouse of one’s son	7	13
Approval to be the spouse of one’s daughter	7	10

Conclusion

The data from our focus groups reveals that there are certain differences in perception of Armenians and Azerbaijanis by ethnic Georgian participants. Although the quantitative data from Caucasus Barometer (2009, 2012) does not show much difference between the attitudes towards Armenians and Azeris when it comes to business partnership, friendship or marriage, everyday situations and media analysis shows that Armenians are perceived far more negatively in Georgian society. Our qualitative data explores some of these tendencies.

To sum up I will again follow Bourdieu's capitals that were used for creating focus group guide and connect it to the data from Caucasus Barometer.

According to CB 2009 (unfortunately this question is not asked in later surveys any more) 80% of ethnic Georgians approve friendship with Armenians as well as Azeris. Although many participants are keen to be friends with Armenians, so with Azeris, in most occasions **Azerbaijanis are perceived as more friendly, devoted and trustworthy while Armenians are seen vice versa – as sly and unreliable**. Another issue is that even ordinary Armenians are associated with “misappropriating”, claiming authorship on cultural heritage that Georgians consider their own and always competing with Georgians which is not the case with Azerbaijanis. Apart from this, while Armenians are perceived as misers, Azerbaijanis are seen as ones who invite you, spend their money on you which is positively perceived in social interactions by Georgian participants. Another important factor must be the fact that Armenians are far more visible for participants, (in Tbilisi and naturally in Akhaltsikhe) than Azerbaijanis with whom contacts are less. Many participants think of Armenians as more sociable and better integrated while Azeris are mostly hidden and only associated with Kvemo Kartli.

This way or another, while friendship is still embraced by many participants things get problematic when we start talking about mixed marriage. According to CB data 2012 only 20% of ethnic Georgians approve Georgian woman marrying Azeri and 24% - marrying Armenian (consequently 22% approves Georgian woman marrying Azeri living in Georgia and 26% - Armenian living in Georgia). The focus groups also showed that mixed marriage is not very desirable and often not acceptable at all, neither with Armenians, nor with Azeris, especially when it comes to Georgian women rather than Georgian men (in our case daughters of participants, when compared to sons). Apart from other reasons such as different culture, traditions, etc., Armenians as well as Azeris are perceived more patriarchal than Georgians, diminishing women's rights. However if we compare these two restricting women is basically associated with Azeris rather than Armenians. Additionally although religious difference is emphasized in case of Armenians too, it plays greater part in Azeris' case.

Generally, cultural capital of Azerbaijanis appeared to be quite low compared to Armenians. First of all, Armenians' culture is perceived more similar to Georgia, while Azeris are seen as very different.

On the other hand while Armenia is considered as a country of ancient culture and unique script, many participants do not hold very high opinion about Azerbaijan's culture, mostly underlining great influence of Muslim religion on it. When it comes to education and intelligence, although neither Armenians, nor Azeris are considered embracing higher education the same way as Georgians, Armenians are still considered smarter while Azeris are seen as rigid and less talented.

In contrary Azeris are more appreciated when it comes to economic capital. According CB data 2012, 73% of ethnic Georgians approve doing business together with Azeri person and 72% with Armenians (Consequently, 76% - with Azeris living in Georgia and 77% - with Armenians living in Georgia). However our data shows that although Armenians and Azeris are considered profit-oriented and better with money compared to Georgians, participants more unanimously approve doing business with Azeri rather than with Armenian. Armenian's image of being sly and less trustworthy sometimes makes it less desirable to have common business with them, while Azeris are perceived as more trustworthy.

When it comes to politics, Armenian as well as Azeri minority of Georgia is thought to be civilly less conscious and easily manipulated, always voting for the ruling party. On the other hand in both cases participants expressed fear that Azeris of Kvemo Kartli as well as Armenians of Javakheti desire autonomy or separation from Georgia. However compared to Azeris Armenians are regarded far more threatening as they are thought to be more ambitious and having more claims towards Georgia than Azeris. The perception of Armenians as less trustworthy also appeared to be associated with politics. Although respondents reminded David Gareja border dispute with Azeris and undermining ethnic Georgians' rights in Azerbaijan, in most cases Armenia still deserves less trust- Participants remind political occasions that they perceive as betrayal from Armenians (Bagramyan battalion in Abkhazian war, Georgia-Armenia war, UN resolution on returning IDPs; thinking that Armenians of Javakheti would betray Georgians for the stronger party /Russia/). Even when it comes to state level relations, many participants identify Georgia-Azerbaijan relations as cooperative while opinions vary about Armenia.

Finally, symbolic capital is low for Azerbaijanis as well as Armenians – both are considered less prestigious in Georgian society.