



The study of Georgians' attitudes towards Armenians

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Introduction

Georgia is rich with multiethnic population. Taking into account the latest National Census, (unfortunately conducted almost 11 years ago, in 2002), ethnic minorities constitute 16,2 % of its inhabitants, among them Azerbaijanis and Armenians taken together make up over 12% (National Census of Georgia, 2002).

Based on 2002 National Census, Armenians make Georgia's second largest ethnic minority group with 5.7% of the overall population. Most compactly they live in Samtskhe-Javakheti region. According to the census, 98% of Ninotsminda, 94% of Akhalkalaki, 37% of Akhaltsikhe and 17, 5% of Aspindza is ethnic Armenian. There are Armenian settlements in Kakheti, Batumi and Tbilisi as well. The integration problems are most apparent in Javakheti region (Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki). Inability of speaking Georgian language is one of the major reasons of the problem (ბორდია, 2012). According to the Crisis Group report (Crisis Group, 2006) Armenian's strongest grievance is that they cannot use Armenian in public life and are afraid of 'Georgianization'. Although political representation of Armenians is still better compared to local Azerbaijanis (ბორდია, 2012) (in the sense that the problem is general for ethnic minorities), according to the data of 2003, Armenians are 4-5 times more prone to emigrate than ethnic Georgians and Azeris.(Svanidze & Svanidze, 2003 in Crisis Group, 2006)

The qualitative research of Akhalkalaki Armenians, their identity and the problematic issues (Харава, 2008), revealed that the feeling of alienation is prevalent among local Armenians, well formulated in the quote by the 29 year old respondent himself *"For Armenia we are Akhalkalakians, for Georgian we are Armenians, for Russia we are the citizens of Georgia."* As Akhalkalakians are absolute majority in Akhalkalaki, they do not face any discrimination in everyday life; however unwelcoming attitude was mentioned when being in Tbilisi, on the basis of inability of speaking Georgian.

Generally, Georgian media analysis also shows the tendency of not so positive public attitudes towards Armenians - "Armenian" is commonly used swear word in order to discredit someone. (Chachua & Tabagari, 2011)

However the quantitative data of what Georgians in fact think of Armenians that can be found in Caucasus Barometer data base, is not as negative unless we are talking about the mixed marriage. According to the data collected in 2012, 72% of ethnic Georgians approve doing business with Armenians, while 24% disapprove. Survey questionnaire differentiates between Armenians generally and Armenians of Georgia. Bit more Georgians (77%) approve and 19% disapprove doing business together with Armenians who live in Georgia. Moreover, based on CB data collected in 2009 (unfortunately data collected later does not include this question any more), 80% of Georgians approve being friends with Armenians.

Although while being each other's friends is perceived positively being each other's spouses does not seem as attractive. Georgians keep much more distance when the mixed marriage is being discussed.

According to data collected in 2009, only 24% approves Georgian woman marrying Armenians. The number of those who approve such mixed marriage is bit increased by 2012. 29% of ethnic Georgians approve Georgian woman marrying Armenian and 26% approve Georgian woman marrying Armenian who lives in Georgia.

These numbers reveal very interesting information, although general disadvantage of quantitative data is that it forces respondents into ready-made answers and leaves no chance to reveal original opinions, ideas and explanations. In such situation listening to what people say has crucial meaning for understanding the meanings behind the statistics.

The issue deserves our interest as on one hand Armenians constitute second largest ethnic minority in Georgia and on the other hand Armenia is Georgia's bordering neighbor. In this context gaining richer data about ethnic Georgians' attitudes towards Armenians can provide more information and understanding of existing gaps, problems, sentiments and perceptions.

Accordingly the aim of the present research is to gain the in-depth knowledge about ethnic Georgians' perspective and attitudes towards Armenians, in more details: **to understand what kind of thoughts and feelings they have about these people generally when it comes to financial, social, cultural, political, symbolic spheres and why they feel/think in this particular way; to find out how the attitudes differ among Akhalkalaki inhabitants where Armenians constitute 37% of the population and Tbilisi inhabitants, where ethnic Armenians are 7.6%; to find out whether there is any difference between younger and older age groups; and finally to understand if there is any difference between attitudes towards Azerbaijanis and Armenians**, two significant minority groups of Georgia.

Method

For better understanding of participant's feelings and opinions qualitative method of focus groups was used. An advantage of this method is that it gives an opportunity to take into account what individuals say and how they express themselves, to look at the ways group wholly discusses the issue. We have the possibility to look at the issues as participants look at it, however on the other hand qualitative method also has its limitation – unlike quantitative methods it is hard to generalize the results on the population. However as the present study aims to catch meanings behind already existing statistical data, this limitation can be tolerated.

Participants

Focus groups were held in Tbilisi where Armenians make up 7.6% of the local population and in Akhaltsikhe, where Armenians make up more significant minority, 37% of population, while Georgians are 61%. The data of conducting focus-groups was 4,5,6 July 2013 for Tbilisi and 26-27 July 2013 for Akhalsikhe.

In both regions eight focus-groups were conducted altogether, four groups in Tbilisi and four ones in Akhaltsikhe. One half of these groups included younger participants, in the age range of 18-35, another half – in the age range of 36 – 65. In each city, in Akhaltsikhe as well as in Tbilisi, two focus-groups were

conducted with younger participants and two focus-groups with older ones. All groups contained 6 ethnic Georgian participants and were mixed in terms of gender (except the one of the older groups in Tbilisi) and the level of education (however most participants are with higher education).

Apart from the gender and education status, specific residence place of the participants should also be taken into account. When it comes to Samtskhe-Javakheti region most participants live in the city of Akhaltsikhe itself, while two participants live in nearby small towns of Vale and Adigeni (3.7% Armenians) and two – in nearby Georgian villages of Atskuri and Ude (i.e. with only Georgian population).

On the other hand all Tbilisi participants live in capital. However some of them live in the parts of Armenian settlements, having experience of closer interactions with Armenians.

Discussion plan for the focus group

Discussion plan was the same for Tbilisi as well as Akhaltsikhe participants. It was loosely based on different types of capitals suggested by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu,1986), such as economic (material, financial facilities), cultural (education, knowledge), social (daily interactions), and symbolic (prestige and status). Political capital was also added to the list and all of these aspects together were used for structuring the discussion questions as well as for the later analysis of the gained data.

The final version of the discussion plan consisted of seven sub-topics: **introduction part; economic capital; social capital; cultural capital; political capital; symbolic capital and general comparison of Armenians and Azerbaijanis.**

- **Introduction part** was basically aimed at opening participants up for the further discussion and collecting information at the same time. Group members were asked if they ever visited Armenia and about their impressions; apart from that - to name their associations connected with Armenians; to name differences and similarities between Armenians and Georgians; also their impression of Armenians' attitudes towards Georgians.
- The sub-topic of **economic capital** included questions about the willingness of having financial relations with Armenian person, as well as attitudes towards Armenians included in small businesses
- While discussing about **social capital** participants were asked to express thoughts regarding the number of local Armenian population as well as imagined hypothetical situation of Georgia without Armenians. They were also asked to share own opinions about neighborhood, friendship and marriage with Armenian person.
- The sub-topic of **cultural capital** dealt with participants' perceptions of Armenian culture, education and intelligence and the language problem.
- Within the notion of **political capital** we discussed participants' attitudes towards local Armenians' inclusion in Georgian politics and if they think Armenian voters are influenced by Armenian government.
- The sub-topic of **symbolic capital** included question about prestige of Armenians in Georgian society.

- Finally focus group members were asked about their opinion regarding **Azerbaijanis**. Comparison between Azerbaijanis and Armenians aimed to find out if there is any difference in the way these groups are perceived by ethnic Georgians.

Data analysis and findings

The most common way of treating with collected focus-group data is providing the descriptive narrative of it (Steward & Shamdasani, 2007). I will follow the same pattern. In addition I will compare the perspectives of Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe inhabitants, as well as younger and older groups. Data will be provided according to thematic sub-topics distinguished in the focus-group guide: introduction part; economic capital; social capital; cultural capital; political capital; symbolic capital and general comparison of Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

Introduction part

As I already mentioned while reviewing the discussion plan, introduction part aims to open up participants and includes more general questions. I will discuss each of them separately.

1. Visiting Armenia

Question concerning visiting Armenia and following impressions was the introductory one for Tbilisi groups. However as the context was somewhat different in Akhaltsikhe (Armenians are part of Akhaltsikhian Georgians' everyday life, so there was no use of starting with visiting Armenia to get closer to the topic), this question was asked close to the end of our discussion.

Most participants, who have been in Armenia, visited either Yerevan or nearby villages. In Tbilisi younger group the resort Dilijan was also mentioned. Generally quite positive impressions were expressed.

The **similarity of Georgian and Armenian people was emphasized in both age groups of Tbilisi**, although in one of older groups it was mentioned that in addition to resemblances all the negative traits of Georgians are doubled in Armenians - all this causing not so positive attitudes between these people. On the other hand, while in younger groups likeness of Georgia's and Armenia's nature was underlined, in older group it was noted that Armenia is a bare, desert-like land compared to Georgia.

"I had fantastic impressions. I thought I was in Georgia. We were in Dilijan. The nature is the same (as in Georgia) and people are same as well." (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

"First of all I understood why there are only Armenians in Armenia. Because it is a bare land and desert and no normal person can stay there. Secondly, I understood that Armenians are the same as Georgians, only worse. Every bad trait we have and I do not like is double in Armenians. I became convinced that we

are the offspring nations of two brothers. We are very similar and generally, considering person's self-critical attitudes, I am not surprised by not so good attitudes between Georgians and Armenians. Just they are worse than us. If we are arrogant, they are even more arrogant" (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

Both age groups of Akhaltsikhe, especially the older group stressed the positive qualities of Yerevan itself. In older groups it was mentioned that Yerevan is beautiful; the local bazaar is well-arranged and tidy; there are best products in shops and more factories around. According to the younger participants unlike Georgians Armenians take care of their capital, giving huge importance to their cultural heritage even though they have only Etchmiadzin. Those who have never been in Armenia based own opinions on other people's experience saying that there have been many clubs in Yerevan before they appeared in Tbilisi and people used to go there to have fun, though the city is quite expensive. Participants who visited nearby village of Yerevan also mentioned that people live in far more expensive houses in Armenia but they do not care about the rubbish outside their homes.

"I have been in Yerevan. It's very beautiful city. I was there in 80-ies. People say it is better now. They had the best products in shops and much more factories." (N47, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

"Unlike us, they take care of their capital and even a small nuance is important for them. They have one Etchmiadzin and talk about it so much that our entire ancient historical heritage becomes pale compared to it." (N32, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

"I've been in nearby village through Yerevan. They are nice people who try to live in cool houses but do not try that this house was in clean environment. This was my impression. (...) You cannot see so cool houses among Georgians as often but there are mostly these kinds of houses in Armenia. I was looking around amazed. They are almost millionaires and in front there is a rubbish. At least I would give 10 laris to someone so that I do not have to see this. There are no such houses in Georgia yet but we definitely have the rubbish." (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

Both age groups of Akhaltsikhe and older groups of Tbilisi noted that they were hosted well and Armenians are friendly, warm and hospitable people. However in older Akhaltsikhe group it was said that despite that, people's attitudes towards other people may change due to certain events and historical periods, such as Ossetians and Georgians for instance.

"It is an extraordinary city, very hospitable. That was my impressions from Yerevan. People were very friendly although we could not speak each other's language." (N15, female, older group, Tbilisi)

"I have lived in Armenia in order to attend the South Caucasus military courses for teachers. They had ordinary attitude when they heard that I was Georgian. Once there was a football match. Tbilisi Dinamo was playing. It was the period of beginning Armenian-Azeri conflict and they were watching whether you supported Armenia or Azerbaijan. I went to the stadium – there were 3 of us, Georgians, and Armenians all around. When I was shouting 'Dinamo', they were saying 'Georgian' somehow in not a good way. I cannot generalize the attitude of the stadium on the whole nation though. We lost that game, 2:1. That's good; otherwise they would have eaten us probably. Then they would say 'brother Georgians.' It's not happening only in Armenia. I have been working in Russia. During the Soviet period they used to distribute people around USSR after graduation, just like in the army. I used to be in Rostov municipality,

in a big village. I saw soldiers with Caucasian appearance. They asked me if I was Ossetian and when I said I was Georgian they answered that we were brothers anyway. It was in 1981-81. 20 years have passed since then and we and Ossetians already hate each other.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Among younger groups of Tbilisi as well as Akhaltsikhe it was mentioned that when it comes to infrastructure, Armenia is far backwards compared to Georgia. In Akhaltsikhe worse roads were mentioned, in Tbilisi - worse situation on Armenia’s side of the border.

“I had the impression about Yerevan that it is like Georgia approximately 15 years ago, it is a more developing country. When crossing the border you can notice that Georgian border is far better arranged and suddenly you move to an ordinary village, no organizing, and just some booths. ” (N5, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

In all groups participants expressed the wish to visit Armenia.

Seeing Etchiazin was named as one of the reasons in both age categories of Tbilisi. Additionally Tbilisi younger participants named **visiting Kobayar Monastery; getting more familiar with Armenian art and culture, getting familiar to country with closer culture with Georgia ; getting more familiar with neighbor country in terms of culture and comparative history**, while in older group it was also noted that generally the more country you visit the better.

When it comes to Akhaltsikhe, here participants expressed the wish to visit Armenia as a tourist as well. However in younger group it was emphasized that one would similarly wish to visit any other neighboring country and this is not because Armenians live in Akhaltsikhe.

“I want to visit but not because Armenians live here and I wish I had been in their country.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I would visit Armenia with great pleasure. I wish to visit Armenia just as I wish to visit Azerbaijan or Turkey.” (N34, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

2. Whether Armenians of Armenia and Armenians of Georgia differ from each other

As expected, compared to Akhaltikhe, Tbilisi respondents have vaguer understanding of differences between Georgia’s and Armenia’s Armenians, especially when it comes to the younger group. While in other groups participants categorized Armenians, younger Tbilisians either did not perceive any difference, saying that **regardless the place of residence Armenians are nationalistic and try to establish themselves**, or distinguish Armenians in terms of Georgian context. They mostly concentrated on Tbilisi Armenians, saying that there are **general differences based on Georgian context, thinking local Armenians are adjusted to Tbilisi and Georgia, which even affected their language**. In contrary it was also noted that **living in Georgia intensifies their identity of being Armenian**. In addition having into mind Georgians’ not have very positive attitudes towards them, **Armenians of Georgia are more cohesive and isolated**.

“I don’t think they differ. Despite their place of residence this is the nation that respects own home country and history so much that they have absolutely common (united) values. For them living in Akhalkalaki, Georgian territory does not matter that much. What matters is that they are ethnically Armenians.(...) Armenians who live here are as nationalistic as those ones (of Armenia). Every day they try to prove to my friends who work there that it is their ancient territory. (...) They do not try to adopt something ours and get used to us. They are absolutely different nation. When you visit Akalkalaki, they accept you as a guest. Although you are Georgian and this is a Georgian territory, it is their territory (...) It is my personal opinion that any Armenian tries to establish their own.” (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Maybe it is natural – in different environment they try harder to preserve their identity, therefore their feeling of being Armenians will be intensified. Maybe just an opposite can happen – adopting local culture and abandoning your identity. Probably the attitudes towards Armenians also define that preserving one’s own identity prevails. It is clear that there is mixed attitude towards Armenians, mostly not very positive. This is my opinion based on what I see. This makes them more cohesive – Armenian may look for another Armenian, unify as a family or a circle. It could be a defense mechanism” (N8, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

Some participants in Tbilisi older groups also found it hard to distinguish, but compared to the younger group distinctions were still made. One participant distinguished four categories: **Armenians of Tbilisi** who are good/nice guys; **Armenians of Javakheti** who have European descent (**Akhaltsikhe Armenians were distinguished as a sub-category** as ones of European descent, immigrating through Turkey and whiter than other Armenians.); **Armenians of Yerevan** who are more snobbish; **Armenians of Armenia (excluding Yerevan)** who are poorer, simpler, and hospitable. It was also mentioned that Georgia’s Armenians are accustomed to Georgians, while naturally, Armenia’s Armenians perceive Georgian visitors as guests.

“Personally I differentiate between 4 categories of Armenians: Armenians who live in Tbilisi, Armenians who live in Georgia, Javakheti; Armenians who live in Armenia and Armenians who live in Armenia but not in Yerevan. Yerevani Armenians have all the traits that are characteristic for capital inhabitants – snobbism, arrogance. I can say that Avlabari (Tbilisi) Armenians are good/nice guys. As Dumbadze¹ says if we gather good Avlabari Armenians and make a football team we will easily defeat Yerevani “Ararat”². When it comes to Akhaltsikhe Armenians, I am sure they have European ancestry. They arrived here through Turkey and were baptized as Armenians in order to preserve own Catholicism. They also differ when it comes to appearance, they are whiter than Armenians. Finally there is the fourth category – those who live in Armenia but not in Yerevan. They are poor Armenians, simple, hospitable.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

Categorization appeared to be easier for Akhaltsikhe participants. However unlike Tbilisi older respondents they did not distinguish ‘Armenians of Yerevan’ and ‘Armenians of Armenia except Yerevan’ categories separately. Both age groups in Akhaltsikhe mentioned ‘**Armenians of Yerevan**’ only, ‘**Armenians of Tbilisi**’ and ‘**Armenians of Akhaltsikhe**’ instead of overall category of ‘Javakheti Armenians’ as in Tbilisi case. In addition Akhaltsikhe older participants distinguished fourth category of

¹ Georgian writer

² Armenia’s football team

‘Armenians of Akhalkalaki (Ninotsminda/Tsalka).’ In Tbilisi older group as well as both age groups of Akhaltsikhe it was noted that Tbilisi Armenians are more pro-Georgian.

According to Akhaltsikhe younger participants who made **distinction between Yerevan, Akhlatshikhe and Tbilisi Armenians** difference has to do with the **language and appearance**. It was noted that **Armenians of Yerevan are beautiful, have fair hair and blue or green eyes, while Akhaltsikhe’s Armenians have mixed blood with Tatars, therefore are dark and look like Tatars**. On the other hand participants agreed that **Tbilisi Armenian’s language is much more beautiful than Akhaltsikhe Armenian’s language**. Some participants think that the latter is more influenced by Georgian, while others think it is basically mixed with Tatar (Turkic) language. In contrary respondents think the **language of Armenia’s Armenians is absolutely different and more beautiful than these two**. It was also noted that Tbilisian Armenians are more devoted to Georgia.

“Language is the difference. Akhaltsikhe Armenian language is mixed with Tatar. They say Tbilisi Armenian language is very beautiful and Yerevan Armenian language is absolutely different. Tbilisi Armenians hate Yerevan Armenians, while Yerevan Armenians hate Akhaltsikhe Armenians. When Yerevan Armenians come here they are blond with blue and green eyes. Akhaltsike Armenians have mixed blood with Tatars, therefore they are very dark and look like Tatars. You can recognize Yerevan Armenians by blond hair and blue/green eyes. They are very beautiful and very different.” (N32, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

The factor of language was underlined by Akhaltsikhe older participants as well who differentiate **between Armenians of Yerevan, Armenians of Akhaltsikhe, Armenians of Akhalkalaki and Armenians of Tbilisi**. Here too it was mentioned that **Armenians of Georgia were immigrated from Turkey and therefore language of Akhalkalaki and Akhalkalaki Armenians are full of Turkish words**. According to older respondents **Tbilisi Armenian’s language is heavily influenced by Georgian and sounds nice**. It was noted that **Armenians of Yerevan are more modern and cultural; they dress and talk differently, in a more pleasant way**.

“Armenians were resettled in Georgia from Turkey, therefore the language is full of Turkish words. Yerevan Armenian cannot understand half of the language Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki Armenians speak. I understand the local Armenian language although I can’t talk. When I was in Yerevan 10 years ago, I realized that I could understand nothing. Tbilisi Armenian language differs from Yerevan Armenian as it contains Georgian slang and Georgian endings. Everybody notes that Tbilisi Armenian sounds nice. This is caused by containing Georgian expressions while the words are the same in fact. They say it themselves as I cannot distinguish it on my own.” (N48, male, older, Akhaltsikhe)

Unlike younger Akhalkalakhians, older respondents talked about **Akhalkalaki Armenians who, according to them, have been influenced by Russian soldiers, are more isolated and look for independence, while Akhaltsikhe Armenians are more integrated as there are many Georgians around, also more educated and modern**. According to some participants, **if there is an appropriate moment, Akhaltsikhe Armenians would do the same as Akhalkalaki (Tsalka and Ninotsminda were also mentioned) Armenians**. It was noted that **Tbilisi Armenians identify themselves more with Georgia, consider themselves more Georgian**.

“There is more complex situation in Akhalkalaki. There had been Russian influence from Russian soldiers, telling them that everything there was theirs. They didn’t even care about Georgian currency, sometimes used Russian one. Then Saakashvili put them on their place. We have very warm relations with each other here in Akhaltsikhe. (...) There are more educated people here in Akhaltsikhe than there. There are more closed people there and more educated and modern people here.” (N42, male, older, Akhaltsikhe)

“Armenians cannot do the same in Akhaltsikhe (as in Akhalkalaki) as there are many Georgians here. My husband had certain experience during Tskhinvali war. He couldn’t come to Akhaltsikhe directly which needs 3 hours and had to come through Tsalka which needs 8 hours. Armenians didn’t give him bread in the shop because he was Georgian. I think if Akhaltsikhe Armenian has the opportunity and somebody’s support they would probably do the same as Tsalka Armenians.” (N40, female, older, Akhaltsikhe)

According to older Tbilisian participants **Yerevani Armenians dislike Tbilisi Armenians**, while younger Akhaltsikhians mentioned that Tbilisi Armenians do not like Akhaltsikhe and Yerevani Armenians, while Yerevani Armenians dislike Akhaltsikhe Armenians.

3. Associations

The older group of Akhaltsikhe found it the most difficult to name associations connected with Armenians. Most of them reminded their **neighbors or coworkers**. It was also mentioned that there is a **difference between Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki Armenians, the latter feeling much closer with Armenia**.

On the other hand, the younger Akhaltsikhe groups (although like older ones they also reminded own acquaintances) as well as both age groups of Tbilisi were more successful in thinking of associations. Generally all groups (except Akhaltsikhe older groups as they could not really name any association) associated Armenians with hairdressers, artisans and repairers.

Unlike Tbilisi participants, Akhaltsikhe younger respondents distinguished **aspects related with appearance, such as big noses, red pointed shoes and red jeans**, as well as **Armenians achieving higher positions by speculating of being ethnic minority; unproductive reforms related with Armenians and traditional dances**. On the other hand, both Tbilisi age groups emphasized that Armenians are misers and fond of money, as well as misappropriate Georgians’ heritage.

Younger Akhaltsikhians as well as older Tbilisians named Armenians food Dolma.

In more details, younger Tbilisi groups named following associations:

- **Hard workers/are not ashamed of working**
- **Trading**
- **Strong Diaspora/Armenian Lobby is the most powerful in the world**
- **Cohesive**
- **Miser/love money**
- **Misappropriator**

- **Love showing off**
- **Hairdresser**
- **Entrepreneur**
- **Shoe repairman**
- **Painter**
- **Film director**
- **Doctors**
- **Watchmaker**
- **Goldsmith**
- **Artisan**
- **Super-ambitious people (without real basis)**
- **Traitors (historically)**

Older Tbilisians gave following associations:

- **Hairdressers**
- **Artisans**
- **Shoe repairers**
- **Doctors**
- **First VCR and discussing movies with Armenian pupils**
- **Dolma**
- **Especially tasty Ajapsandali³**
- **Hospitable people**
- **Traders/merchants**
- **Adroit**
- **Money/love money**
- **Love gold**
- **Are misers/do not like spending money**
- **Cheating**
- **Trying to be better than Georgians in everything**
- **Misappropriating Georgian cultural heritage**
- **Expression ‘white tooth and black heart of Armenian’**
- **Do not accept other ethnic groups, even Georgia’s Armenians**

While older Akhaltsikhians found it hard to name anything specific, younger ones named following:

- **Armenian friends/devoted friends**
- **Cousins (Aunt is married with Armenian man)/friends/neighbors/co-workers/students**
- **Armenian classmate who was annoying**
- **Armenian co-worker who was liar and annoying**
- **Hairdresser**
- **Artisan/Repairer**

³ Dish made of eggplants

- **Car-repairer**
- **Shoe-repairer**
- **Waiter/Waitress**
- **Hold high political positions due to speculating that they are minority**
- **Many problems and reforms connected with Armenians that are in vain**
- **Dolma**
- **Traditional Armenian dance**
- **Red pointed shoes**
- **Big nose**
- **Red Jeans**

“What comes to my mind firstly is “Rustaveli⁴ is ours”, “Jvari⁵ is ours”, “we created your language”.” (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I am sure everyone here thought of Armenians as being misers but kept silent, not because we think like that but because we hear it since childhood. Armenians and Jews. Then in relations you understand that they are ordinary people like you.” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I started working at school in Russian sector and the kids made me buy my first VCR ever. In the class they used to discuss the movies they had watched. So I had to buy the VCR to watch all these movies as well so that we could discuss them together in Georgian next day.” (N15, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Apart from the classical evaluation that Armenians are miser and adroit, I always associate Armenians with the fact that standard for them is Georgian. They will do anything to be better than Georgian.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“Money (association). During Shevardnadze period, when he was newly arrived, my Armenian neighbor said because of problematic situation it would better to appoint ethnic Armenian as the Minister of Economy and the economy would flourish. (...) There is a famous expression ‘white tooth and black heart of Armenian’. When someone stays in Yerevan or in villages for too long, since childhood, I mean... I know that when the film director Parajanov⁶ arrived there he was saddened because he was nothing there while was loved and accepted in Tbilisi. They did not accept their own. Exactly 99.9% is ethnic Armenian in Armenia. Probably they are better accustomed to each other. Every Armenian who goes there from Georgia admits it...” (N21, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Can we include some humor to relax a bit? I remember red pointed shoes and big nose or red jeans.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Nothing comes to my head. I have normal relations with them. My next-door neighbor is Armenian – they are very good people by the way.” (N39, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

⁴ Georgian poet of 12-th century

⁵ Jvari Monastery near Mtskheta, Georgia

⁶ Tbilisi born ethnic Armenian film director

4. Perceived Differences and similarities between Georgians and Armenians

First of all, I will discuss each group category separately. Younger participants from Tbilisi distinguished following differences:

- **Religious difference (Georgian dyophysitism vs Armenian monophysitism)**
- **Better traders/merchants than Georgians**
- **Armenians can find own way/they can solve any kind of problem**
- **Armenians are profit-oriented**
- **Georgians spend money on feasts, Armenians do not spend money as easily/they like to save**
- **Armenians are more flexible immigrants, while Georgian immigrants cry over their home-country/dream to return back**
- **In politics Georgia is always radical, Armenia is neutral**
- **Visual difference – Armenians have bigger nose**
- **Armenians are hardworking while Georgians are more lazy**
- **There are only few Georgians in Armenia/majority is Armenian while in Georgia it's different.**
- **Armenians sell apartments only to Armenians (more cohesive)**

“They are very good at trading. I don't know why Georgians are so proud that we are bad at trading.(...) There is another stereotype although in my case it was not proved as true. When Georgians get salary, they immediately call you to gather and feast. They do not spend money as easily as Georgians do. But this depends on a person.(...) They never sell apartments. When the relative of my acquaintance (who lived in Yerevan) died, they wanted to sell the apartment. Although it was very urgent, they had waited for months because they wanted only Armenian to buy it and not someone else.” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

On the other hand older participants from Tbilisi emphasized these differences:

- **Different weddings**
- **When it comes to dressing and hairstyle taste, Armenians lack the simplicity/golden balance that Georgians have – they love sharper colors and women wear excessive make up**
- **Religion** (despite both are Christian, there are differences)
- **Armenians in Georgia change their surnames into Georgian while Georgians would never do it abroad** (on one hand it was noted that they are ashamed of being Armenians, on the other hand participants mentioned that it is easier to get as job with changed surname)
- **Armenians are less patriotic/are ashamed of being Armenians/hide that they are Armenians**
- **Differences in appearance** - Armenians have darker skin color and bigger nose compared to Georgians
- **Differences in lifestyle - emphasis on financial profit** (brings kid to the Russian school because books there are for free)
- **Armenians are more hardworking while Georgians are lazy**
- **Armenians are not ashamed of any kind of work/ are oriented towards earning money /more practical while Georgians are more ambitious when it comes to work and education**
- **Armenians are more sly and miser than Georgians**

- **Nature in Armenia is stricter than in Georgia, therefore Armenians developed skills of trading/merchant and artisans while in Georgia nature is milder and it is easier to survive, so trading is considered as shameful.**
- **Armenians are more cohesive/ support each other when they are abroad**
- **Armenians adjust to any place they go**
- **All Armenians are supposed to know Armenian, while not all Mengrelians are supposed to know Mengrelian**

“I attended Armenian wedding when I was 15 years old. I remember very beautiful boys with blue eyes. Everything was beautiful although the culture was very different. I associate it with darkness and greasiness; everyone was dancing and had bright face. They were cheerful and hospitable. Moreover as we were from Georgia, they showed us great respect. I did not like their clothes style though. They lack the simplicity, Georgians have. (...) They cannot keep golden balance that Georgians have in everything. Nevertheless their paintings are best and tasteful.” (N14, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Maybe I’m using inappropriate word but I have heard many times that Georgia’s Armenians are ashamed of being Armenians and that is why they are changing surnames. I am sure Georgian will never be ashamed of being Georgian and change the surname. Compared to Armenians, patriotism is stronger in Georgians. I had close relation in childhood and I remember saying “you Armenian” would provoke their anger. This was an insult for them, while I would be proud if someone told me “you Georgian” (N17, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“There is a difference. They are more hard-working compared to us. We are lazier. Firstly, they are not ashamed of any kind of job. Maybe there are not so many professors, docents and academicians among them and neither have they ambition to study in Georgian Higher Education Institutions, but in any case after completing 9 grades father accommodates his child and he becomes shoe repairer, etc. We are too arrogant for this, thinking we have to graduate the University first.” (N22, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“In Armenia there are very strict natural conditions, desert and this shaped survival spirit in these people. In Georgia you can lie down under the tree and wait until the pear drops off it because you are lazy. The nature there (in Armenia) forces you not to lie down because there are no trees to lie under. Therefore historically Armenians developed very good traits of merchants and artisans. (...) The difference between our and their character is that Armenians are very practical and earning money is more prestigious for them than the ways of earning it. According to Armenian, everything that can help you to earn even 1 tetri is prestigious. We distinguish occupations according to prestige: washing a car is shameful, being merchant is shameful, being a shop seller is shameful. You go into the shop and the seller talks to you in a way as if s/he says ‘you see me selling but I never wanted it, life forced me but actually I have two diplomas’. She justifies herself as if being a shop seller is shame.” (N24, male, older group)

Younger Akhalstikhians also named Armenians’ characteristics that in their opinion, distinguishes them from Georgians.

- **Culture/traditions/customs**
- **Religion**
- **Armenians are not ashamed to do jobs such as shoe-repairing, hairdressing etc. while Georgians would rather be unemployed than do these things**

- **Armenian women are more prone to take care of themselves in beauty salons, while Georgian woman usually look casual**
- **Georgians are more snobbish towards Armenians while Armenians do not act snobbishly towards Georgians**
- **Georgians like being late while Armenians are very punctual and loyal**
- **Armenians are more cohesive and supportive towards each other/have strong feeling of national group membership; they go to fellow Armenians' shops for instance, etc. (according to one participant this is because Armenians consider themselves as minority and feel threatened as Georgians are majority)**
- **Georgian are more free-spirited, while Armenians always compete with Georgians**
- **Different opinions regarding the ownership of cultural heritage that often lead to physical conflicts between Georgians and Armenians**
- **Different mentality/different taste (unlike Georgians, Armenians mostly listen to Russian music and watch Russian and Armenian TV channels; different clothes, style)/ different sense of humor**
- **Armenians have healthy competition towards each other (try to do better than other) while Georgians try to throw the successful one down**
- **Armenians are more focused on financial values/money/property while for Georgians bravery, tradition and friendship is more important**
- **Georgians like to go to restaurants, Armenians don't**
- **Armenians make friends with the members of own professional circle (hairdressers make friends with hairdressers, car-repairers with car-repairers, etc.)**
- **Unlike Georgians abroad, Armenians know, love and preserve their own language**
- **The only nation that does not feel nostalgia towards own homeland**

“Armenians have stronger feeling of cohesion because they consider themselves as minority and think that as we are majority we may create certain threats for them. They are more united and supportive towards each other. You cannot find this among Georgians that much as if we are always together and it is guaranteed for us to be this way. (...)There is a difference in mentality because unlike us they embrace different values. Their taste consists of watching and listening to Russian and Armenian channels. They have different sense of humor, laugh at different things. They like different things, Russian song videos. Georgians do not like this.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There is no such saying as ‘You Georgian’ but you can hear ‘You Armenian’ very often in Akhaltsikhe. You can distinguish: they have hair style combed towards front and all the jewelry is hanging on them. You can distinguish Armenian in Akhaltsikhe by clothes style and manners. They talk very loudly and even when cooler Armenians visit us, they wear white pierced shoes with very long points, or the sporty pants, slippers and socks. It is really like that. If you ask someone to describe Armenian, they will definitely mention Kangol hats, striped sporty pants, slippers and socks. Even if the last model car stops in front of you, they guy would still be wearing slippers. We were in Hungary and we met group of kids, guys from Yerevan. When I looked at them I understood that it does not matter where they come from.

You can often see them, wearing ironed striped sporty pants in Abastumani. When I tell this to my friends in Tbilisi, they laugh at me. Then they saw themselves their ironed striped sporty pants with iron lines in front and socks pulled up till the knees.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

According to older Akhaltsikhians, the differences between Armenians and Georgians are following.

- **Religious difference (Georgian dyophysitism vs Armenian monophysitism)**
- **Better traders/merchants than Georgians**
- **Armenians can find own way/they can solve any kind of problem**
- **Armenians are profit-oriented**
- **Georgians spend money on feasts, Armenians do not spend money as easily/they like to save**
- **Armenians are more flexible immigrants, while Georgian immigrants cry over their home-country/dream to return back**
- **In politics Georgia is always radical, Armenia is neutral**
- **Visual difference – Armenians have bigger nose**
- **Armenians are hardworking while Georgians are more lazy**
- **There are only few Georgians in Armenia/majority is Armenian while in Georgia it's different.**
- **Armenians sell apartments only to Armenians (more cohesive)**

“They have more aspiration towards handcrafting. It comes from their life-style - they often had to migrate and nobody can take handcrafting from you: wherever you go, barber, dentist and goldsmith are always needed. While Georgians were striving for 2 and 5 diplomas, Armenians and Jews used to learn handicraft and lived better. Maybe they did not want to be ministers but despite the place of living they were never hungry.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

As we can see there is no big difference between the opinions of Tbilisi and Akhalstikhe respondents, neither between younger and older groups.

All Tbilisi groups and younger Akhalstikhe groups stressed the factor of different religion and appearance, Armenians being profit- and money-oriented; as well as being more flexible immigrants, i.e. less nostalgic to the homeland. All Akhalstikian and Tbilisi older participants distinguished different culture and traditions, for instance wedding traditions. All category participants mentioned that Armenians are more cohesive than Georgians and stand by each other, bringing various examples for illustration: younger Tbilisians talked about Armenians selling apartments to only Armenians, older Tbilisians mentioned that Armenians support each other when they are abroad; younger Akhaltsikhians noted that Armenians go to each other's shops to buy something, and according to the older Akhalstikhians they also prefer each other's company. In most groups it was also mentioned that Armenians are more hardworking and they are not ashamed to work in service spheres that Georgians are too arrogant to do. In addition, in both age categories of Tbilisi it was emphasized that Armenians are better traders/merchants than Georgians. Different taste of Armenians was mostly mentioned in older Tbilisi and younger Akhaltsikhe groups, older Tbilisians speaking about sharper colors Armenian women like to wear and younger Akhaltsikhians - about specific style of clothes, as well as Armenians listening to Russian songs and having different sense of humor.

The trends were more noticeable when participants were asked to remember what Georgians and Armenians have in common.

On one hand Tbilisi participants were able identify more common things than Akhaltsikhians, and naturally, Akhaltsikhians were more focused on local Armenians than Tbilisians, mentioning such common things as living in one country, under one law and constitution (Akhaltsikhe younger group) and living in multiethnic society, i.e. adopting each other's lifestyle and cuisine (Akhaltsikhe older group).

Both Tbilisi age groups mentioned that Armenians as well as Georgians are hospitable, younger respondents connecting it to being Caucasians. Apart from this, younger participants also mentioned similar appearance as connected to being Caucasian. Actually, 'Caucasian' was only mentioned among Tbilisi younger group.

Both Tbilisi age groups named 'being open and sociable' as a common trait. Younger Akhaltsikhians also mentioned this when describing Armenians, however not while specifically comparing them with Georgians.

On the other hand, unlike older participants younger participants of both cities stressed the nationalism and chauvinism as common trait of both people. More precisely, young Tbilisians said that both nations falsify and fetish their history, are xenophobic and radically patriotic, while young Akhaltsikhians mentioned that both ones are chauvinistic and both think theirs is unique.

Apart from what is already mentioned, only Tbilisi younger participants named: great history/traditions, respecting own history, similar art and writing script (meaning old Georgian script), soviet and post-soviet experience. Only Tbilisi older participants mentioned generosity, religion, being curious/interested, love of feasting (wine, duduk, women), mentality, being traditional (women care for family, respect traditions etc.). And only younger Akhaltsikhians named being friendly as a common trait.

"I think they falsify the history the same way as we do in Georgia. Lies are written there. (...) Like us, they also fetish the history. (...) We are equally very xenophobic." (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

"Both are ancient nations with own traditions that follow one line. Take the art, script as an example, they are very similar. We have Mkhedruli script nowadays but their alphabet looks like our Khutsuri (old Georgian script). These are two nations, developing in a parallel mode, crossing each other in so many things." (N7, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

"There are many common features – hospitality, openness. I have never met closed (not sociable) Armenian." (N18, female, older group, Tbilisi)

"There are lots of similarities. They are family oriented people like us. They also respect own traditions and sometimes I am surprised how much they respect. Even if we take the topic of mother and father-in-laws and the daughter-in-law. I like this very much. Maybe I do not do the same, but I like what they do – family traditions, working hard, bringing up the children. They teach good things to own children and are not as ambitious. I have a neighbor with (Armenian) daughter-in-law. I was the daughter-in-law as well and when I compared myself to her, I liked her very much. She was quite young but used to talk politely, used to bring slippers... elementary Georgian traditions to respect elderly and the oldest grandmother... Many family traditions are the same." (N22, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Every nation has its positive and negative qualities and Armenians and Georgians are among them too. The similarity is that we are both very chauvinists, we both love ours and think that it is unique and only one. I don’t know whether it is positive or negative but we equally have this feeling so that sometimes it even becomes conflicting. But it’s all right, we bear it.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Our life-styles are the same especially in our city and our area because the society is multiethnic here, many nations live together. (...) The life-style is so mixed that even though some dishes are Armenian, some - Georgian, you cannot find Armenian family that doesn’t cook Georgian dishes and vice versa. Table setting and arrangement may be different but menu is the same. There can be something special that only one cooks but after an year or an year and a half, it spreads to every family, from Georgian families to Armenian ones, from Armenian families to Georgian ones.” (N48, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

5. Armenians’ attitudes towards Georgians

The opinions of participants are quite overlapping across the various category groups. The most obvious difference on the basis of residence place is that Akhaltsikhe participants are again more focused on local Armenians, while Tbilisi respondents talk generally.

Younger Tbilisians shared following opinions:

- **Armenians have very good attitudes towards Georgians**
- **On the surface they praise Georgians but they do not want their daughter to marry Georgian**
- **Armenians of Armenia have much better attitude towards Georgians than local Armenians as they are often insulted by Georgians**
- **Armenians feel negative, snobbish attitude coming from Georgians, therefore it is hard to be positive towards Georgians**
- **Relations of Armenians and Georgians have competitive character and often causes conflicts (means non-political conflicts)**
- **They have the same snobbish/humoristic attitude towards Georgians as Georgians have towards them**
- **Armenians have exactly same stereotypes and jokes about Georgians as Georgians have towards them: about being miser/being fond of money**
- **Armenians claim certain cultural inheritance of Georgians (Armenian scientists, tourist companies)/falsify history**
- **Javakheti Armenians show aggression when one wants to photograph local churches.**
- **Javakheti Armenians show positive attitudes (Kids try to communicate with Georgian tourists)**
- **Mixed attitudes: some Armenians are misappropriators/claim Georgian heritage, while others praise/like Georgians**

“I think they have quite positive attitudes. My friend visited Armenia recently and as they heard that she was Georgian, everyone was very welcoming. Everyone had positive attitude, saying that they had the great time in Tbilisi and good memories.” (N5, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“On the surface they say “Georgian! Cool!” and we like when we are praised but it is bad that they feel we have snobbish attitude towards them, for instance at the black sea coast when they come for vacation. It happened to me; an Armenian asked me something and then added that although he was Armenian, he was not a bad person. He obviously felt not being treated well by some people just because he was Armenian. On the other hand I had certain illusions that we are so bad because of laughing at Armenians sometimes. The granddaughter of my Armenian neighbor was in love with Georgian and this family was very much against; not because this boy did not study or was poor, just because he was Georgian. I heard about such situation for the first time. Mostly it happens vice versa. Georgians do not want Armenian son-in law (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi).

Older Tbilisians expressed quite similar opinions:

- **Armenians try to be friendly but do not want Georgian daughter-in-law either**
- **Armenians are misappropriating cultural heritage**
- **Armenians are competing Georgians**

In addition it was noted that **historically Armenians have hostile attitude towards Georgians (Abkhazia war, Georgia-Armenia war, UN resolution on returning IDPs, etc)**

Like Tbilisi youngsters, Akhaltsikhe younger participants also stressed that while Armenians **do not have negative attitudes towards Georgians, it is Georgians who feel somehow snobbish and ashamed of being with Armenians**, even the kids at the playground. Several reasons of this were identified: not so positive associations regarding Armenians; certain envy towards Armenians; there is just the case of someone being different from you, especially when it comes to kids; Armenians have certain privileges in the universities which makes Georgians feel injustice and irritation. In contrary it was also noted that Georgians never act snobbishly and reject Armenians.

According to another opinion **Armenians there always feel they are/claim to be disadvantaged**. They also distinguished between the views of educated Armenians (who communicate with Georgians and know what being minority means) and illiterate Armenians (who have not studied even at Armenian school, know handcrafting, dream about going to Moscow and girls marrying early). According participants these illiterate Armenians are majority of Armenians.

It was noted that **Armenians do not have civil consciousness towards Georgia**. Several examples were brought such as: unwilling to serve in Georgian army, running away during the war 2008; not supporting Georgians and waiting for Russians to win in war 2008; some Armenians do not speak Georgian on purpose, although they know it well and communicate with Georgians in Russian; some Armenians try to persuade the locals that Armenians lived in certain villages firstly and these Georgians are in fact Armenians with changed surnames. It was noted that Armenians are mostly “winner welcoming people” and they try to please Georgians as long as they need to live well here, otherwise they will support the stronger force. **According to the participants situation is tenser in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda**. It was also mentioned that Armenians throw stones at Georgian monastery in Tsalka and oppress the local

nuns. Participants said that Georgians try to avoid the conflicts while priests/church also try calm the situation down but if allowed, Armenians would misappropriate there everything.

On the other hand, while talking about Armenians focus on money, one participant said his Armenian friend feels more self- assure in his own opinion after Georgian friend agrees with him, indicating that Georgians' opinion is very important for Armenian, regarding them "right" or "superior".

Older Akhaltsikhe participants also distinguished Armenians of Akhalkalaki, saying that they are **more oriented towards independence from Georgia and the situation is tenser in Akhalkalaki. However it was also noted that if Akhaltsikhe Armenians had the opportunity they would do the same.**

Apart from this, some even contradictory opinions were distinguished:

- **Armenians have very positive attitude towards Georgia**
- **Relations (for instance neighborhood) is quite positive unless Armenians start to prove that Akhaltsikhe and the churches are theirs**
- **The attitude is normal, although not very close - as Georgians prefer the company of other Georgians and Armenians prefer other Armenians, Armenians being even more cohesive (going to each other's shops only). It was noted that while Armenians mostly work in the service sphere, Georgians feel arrogant as they consider Armenians serve Georgians.**
- **Although everyday relations are good, Georgians are anyway disadvantaged in Akhaltsikhe – Georgians are more prone to learn Armenian that vice versa; Armenians are more likely to get a job.**
- **It is easy to provoke conflicts in Akhaltsikhe based on ethnicity**

As we can see, the groups in various categories mostly share each other's opinions.

Armenians misappropriating, or claiming certain Georgian heritage was mentioned in all category groups.

Tbilisi older participants mentioned that Armenians are historically hostile towards Georgia, reminding Abkhazian war, Georgia-Armenia war, UN resolution on returning IDPs). Earlier, when naming associations, Tbilisi younger participants also mentioned Armenians being 'historically traitors'. Similarly young Akhalstikhians noted that Armenians are ready to betray Georgians for the favor of someone stronger.

While in younger group of Tbilisi there was mixed view of Javakheti Armenians, in Akhaltsikhe both age groups emphasized tenser situation in Akhalkalaki, although it was mentioned that if Akhaltsikhe Armenians had the chance they would do the same.

Both Akhaltsikhe age groups mentioned that Georgians are disadvantaged when it comes to job opportunities (although youngsters talked about it later, while discussing language issue).

On the other hand, in Tbilisi both age categories it was noted that although Armenians look friendly on the surface, they do not want Georgians to be spouses of their children; also that Armenians are competing with Georgians and generally the relations have competitive character.

When it comes to age group differences, unlike older respondents both younger groups from Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe mentioned that in contrary, Georgians display snobbish attitudes towards Armenians.

Financial capital

The sub-topic concerning economic capital aims to understand participants' attitudes towards financial relations with Armenians. Participants were asked whether it is a smart decision to have financial relations with Armenian person.

Basically the expressed opinions are not very different across various age and place categories. In all groups it was mentioned that specific person, specific skills and personal trust is more important than ethnicity. On the other hand participants still distinguished positive (prudent in finances, more profit-oriented, appreciate/do not waste money, good at finances/bargaining, more hardworking) that makes business partnership with Armenian desirable and negative characteristics (not trustworthy, sly, misappropriator) that makes it non-desirable. These kind of negative characteristics were not named only in older Akhalstikhe groups, moreover while other category groups mentioned that Armenians are not trustworthy, older Akhalstikhians said that they are actually more trustworthy in this sense than Georgians.

However unlike Tbilisi groups both, younger as well as older Akhalstikhe groups mentioned that Armenians are more cohesive and prefer doing business with each other.

Speaking in more details, younger Tbilisians say that according to stereotypes **Armenians are very prudent in finances, so doing business together will be favorable**; Another opinion is that business is favorable because **Armenians are very hard-working**, always finish the work they started to do. On the other hand participants also say that first stereotype is that **you cannot trust Armenians, they will cheat you and misappropriate your whole business**.

Older Tbilisians also distinguished Armenians' specific trait of being good at business, especially bargaining/trading. Others remembered **wide-spread belief that Armenians are hard to trust**; despite this opinion **positive experience of financial partnership with Armenian was also remembered**. Apart from these opinions, one participant also mentioned that in case of equal skills, **priority will be given to ethnic Georgian in order to help and profit own (ethnic) group member financially**.

Younger Akhalstikhians similarly emphasized **specific positive for business "Armenian characteristics"**, such as **being more profit-oriented and adroit, appreciate money and do not waste it like Georgians**, therefore they were quite positive towards financial relations with Armenians. Other participants said that when **including Armenians in business**, you risk being cheated and tricked. **It was mentioned that as Armenians are sly and misappropriators**, Georgians generally try to avoid doing business together with them. It was also mentioned that Armenians are themselves closed and try not to include Georgians at all.

In contrary, most of older Akhalstikhians think that having **common business with Armenian is quite good decision**. Certain traits of Armenians were still distinguished such as **having talent in business; being hardworking and not lazy, Armenians being more trustworthy in business than Georgians**. As in younger group, here was also mentioned that Armenians are more cohesive, try to

do business with each other rather than with Georgians (if Georgian has money, than they are more prone to cooperate).

“If consider stereotypes, doing business with Armenian is good because Georgian may say “We are the brothers and therefore you pay”. Armenian will not pay for you even 5 tetris, but he will never ask you to give him 5 tetris as well. He will do everything precisely. (...) When I was a first-year student, there was a girl (in the group), very dedicated, always asking questions, smart. We were friends. When we had to make the copies of the readers, one of us would go to do it. Once it was her turn; it turned out that there was some problem with pages and she had to add very little money. Finally she calculated and all of us had to give her 15 tetris back. When she told us about it, it was such a shock that were really saying if not Armenian she would not mention it.” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I remembered the proverb: You cannot trust Armenian even if he is buried 5 years ago. They are still dangerous there. However from my experience I cannot repeat it so assuredly. Depends on the specific Armenian you meet.” (N15, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“In business it is important to use positive traits maximally and restrict the probability of displaying negative traits maximally. Therefore it is impossible that Armenians were totally unacceptable. Armenians do not have all negative traits. For instance, I would include Armenian in bargaining and tell that the half of the price amount he manages to make someone reduce will be his. He will do his best in such case.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“They do not spend the money like Georgians. They know the value of the money and if it is necessary they spend, if it's not - they understand... (...) I can tell you an example. Armenians study with us. I don't remember they were bad students just because they pay money and they want to get certain results for this money unlike Georgians, who may attend the lecture only once while the fee is paid by their parents.” (N25, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Generally it is very difficult to talk about financial issues. They are very sly and misappropriator. I'm talking about bad qualities but they are like this. Generally Georgians try to avoid talking over financial issues and having such relations with them. Finally Georgian will lose anyway.” (N32, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“They are trustworthy partners. They like doing business and do not like betrayal. You can trust them. I cannot generalize but it is easier to have such relations with Armenians I know, than with Georgians. Betrayal and cheating are more common among Georgians, while if Armenians stand by your side sincerely, they would be there till the end. (...) They like working, they aren't lazy, and they have talent in business. However they mostly try to have such relations with each other, Armenian with Armenian. It happens that Georgian and Armenian do something together but I don't know them.” (N42, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

As noted while discussing associations, all groups associate **Armenians with shoe-repairers, hairdressers, tailors, artisans**. When it comes to these occupations, younger Tbilisi participants consider Armenians to be better than Georgians. Among older Tbilisians it was also noted that **Georgians mostly avoid this kind of job because of pride and arrogance, while Armenians are more oriented on making money**. However one participant mentioned that she would rather go to Georgian hairdresser

who, according to her, would choose more tasteful hair style for her, than Armenian. When it comes to price, some younger Tbilisians see no difference, others say that Georgians set more expensive prices, or vice versa, Armenians set more expensive prices but quality is corresponding. Older Tbilisians say that the price is standard, although Armenians are better at bargaining and they can decrease the cost, especially for Georgians. In younger Akhaltsikhe group it was mentioned that **Armenian hairdressers treat you much better than Georgian ones; therefore it is more pleasant to have interaction with them.** Other participants do not see any specific differences between Georgian and Armenians when it comes to these kinds of business, neither in treatment, not in price. Older Akhaltsikhians also agree that **service spheres are mostly occupied by Armenians and Georgian clients mostly go to them as they are thought to be more professional** (than Georgians).

Unlike Tbilisians Akhaltsikhe respondents also discussed Armenian shopkeepers. Some younger participants say that **although goods are more expensive in Armenian shops, they also have wide choice and higher quality products.** On the other hand according to the older participants **Armenians and Georgians set the same prices not to lose the clients. In addition older respondents mentioned that while employing someone, Armenians try to give job to Armenians.**

Social Capital

Changing number of Armenian population in Georgia

All category groups mentioned that the number of Armenians has been significantly decreased during 1990-s, due to Georgia's political situation.

Apart from this, according to younger Tbilisians **compared to other minorities the number of Armenians is stable** while for instance number of Azeris is increasing more because of higher birth rates. Others say that the **number of Armenians is increasing because of the higher birth rates** compared to Georgians. On the other hand, older Tbilisians say that the number of Armenians is actually decreased in Georgia, naming different reasons such as **1990-s' hardships and ethnic minorities' immigration from Georgia; lower fertility rates among Armenians compared to past; adaptation to Georgian ways.** In contrary, one participant noted that if speaking about overall Georgia, the number of Armenians is actually increasing in places such as Abkhazia and Javakheti.

Younger Akhalstikhian participants also agree that **the number of Armenians has been increased in Akhaltsikhe. Easier living conditions (in Akhalstikhe) and the most serious businesses run by Armenians in Akhaltsikhe** was named as the reasons of increase, as well as **closing the border with Russia.** In addition, respondents noted that the number of Georgians has also increased in Akhaltsikhe, and in addition many Armenians speak Georgian in public. 'Armenianized' Georgians were also mentioned, noting that they take pointing at Georgian roots as an insult. When it comes to older Akhaltsikhians, **some participants think that the number of Armenians is still decreased, while others think it is actually increasing due to higher birth rates** and because Armenians are not leaving any more.

All category groups except older Akhalstikhians regard increasing the number of Armenians as a problem: for some younger Tbilisians it is mostly connected with **the fear of creating Javakheti Autonomy, as well as losing “Georgianity”, Georgian culture, religion, values/ occasions of misappropriation.** Older Tbilisians say that in that **this can lead to threat of ethnic Georgians becoming minority in their country.** On the other hand it was noted that **Armenians have the idea of “Great Armenia” and consider Javakheti as Armenian land that has to be won back.** It was also mentioned that Armenians have been dwelled for long in Tbilisi as well, therefore feeling to have more rights there, than Georgians.

Younger Akhalstikhians have the similar opinion. Increasing number of Armenians is regarded as a problem by some participants and is mostly connected with the fact of increasing number of other nationality representatives in Georgians’ country and staying only Armenians finally. Unlike Tbilisi groups, here it was also mentioned that Armenians may have conflicts with newly settled Meskhetian Turks and Azeris. Apart from these, participants focused on the language problem, saying that Armenians do not speak Georgian on purpose, even when they know it, creating problems when it comes to service in the banks etc., neither have they intention to learn it. **Nevertheless according to another opinion increasing the number of Armenians will create competitive environment for Georgians which is a positive event.**

However older Akhaltsikhian participants **did not express that they see any problem in increasing the number of Armenians** saying that they compactly live in certain villages anyway, also it was noted that the situation may seem more apparent for the newcomer but those who live in Akhaltsikhe are get used to it. It was mentioned that there are no Armenian rallies any more therefore there is no problem nowadays. However at the same time participants expressed the “helpless” attitude regarding the issue, saying that Javakheti anyway belongs to Armenians already and Akhalkalaki Armenians are very much against of Georgians living there.

“At certain point it is a danger. Having many ethnic minorities is good but when it comes to preserving “Georgianity”, values... It endangers culture, religion, values. (...) Tolerance is good but there are facts of obvious misappropriations. We do not have the power. We do not defend ours.” (N3, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Do you know what the problem is? Now they erased our nationality from our ID cards, they erased our patronymic, etc. Our country is called Georgia. If Georgians are minority here and Armenians or Tatars suddenly decide to rename “Georgia” and call the country “the flower”, they will support this. If we are minority, there is a threat. Georgia belongs to Georgians and if others are too much, it is a problem already.” (N23, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“They think there is “Great Armenia” which has exit to the sea and is currently occupied. The perception of Armenians that living in Javakheti actually means living in Armenia that is temporarily occupied by Georgia, differs from what we call classical occupation. They do not consider that they are invading other’s territory (...) Moreover, the nature of Javakheti is more similar to Armenian nature, desert-like. (...) Georgian nobles mostly lived in villages and Tbilisi was a small trading city with lot of Armenians. Too many buildings belonged to them, were built by them. When you tell Avlabari Armenian, if you don’t like here, then go, he answers he has more rights here than any Georgian because his ancestor was here too.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“I don’t think it is a problem because there should always be a competition. Competition is very important for farther development and I think it is good if there is motivation for Georgians to be better than Armenians.” (N25, female, younger group, Akhalstikhe)

“We will not have any problem but Turkish Meskhetians are being settled here bit by bit. People say that if there is any conflict between them, then we’ll get in trouble. When it comes to us, we have conflict neither with these, nor with those.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhalstikhe)

“If there are two Georgian weddings in a month, there are 7 Armenian weddings.” (N44, female, older group, Akhalstikhe)

“There is no problem at all. They are compactly residing in villages and the land of the village is enough for them. It is their internal problem whether 1000 Armenian will live in the particular territory or 200 ones.” (N41, male, older group, Akhalstikhe)

“Anyway Javakheti is not ours any more. You cannot hear Georgian word there at all. Not even one Georgian lives in Akhalkalaki.” (N46, female, older group, Akhalstikhe)

Participants’ opinion about hypothetical situation of Georgia without Armenians

In order to better clarify whether participants find the increase of Armenians’ number problematic, they were suggested to imagine hypothetical situation where Armenians leave Georgia and they do not reside in this country any more. As in case of previous question for Akhalstikhe group “Akhalstikhe without Armenians” was suggested, while for Tbilisi group the question more was generally about Georgia.

In all categories positive as well as negative results were emphasized. Speaking about positive effects two basic opinions can be distinguished, regarding disappearing of the threat of ‘losing’ Javakheti region and Georgians gaining more job opportunities. According to younger Tbilisi participants, in case there are no Armenians in Georgia, **Georgian people, especially older generation will see much less threat regarding Javakheti region** on one hand, and **there would be no threat of separatism by Javakhetian radicals** on the other hand. **Older Tbilisians concentrated only on more job opportunities for Georgian people. Younger Akhalstikheans think that in this case Georgian people would become more ‘alive’, dedicated and hardworking (as Armenians would leave back lots of jobs, especially in service sphere), in addition Georgians would live in Georgia. Older Akhalstikheans mentioned that if no Armenians, they (Armenians) would not be able to consider Akhalstikhe as theirs any more. Unlike all the other category groups, they also noted that the prices of apartments would decrease as Armenians have good apartments in good places. Generally, unlike Tbilisians, some Akhalstikhean participants of both age categories expressed more excitement, mentioning that they would be quite happy if Armenians left or they said they would not care much.**

When it comes to negative effects of Armenians leaving Georgia, most common opinions were losing people in service sphere, as Armenians are stereotypically associated with artisans, hairdressers etc.; and losing diversity, the special ‘flavor’ of Georgia. In more details, according to younger Tbilisians **without Armenians there would never be beautiful buildings of Old Tbilisi which were built by them; number of service providing places staffed by Armenians will decrease, Georgian culture would**

lose its diversity; there would be no Ilia Chavchavadze⁷ because his mother was Armenian. Older Tbilisians have the same opinion that there would not be good artisans, shoe repairers, etc. anymore and Georgia will lose its special “flavor.” Akhlatsikhe younger participants also mentioned that there would be no more good hairdressers/artisans (phone repairers), in addition they emphasized that the city (Akhaltshike) would be emptied, and also Armenians bring activity and novelties to the city. Like all other groups, older Akhalstikhians also mentioned that in such case there would be no more yard keepers/artisans etc. and that diversity would be lost. Apart from the mentioned, following opinions were distinguished in the final category: **There would be no competition between Armenians and Georgians, while competition increases quality of products/services; Armenians always have the best products in their shops because unlike Georgians they import it from Russia; If there are no Armenians and Azeris in Georgia, there would be internal conflicts between Georgian regions; Many friends and neighbors would be lost; Kids would not be able to study the language in the interaction any more.**

“Hypothetically speaking there will be less threat perceived, especially by older generation when it comes to compactly inhabited region. (...) there is the fear that Javakheti would turn out the second Abkhazia. There would be no such fear any more. I do not think these fears are valid in case you give them opportunity of inclusion and encouragement. On contrary, you should give them the possibility to preserve their roots.” (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“There would be no threat of Javakheti anymore. Years ago Russian troop controlled Javakheti and even nowadays there is an organization “Javakh”, that wants separating from Georgia and attaching to Armenia. If considering the history and that the part of Kvemo Kartli situates in Turkey and Armenia today, this problem is pretty severe. I do not mean all Armenians but Javakhetian radical side.” (N3, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Probably we will not have good artisans any more, neither tile, nor shoe-makers. Georgia will lose a lot. Many people may feel ashamed to work on such jobs, or they may require double price that is not adequate to the work.” (N21, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Generally, ‘Georgia’ is a collective name and Avlabari Armenian, Ossetian or Abkhazian are all parts of this ‘Georgia’. If we do not understand the truth, it will be hard for us. It is not a shame to admit that ‘Georgia’ is the unity of various similar tribes.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“Both Georgians and Armenians may leave and I can handle it. Sometimes even my close people leave, so how can I interrupt those (Armenians) to go where they feel better? For instance they are not oxygen for me and I will still continue breathing and living normally.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhalstikhe)

“I’m sure 95% (of Georgians) would be relieved.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhalstikhe)

“There is no problem at all. They are compactly residing in villages and the land of the village is enough for them. It is their internal problem whether 1000 Armenian will live in the particular territory or 200 ones.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltshike)

⁷ Famous Georgian writer and public figure

“Anyway Javakheti is not ours any more. You cannot hear Georgian word there at all. Not even one Georgian lives in Akhalkalaki.” (N46, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Perceived neighborhood with Armenian person

As it is not unusual for Tbilisi inhabitants to have Armenians neighbors, Tbilisians appeared to be almost as familiar to Armenian neighbors as Akhaltsikhe participants. Some Tbilisi respondents even live in the part where Armenians mostly reside, while others remind someone else's experience.

In fact youngest groups of Tbilisi found it easier to name distinctions between Georgian and Armenian neighbors while older groups both in Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe mentioned that at the neighborhood level there are no differences.

Tbilisian youngsters reminded certain examples connected with Armenian neighbors that they find peculiar.

- **Armenians would not bring home something they had bought by daytime so that neighbors would not see it**
- **When another neighbor's husband was absent for a while, Armenian neighbor told her that he would have their car until he was back**
- **(Armenian neighbor) is very possessive regarding his part of yard/He may forbade you to put something there, for instance when you have something very heavy and need to put it down for a short time.**
- **Is not very attentive neighbor/would never share something (specific food, etc.)**
- **Armenian neighbor knew precisely what his neighbor had in his cellar.**
- **Did not let his neighbors to use his cellar temporarily although he had no need of it.**
- **Do not prepare lot of food when the guests were coming/Even Dolma⁸ is prepared only by New Year, like Georgians have Satsivi.**
- **Have colder relations with their children/they could not come and stay without calling prior, or leave grandchildren.**
- **Whenever they share certain food, they put exactly same number of something on the plate as the number of the family members they are giving to.**
- **Armenian neighbors left alone/marginalized Georgian kid in the yard**

Despite that at the same time it was also noted that Armenian neighbors are open and sociable.

- **Open to Georgian neighbors; possible to leave the door key with them; invite neighbors inside**
- **They are more sociable, visit each other.**

On the other hand, according to older Tbilisian **there is no special characteristic of Armenian neighbor**. Lot of participants have/had Armenian neighbor and according to them, **Armenians are quite good neighbors, hospitable and always ready to help, even more than Georgians.**

⁸ Traditional food, Armenian

Older Akhalstikhians also **do not think there is any difference between Armenian and Georgian neighbors**. On the other hand it was mentioned that **relations are different in Akhalstiskhe and Akhalkalaki/Tsalka, where Armenians are majority**. While in second case Georgians try to do something pleasant for Armenians, in Akhaltsikhe Armenians are expected to please Georgians.

Younger Akhalstikhians identified bit more characteristics. While some participants **cannot distinguish any specific “traits” of Armenian neighbors**, (saying that local **Armenians have adopted lots of Georgians ways when it comes to traditions and Georgians also have certain Armenian influence, especially when it comes to cooking**), others mentioned the specific ‘characteristics’, describing own Armenian neighbors as: **noisy; they keep distance though are not closed; friendly; having specific smell at home** (due to special meals).

As we can see generally younger participants were more prone to identify particular “traits”, while older ones mostly see no essential difference between Georgians and Armenians at the neighborhood level. Older Tbilisians even appreciate their Armenian neighbors more than Georgian ones. On the other hand older Akhaltsikhians underlined the factor of being many Georgians in Akhaltsikhe as well.

“My acquaintance lives in Avlabari. He has Armenian neighbor and says that they are quite peculiar. He says, if they buy something they will not bring it by daytime so that neighbors did not see it. He had another neighbor, always with some problems. Her husband was absent for a while and this (Armenian) neighbor told her that he would have their car until he was back. He says, they are making him crazy, saying illogical things.” (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“You can notice that he is Armenian. Different views, different mentality. He’s very different. Maybe something is acceptable for you but not for him and vice versa and different views could cause conflicts as he wants differently and Georgian would think differently in that certain situation. For instance his yard is a problem for him. He says he needs it because he could do something here in a year. He may forbade you to put something there, for instance you have something very heavy and need to put it down for a short time. Georgian would not pay too much attention to it. (...) I have Russian neighbor as well, so I can compare. He is much more attentive than Armenian. That day when they (Russians) cut a watermelon, they gave us half. I have never seen Armenian doing such thing. There is a big difference in this.” (N4, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I have Armenian neighbors and I can boldly say that I have far better relation with them than with Georgian friends. She feels the same way. Her grandchildren are visiting her currently from Yerevan. They sent her sweets from Moscow. She knows that I love chocolate, and when I visited her yesterday and the kids offered me, also asking to take it for my son. I took 2 ones and they asked to take more. They say Armenians are miser. I took as much sweets as I could.” (N15, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“They have lot of Georgian things in their family, traditions. They have celebrated many Georgian holidays together with us. Although they preserve their traditions as we do, Georgian influence is very noticeable among them. (...) There is Armenian influence on our cuisine, otherwise not as much. I have mostly noticed our influence among them, they like lot of Georgian traditional things.” (N27, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“30% of my neighbors are Armenians. They talk very loudly and we are disturbed. It is more shouting and screaming rather than talking. They use the loudest voice to call the kid. (...)“There is a bad smell (in their homes). My father used to say that we had to close our windows when they had theirs open and vice versa.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“As Georgian neighbors share fruits etc. with each other, Armenian neighbors do the same. There is no difference between relations of Armenian-Georgian neighbors and only Georgian neighbors in everyday life. (...) The kind of relations depends on the environment. Armenian is different in Ninotsminda, different in Akhalkalaki and different in Akhaltsikhe. (...) There are very few Georgian villages a bit farther from Akhalkalaki and all the best places are inhabited by Armenians. I’m not saying that this is either good or bad. It is historically this way. In Ninotsminda there is no Georgian village at all. In Tsalka population is mixed: Armenians, Greeks, Azeris. When Georgian is also being isolated with them, he becomes similar to them. When there are 10 people of certain nationality and you are the only one, involuntarily you become dependent on them. This Georgian knows that he is in Georgia but in that small place he thinks he should please them. Here we have the feeling that Armenians should please us, Georgian has the same feeling there that he should be on Armenian’s side. Your consciousness changes depending on the environment you live in.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Perceived friendship with Armenian person

Tbilisi participants are also familiar with Armenians when it comes to friendship. Generally they expressed quite positive attitudes towards being friends with Armenians. Some of the younger participants actually have Armenian **friends from Armenia** who they met on certain exchange programs, while others have local Armenian friends but it seems that these friends are **mostly those Armenians who are very integrated with Georgians** (speak Georgian, consider themselves Georgians). Older respondents too say **they have Armenian friends** (one respondent also had Armenian bridesmaid), that Armenians are capable of good friendship and according to one respondent they are far better than Georgians in this sense. Some older participants said that their children also have Armenian friends, while others expressed grievance that **younger generation is more nationalistic and snobbish**, bringing examples of own children.

Akhaltsikhe participants also say that it is common to have Armenian friends and that they have close ones. Younger Akhaltsikhians clarified that they were talking about **educated Armenians with civil consciousness**. Despite this, unlike Tbilisians, Akhaltsikhians mentioned certain distance that anyway exists between Armenians and Georgians. Although younger participants said that if **Armenian really makes friends with you, s/he will never betray, they think real friendship is quite seldom occasion - mostly Georgians make closer friendships with other Georgians and Armenians with other Armenians** as there are lots of differences and **Armenians also keep distance**. A **bit of less trust towards Armenians** was also mentioned in this case. Older Akhaltsikhians share the same opinion about distance saying that **Georgians and Armenians are still separate groups; they are not very fond of constantly hearing each other’s language**.

Akhaltsikhe participants were also asked whether Georgian and Armenian kids make friends with each other at school. Both age groups noted that mostly Armenians and Georgians study at

different schools, or at least different sectors. Younger participants added that Armenians only choose Georgian school if one of the parents is Georgian, or holding certain official position or hoping such career for the kid; but if Georgians and Armenians are in the same class, friendships happen and conflicts are much lesser in this age than among adults.

“I have Armenian friend but he is born here and is very different from immigrants. Immigrants are mostly looking for Armenian friend. I have Armenian friend and sometimes I’m joking that he may tell “You Armenian!” to someone. He is Armenian too but you cannot even tell it. You can tell it more about immigrants. For instance, in Avlabari, where I live, usually 3-4 Armenians stand outside. Not even one Georgian is there. Usually Armenians make friends with each other. Sometimes they make friends with Georgians but when it comes to really brotherly relations, they prefer each other. Probably Georgians would do the same in Armenia.” (N4, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I also have one friend and remembered just now that she is Armenian. She has Armenians surname. Plus she is a Georgian folk-dancer. You cannot even notice, she can’t even speak Armenian.” (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Personally, I have said many times that when it comes to friendship and support, Armenian is better than Georgian.” (N22, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“My opinion and my children’s opinion differ too much. They say why they (Armenians) should live in Georgia.” (N21, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“I have (Armenian) friend, we have normal relations. She may not come to you very close, sometimes we even have conflicts but she will stand by your side somehow until she sees other Armenian somewhere.” (N34, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“If I say Armenians are my childhood friends in Akhaltsikhe that would be untrue. There can be one among 10 people and even this happens seldom. There is no friendship such as Georgian guys have when they are together for 24 hours. They don’t make the same kind of friends with you.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“We are anyway different and both parties recognize this. We should be all right with each other but we should avoid the topics we have different opinion about. Frequent relation and contact provokes conflicts. If you are together every day, at least once you will talk about something.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I have close (Armenian) friends. It had never happened that I decided not to make friends with someone because he was Armenian. Friendship is built on similar views, positions. We don’t choose friends, we become friends. We don’t distinguish by ethnicity.” (N48, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Georgian and Armenians are anyway separate. There are two separate birzhas⁹ in our small city. Armenians sometimes attend Georgian birdzha, but I’ve rarely seen Georgians by Armenian birdzha.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

⁹ The practice of people meeting and talking usually at the same place

Marrying Armenian person

Generally participants do not seem very happy with the opportunity of their children marrying Armenians.

Opinions among Tbilisi youngsters were quite mixed regarding the issue: While for some respondents marriage with any foreigner appears to be unacceptable because of different traditions etc., others do not consider it as a problem at all. In between these two opinions some think marriage with Armenian is acceptable though not desirable, others approve marriage only with integrated Armenians.

Most of older Tbilisians **do not want their children to marry Armenians either**. . Some respondents are against marriage with any foreigner including Armenians. . It mentioned that **one wants to multiply own breed, not others**, although the possibility of love was not excluded. Some respondents said that children should be brought up patriotically so that they married only Georgians. Others dislike particularly Armenians; some say that they would rather have such relations with Russians. Unlike youngsters **apart from different traditions, culture, etc., darker physical appearance and poor health/illnesses attached to Armenian nation were named as reasons of disliking marriage with Armenians**. On the other one participant noted that **for developing national genetic it is important to mix it with foreign blood from time to time**.

Like Tbilisians Akhaltsikhian youngsters **do not seem to be very happy with such marriage**, while they mostly do not exclude the case of falling in love. It was said that although mixed marriages happen, they are not very frequent and Georgian, as well as Armenian parents try that their children married own ethnic group members.

While younger Akhaltsikhians also pointed at different traditions/religion/mind (psyche), unlike Tbilisians they added that Armenians are more chauvinist people and they “Armenianize” Georgian wives and husbands and children, and that compared to Georgian men Armenian ones are much more patriarchal, restrictive and sometimes abusive.

Older Akhaltsikhians also remembered certain examples of the mixed marriage; however **most of them are against Georgian marrying Armenian. Like all the other groups, they said** that Georgian should marry Georgian and there are different traditions/habits (although some participants also mentioned that some Armenian families are quite modern and do not follow certain traditions any more).

“I do not think this is acceptable for me because they have absolutely different traditions. For me it will not be acceptable to live in such family and adapt to other traditions. I’m Georgian and I will always implement my traditions.” (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I circled “yes” answer but I mean integrated Armenian. For instance I didn’t even remember that this girl (her friend) was Armenian. But only if he feels himself as Georgian, does not feel that he is different from me somehow.” (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I have asked my children not to marry at least Armenian and black-skinned person. Neither my husband, nor I are strict parents. If they say they love, we cannot resist but if they ask, I will express my opinion. It will be hard for them as well - friendship is one thing, marriage – another.” (N18, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“I cannot imagine my son or daughter marries Armenian. They are so ancient nation, full of illnesses. They have polluted, delicate health. The same goes to Jews and Kurds as well.” (N14, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“We are talking about normal issue that is called developing nation and national genetics. This is ordinary mathematical number representing the amount of blood that should be mixed with nation from time to time in order to make it healthier and avoid getting older. However moderateness is important in everything. If we are closed in our district, family, ethnicity, it is very bad for the nation. If we open too much, the same will happen to us as happened to Paris. (...) If my child will find worthy Armenian who will not come to my family to argue that Georgians are bad and this-that is Armenian... In case I notice any aggression, or course I would not want. If this Armenian will be as good as my Armenian friends who think in a Georgian way and value honesty and friendship, why not? I am sure that if my gene were mixed with Armenian gene, finally we would get a Georgian anyway.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“Armenians as well as Georgian prefer someone from own nation. If the parents are able to do what they want, they will not let their children to do this, but if not – then they get used to it finally.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“In Akhaltsikhe they say that it never happens that Georgian guy married Armenian girl and the kid studied at Georgian school. When Georgian guy marries Armenian girl, they say the family is ‘Armenianized’, when Georgian girl marries Armenian boy, they still say that the family is ‘Armenianized’. Georgian woman has to fight a lot to turn the family to own traditions because they are very chauvinist people. Forget Georgian name; you have to see what the names of Georgian women are. Therefore I’m definitely against the marriage of Armenian and Georgian. First of all, there is big difference when it comes to religion, culture, traditions. When somebody asks me I say that I prefer she married dirty Georgian than millionaire Armenian. I’m extremely against Georgian marrying Armenian because Georgian girls are very disadvantaged in this case. For them beating their wives is like petting. When the girls, teachers, visited us from Akhalkalaki they told stories that made me feel shocked, I though such things used to happen 50 years ago. The girl said that when her husband beats her too much, it means he misses her. I say the Georgian girl who knows this situation and still marries Armenian deserves this.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There are many barriers. We wouldn’t be able to adopt their traditions. I have seen many Georgian women married with Armenian and later divorced. Many of them probably bear.” (N46, female, older group, Akhalstikhe)

When given the choice between Armenian daughter-in-law and Armenian son-in-law, most participants in all category groups consider their daughter marrying Armenian is least acceptable option. Man influencing, changing his wife and giving surname to children were commonly named reasons. However some participants except in older Akhaltsikhe groups also mentioned the role of mother as being more influential for kids. The explanations were mostly gender-related, only in older groups was mentioned specific characteristics of Armenians in this sense. Older Tbilisians think that **Armenian daughter-in-laws are much more adroit and flexible in the family relations**. Older Akhaltsikhians say that they come with good dowry. Regarding Armenian men older Akhaltsikhians also mention certain Armenian ‘traditions’ that are not advantageous for women such as: men can be absent for years as they leave for working; among the very traditional and less modern Armenians daughter in law

has to wash the feet of her father-in-law, restricting from eating together with men (mostly in villages) etc.

Speaking in more detailed way following opinions were identified among younger Tbilisians:

- **No difference**
- **Mother influences her children, their language**
- **Man influences/changes his wife**
- **Man is major in family/influences family culture**
- **Man gives his surname to the children**
- **Daughter-in-law will live at your place, while you should let your daughter somewhere**

“It is very difficult because daughter-in-law has to live with you and in case of son-in-law, you should let your child somewhere. Both occasions are very hard because I want my family to live in Georgia.” (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“If considering cultural factor, man has the leading role in Georgia. Therefore he will be able to influence his wife in the family. He will be leading when it comes to family culture, values.” (N3, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

Similarly most of older Tbilisi participants **think that Armenian daughter-in-law is much better option** than Armenian son-in-law because it is **easier to change/influence or replace the daughter-in-law** (compared to son-in-law); **Armenians daughter-in-laws are much more adroit and flexible** (compared to Georgian ones); **children will have Georgian surnames**. On the other hand it was also mentioned that it is **better that your daughter married Armenian because it is the mother who transfers language, traditions and culture to the kid**. Other participants noted that both are equally unacceptable.

“(…)I want my grandchild to have Georgian surname and we will crush that mother. If a man is the man in the family, traditions will follow the surname. That is why I prefer daughter-in-law to be Armenian.” (N22, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“It is better to marry Armenian boy because in Georgia it is woman who brings the children up. The child may have Armenian surname but the family is run by a woman, mother. She will bring them up according to Georgian traditions and therefore they will be more convenient for Georgia. Father is always out and that is why I’m saying it.” (N23, male, older group, Tbilisi)

In the same way while for some younger Akhaltsikhian both options are equally unacceptable, some said **it is better to have Armenian daughter in law** because **Georgian boy will influence her when it comes to language and traditions**. In contrary, other participants think **woman is more capable of influencing children, therefore preferring that mother was Georgian**.

In addition, it was noted that Armenian boys are more interested in Georgian girls that Georgian boys in Armenian girls as Georgian girls are more beautiful. It was also mentioned that some **Georgian boys in Akhaltsikhe married Armenian girls for money**, as local Armenians are far richer than Georgians.

“For instance, my cousins don’t know Georgian at all. If the (Armenian) boy marries (Georgian girl) kids will not know Georgian, it will be lost somehow. I interact with them in Russian. Why should I interact in Russian when they have Georgian mother and could learn Georgian? In case husband is Georgian, he would promote his language or at least kids would be bilingual.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

Older participants from Akhalstikhe regarded **daughter marrying Armenians as least acceptable** option (consequently, participants prefer Armenian daughter-in-law to Armenian son-in-law). Following reasons were named:

- **It is better that Georgian girl reproduced Georgian, rather than Armenian nation/ Armenian daughter-in-law will anyway reproduce Georgians (Georgian surname)**
- **Armenians have certain traditions that are not advantageous for women such as: men can be absent for years as they leave for working; among the very traditional and less modern Armenians daughter in law has to wash the feet of her father-in-law, restricting from eating together with men (mostly in villages) etc.**
- **Armenian daughter-in-laws come with good dowry**
- **You can still change the daughter in law (make her adopt your traditions)**

“For instance, my cousins don’t know Georgian at all. If the (Armenian) boy marries (Georgian girl) kids will not know Georgian, it will be lost somehow. I interact with them in Russian. Why should I interact in Russian when they have Georgian mother and could learn Georgian? In case husband is Georgian, he would promote his language or at least kids would be bilingual.” (N30, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“If your daughter marries Armenian, it means you are losing your child, they will not let her back.” (N32, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Cultural Capital

The sub-topic of cultural capital intended to understand participants’ perceptions of Armenian culture, education and intelligence and the language problem.

Armenian culture

When talking about Armenian culture, hospitality and the dish Dolma (tolma) was named in all category groups. Unlike Akhaltsikhians Tbilisi participants (both age categories) also remembered Tbilisi born ethnic Armenian film director Parajanov, Armenian cognac and emphasized the unique writing script of Armenians; when discussing cultural differences they mentioned monophonic character of Armenian songs versus **Georgian polyphonic ones. Both Tbilisi groups included misappropriation of Georgian cultural heritage in the discussion.**

While younger Tbilisians admitted that they do not have much knowledge regarding Armenian culture, Older Tbilisians and Akhaltsikhe participants focused about specific traditions connected with wedding or funeral rituals. In addition older Akhaltsikhians admitted that local Georgians are less familiar with Armenian folklore than vice versa.

I will discuss information gained in each category group in details.

When talking about Armenian culture younger Tbilisians participants mentioned that **one of the oldest writing scripts** belongs to Armenians. Famous film director **Parajanov** and Armenian-American rock band **System of a Down** were also named. When it comes to dishes they reminded **Dolma, Baklava, Armenian bread, Shawerma, cream soup**. Participants say that hospitality **among local Armenians** is the same as in Georgian families. Others say it rather depends on specific families rather than nationality. However it was also noted that **participants don't know much about Armenian culture as they were not taught anything at school about it**. Talking about culture again brought the topic of misappropriations such as CDs of Georgian folksongs issued in Yerevan. Some participants said that **they would like to know more about Armenian culture, find out where mentioned "misappropriations" and conflicts come from; learn about Armenian customs and traditions, theatre**. Others expressed no such interest, either because they are not interested in cultures or would like to learn about Eastern cultures such as Chinese or Japanese.

It was mentioned that Armenian and Georgian cultures are rather similar unlike Georgian and Azeri.

Following differences of Georgian and Armenian cultures were identified:

- **Armenians preserved their history better – unlike Georgians they practiced paying the money to the enemies not to destroy their monasteries**
- **Georgians practice polyphonic singing, while Armenians - monophonic singing**
- **Armenians dance more during the feasts while Georgians mostly drink and say toasts**
- **Armenians preserved the tradition of family dinner, while Georgians lost it**
- **Armenians produce cognac**
- **Religious differences**
- **Churches are different (architecture)**
- **Armenian culture is more unanimous and closed than Georgian one/Georgian Orthodox Christianity was more open to western influence than Armenian Gregorian Church**

"It is a culture of most ancient writing script. In Caucasus there are Armenians and Georgians who have really ancient culture. They have so much their own that it would be well enough. In spite of that we are still looking at each other." (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

"When it comes to modern Armenian culture, I think about foreign singers and the System of a Down. It is already an offspring of different culture but I think their uniqueness is connected with this (being Armenian). (...) Near Dilijan there is the monastery. Although I respect and adore Georgian architecture a lot, I was really shocked. It was 12 century monastery with massive stones... I think they have so much preserved... We were not as lucky; they (enemies) used to ruin them (monasteries). They practiced paying money to enemies so that they did not touch theirs. We never practiced it. I think they have very characteristically cool architectural style." (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

"I want to study about the creation of writing script, as they argue that script (Georgian) is created by them. I want to study why do these stereotypes exist. We were taught that Georgian was from Nikopsia to

*Daruband*¹⁰. *But this is reciprocal process. We think they misappropriated. They think we misappropriated. Then why they think that we misappropriated? It is very interesting to study why they have such attitudes and where these conflicts come from.*” (N7, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

Like younger Tbilisians in older group Tbilisi participants also mentioned **Parajanov**, in addition Tbilisi-born Armenian film director; Armenian **painter who was a watchman at the same time; unique writing script; hospitality**. They remembered various foods such as **Dolma, Ajapsandali, Baklava, Armenian bread, Armenian cheese, cognac, etc.** One participant also noted that Armenians have **sad but empty eyes** and this is visible in their drawings and icons as well.

When it comes to differences between Armenian and Georgian cultures here was also mentioned that **Georgians have polyphonic songs while Armenians – monophonic; Armenians do not have tamada at the wedding feast, while Georgians – do and general wedding ceremonies are different too; when it comes to marriage, the bride is chosen by boy’s family** and in case bride will not turn out virgin, mother-in-law brings her back to her family, while Georgian boys do not even make their parents aware and marry girls who are not virgins or were already married once. Apart from that it was noted that although Armenia has quite rich culture, **Georgian culture is still superior including the writing script. Misappropriating authorship on Georgian cultural heritage** by Armenians was also mentioned.

“While in Georgia couples fall in love and suddenly run away to marry, in Armenia there is still preserved the tradition that mother, father, grandmother respectively visit bride’s family. The girl is chosen in prior. This happens in 99% of cases in Armenia. However I don’t know how it is among youth, there are always differences among generations. When I have unmarried daughter in Armenia, she sits at home. She does not entertain in bars and clubs. Then a relative is looking for, asking around, they agree. If not 99%, 90% is definitely this way. They visit the family, see the girl, if they get consent, then they have huge tradition of engagement. On the other hand, in Georgia your son may marry non-virgin or once already married woman without your awareness. In Armenia when the bride turns out not to be virgin, her mother-in-law brings her back to her family; if she is a virgin, the mother-in-law gives her red apples. These are the traditions they will never disobey. This is the biggest difference, this is their culture.” (N22, female, older group)

Younger Akhalsikhians described **specific wedding and funeral traditions that Armenians practice and looks different for Georgians** such as: taking the bride for shopping prior to the wedding and buying the precious fur and golden jewelry for her; playing Drum & Garmon at the funeral; having funeral and Ormotsi¹¹ together or the day after funeral; only those who are chosen by the family leader (man/husband/father), go to funeral feast. It was also noted that while Akhalsikhe Armenians are still closer to Georgian traditions, women in Yerevan are absent at cemetery, as well as the following feast. **Food such as Dolma, which according to participants Georgians like and cook often, Khada (pastry), Armenian bread named “Qatsi” , tomato barbeques were mentioned.** When it comes to hospitality, **participants agree that Armenians are very hospitable**, although according to some participants not as much as Georgians, while others think they are even more hospitable. Some

¹⁰From the Georgian chronicle of the 11-th century “Life of Georgia” Georgia’s prosperity was expressed by formula “From Nikopsia to Daruband”, i.e. from the North-Eastern Black Sea littoral to The Derbent gateway, on the western shore of Caspian Sea

¹¹The farewell feast on 40-s day after the funeral, when Georgians believe the spirit of the dead leaves the earth

participants said that **when it comes to literature Yerevani Armenians have real good culture unlike Akhaltskhe Armenians who are more interested in property and money and less interested in education.**

“When you are following the funeral procession and it is over, the family leader touches certain people and only these people are allowed to attend funeral feasts and other rituals. Among Georgians it is different – everyone can attend.” (N29, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“They have absolutely different weddings. When it comes to literature, I think they don’t have normal one. They may have one or two writers. I don’t mean Yerevan Armenians, they have a great culture. It is hard to talk about culture with local Armenians they are not interested in anything except gold and property. Education and knowledge is not a priority, it may appear the last one among their values.” (N32, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

Older Akhaltsikhian participants mentioned **hospitality and traditional wedding**, as well as **traditional holiday of people soaking each other with water**. When it comes to food, respondents mentioned **Dolma**. It was also noted that generally **Armenians have very tasty cuisine, even tastier than Georgians**. Participants admitted that although **Georgians and Armenians live together Georgians are not as familiar with Armenian dances/folklore as Armenians are with Georgian one**. According to them **culture of local Armenians is not as developed as it would be in Armenia**. However it was also noted that **compared to earlier period there are at least some Armenian folk groups currently**. On one hand it was mentioned that **the local Armenians should be more active themselves and present their culture** (folk dance/singing groups); on the other hand it was noted that **Georgia’s Ministry of Culture should take care of it**.

“Armenians cook better Dolma, Georgians cook better khinkali. Armenians know how to host well. Georgians also know. Georgians have weddings with 500 guests. Armenians do it another way. From my experience we don’t have as much cultural relations. Maybe Armenians do not have opportunity to reveal own cultural aspects here. They do not have many cultural traditions here, mostly it happens in Armenia. (...) They are very closed in this sense. They need to be supported. They have certain tradition in villages when they soak each other with water. This is pure Armenian tradition but we don’t even know it well. We have never participated. If Armenians take part in our traditions, we also have to participate in theirs. (...) It’s been so long we live in Akhaltsikhe and we do not know each other’s traditions. We don’t know what the level of their culture is. We (Georgians) have 3 dance groups which perform at concerts and they watch it whether they want it or not. Therefore they are more familiar with ours than vice versa. It would be nice to share. This makes nations closer. When you join their holiday and do what they do – it is nice.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Perceived intelligence and education of Armenian people

Generally all category groups mentioned that Armenians are more oriented towards practical occupation and handicraft rather than towards higher education, while both Tbilisi groups clearly differentiated Tbilisi and Javakheti Armenians.

I will discuss opinions expressed in each category in more details:

Younger Tbilisians **denied that any difference in natural talent/intelligence could exist** between Georgian and Armenians. On the other hand they distinguished between Tbilisi Armenians and Javakheti Armenians; as well as more generally - between Georgia's Armenians and Armenia's Armenians. It was noted that **in Armenia people are very educated, know many foreign languages and are very hard-working**. However it was also stated that **state universities in Armenia provide lesser quality education compared to Georgian as they are more in accordance with Russian education system while Georgia's education is more harmonized with Western one**. Although when it comes to private universities, Georgia and Armenia provide equally high quality education. At another point participants noted that situation of Armenians in Georgia is quite different, as **Georgia's Armenians having own schools are not familiar with Georgia's history/culture**. Some participants noted that **local Armenians around them are more oriented towards practical occupations and marriage rather than towards higher education**. The severe **problem of education in Javakheti region compared to Tbilisi** was also mentioned, the **problem of region is worsened by inability of speaking Georgian**.

"When it comes to my surroundings, education level is quite low, almost no one pays attention to further education; they are more oriented towards practical occupation and marrying." (N9, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

"Armenians of Armenia and Armenians of Georgia are absolutely different categories. Those who live here do not have convenient conditions to obtaining education. There is not even Armenian literature here. The view that Armenians are not developed is extremely wrong. I am sure there are very many talented people. Just they do not have convenient conditions in Georgia for education. Let's take Javakheti, children do not even know that Georgia is bordered by Black Sea." (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

"I know that in State universities there is lesser quality education in Armenia compared to Georgia. But in private universities quality is much higher. In our private universities there is no less quality education as well. However State education is much better with us. They always had problems regarding the credit-system; I guess they changed it now. Georgians go mostly to Europe and US for education while they prefer Russian education in Armenia, therefore their educational system is more flexible with Russian one." (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

Older Tbilisians say that compared to Armenians, **Georgians are more intelligent and educated as Armenian are mostly oriented towards more practical handicraft rather than higher education**. It was also mentioned that there is a big difference between Tbilisi and Javakheti Armenians, where children are forced to go to Armenian schools and cannot acquire Georgian language. On one hand it was said that because of incorrect politics lot of Georgia's Armenians go to Yerevan for studying and mostly stay there, while on the other hand it was mentioned that while Georgian applicants are required to do their best at the united national exams, Armenians and Azeris have much easier program. When asked to talk about Armenia's Armenians, participants remembered composer Khachaturian, although some respondents doubted he had Georgian roots. On the other hand, it was noted that **while in Georgia the education fee is high and applicants are quite a lot, in Armenia there are many professional technical colleges where one can continue their studies after 8-9 grades**. It was mentioned that **Armenia also has better higher education institutions with lot of famous scientists. Much better**

Aviation school was named as an example. It was also noted that **Armenians have more opportunities to go and study abroad as they have much stronger Diasporas.**

“I don’t think their intelligence reaches Georgian’s intelligence. I don’t think they are as included in higher education and they are as obsessed with it.” (N15, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Armenians (in Armenia) have much more opportunities to study in Europe and abroad generally, because their Diasporas are much stronger in Europe as well as in US and elsewhere. We agreed that they are not ashamed of any job. In our reality there were professional colleges and for Georgian it was a punishment. If only the parents could not afford saving the child who did not study, they would take them to these colleges. Those, who couldn’t afford exchanging the school, preferred that way. However studying in such college was very shameful. In Armenia there is no such problem. In contrary; learning and obtaining profession is not shameful. I know that they have more opportunities when it comes to higher education as well; they have many famous scientists. Armenian aviation school is also far better than Georgian one. When it comes to Georgia’s Armenians, many of them leave for Yerevan because of our incorrect policy. It means that talented part of Georgia’s Armenians study in Yerevan, get used to life there and mostly stay there too. Less talented part stays in Georgia. There is serious tendency of the flowing brains out from Georgia, especially when it comes to Georgia’s Armenians.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

When it comes to younger Akhalsikhians, on one hand participants mentioned that the **local Armenians are mostly oriented on handicrafting (being artisans) from the early age**, which is also affected by early marriages that are common for Armenians. Also, according to them, handicrafting is connected with more freedom as Armenian students cannot fully self-realize in the universities because of inability to speak good Georgian. In contrary it was noted that **Armenians are quite good students at the university and they study hard**, even though they get higher education for free. It was also mentioned that Armenians often get higher education in Moscow or Yerevan to study something serious, for instance dentistry, sometimes even stay there as well. About Armenia **it was mentioned that the level of education in Armenia is as corrupted as it was in Georgia before 2003.**

“There is a 0 grade before the first grade to prepare them for university and study Georgian and Armenian there. It is rather preparatory and they learn subjects of the program they have chosen. I think they mostly choose handicrafting because it gives them more freedom and no frames. Majority cannot speak good Georgian, cannot realize themselves in the university as it needs years – they had been studying at Armenian school for whole life and were given good grade in Georgian just like that. They don’t know the grammar and cannot pass the United National Exams. What can they do? They cannot stay without a job, therefore they choose handicrafting.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhalsikhe)

“They marry at a very young age. The family needs to be supported, which cannot be handled by the student. When 16 year-old girl marries, she is either hairdresser or a nail specialist and the boy is either taxi driver or a goldsmith. They chose the professions which bring good profit. (...) In seldom cases they are the dentists because being dentist brings very good income. Nowadays most of dentists in Akhalsikhe are Armenians. They have been educated in Yerevan and then in Moscow, mostly because of financial profits. They are not sure if they get a job after graduating the university while both goldsmith and hairdresser are professions bringing more income.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhalsikhe)

On one hand older Akhaltsikhians say that **there is no difference between Georgians and Armenians when it comes to it educational level.** It was said that **it depends whether it is remote village, ‘better’ village or the city.** It was noted that in Akhaltsikhe there is Armenian and Georgian-Russian school of the same level. Armenians mostly study at Armenian schools and at Russian sector of Georgian school. After it they mostly prefer to go to Russia or Armenia as they are not Georgian-speaking and after graduating settle there. As currently Armenians have certain advantages (0 grade for language) for the university, it was also noted that many Armenians prefer to enter Akhaltsikhe university and get a job in Georgia then. On the other hand here as well was noted that **Armenians are more oriented towards being artisans/handcrafting rather than education,** even in case of talented kids and only few go to universities; especially when it comes to villages. It was said that according to Armenian tradition woman has to marry and be a housewife while the men used to work far in Russia to support the family.

“Education level is the same among Armenians and Georgians. N2 secondary school of Akhaltsikhe is Armenian and it is taken care in the same way when it comes to books and teachers. Distant villages have worse schools, better villages have better schools, better teachers; and the working language is Armenian. However the goal of using secondary education is different. They cannot use this knowledge in Georgia anymore and have to leave to continue higher education in Armenian. Educated ones would not return here. (...) Where can he apply in Tbilisi to continue higher education in Armenian? Now they try to enter Georgian universities after Armenian secondary education. They are given certain advantages. The parents from a distant village, at least 90% of them, prefer their children to study in Akhaltsikhe University and find the job there rather than sending them to Armenia. But the education system is not arranged in a way that all the Armenians were able to study here and use the knowledge later. If they get Armenian secondary education here and higher education in Armenia or Russia, then they stay there.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Armenian families are more oriented towards learning handcrafting. Why all rubbish-men and shoe makers are Armenian? As soon as children graduate the school, teach them handcrafting rather than give the higher education.” (N39, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“The girls mostly marry at the age of 16-17. They say they would get old until they graduate. Mostly they learn handcrafting – pedicure, manicure, cosmetic. There are few who study (at higher universities), at most 5% in Akhaltsikhe. The rest of them go to Russia or Yerevan. The boys have just started to enter the universities. Earlier they did not know Georgian language and had to continue studying somewhere else.” (N45, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Language problem

Generally, when speaking about language problem, Tbilisi participants mostly emphasize Armenians of Javakheti, while Akhaltsikhians distinguish between Akhaltsikhe and Akhalkalaki/village Armenians, saying that the language problem is more severe in Akhalkalaki and nearby villages. Both age groups of Akhaltsikhe mentioned that Akhalkalikian Armenians are more prone not to talk Georgian deliberately, rather than there really exists a problem of understanding the language. In addition both Akhaltsikhe groups noted that the situation of learning language greatly improved lately.

I will follow groups of each category seperately:

Most of younger Tbilisians say that Armenians of Georgia should know Georgian. Among the named reasons we can distinguish between **“they should know Georgian because they leave in Georgia” and the reasons connected with perceived needs of Armenian population: to get education in Georgia instead of Armenia and be more successful in this way; to integrate with Georgians; to get a job/be represented in parliament or public offices.** Although other participants also emphasized the necessity, a bit different opinion was that **learning Georgian should not be an obligation for Armenians** in case they can communicate in Russian or English and they have no need of it.

According to older Tbilisians, **inability of speaking Georgian is more obvious in Javakheti rather than in Tbilisi.** Some respondents say there is no such problem in the Capital, while others mention there are still some language-connected problems in Tbilisi as they cannot even speak good Armenian, not to mention Georgian or Russian. Participants agree that **Armenians of Georgia should definitely know Georgian if they have any ambition to live fully in Georgia.**

Akhaltzikhe younger participants noted that **there is no language problem in Akhaltsikhe, while it really exists in nearby Armenian villages and Akhalkalaki.** The closer the village is to Akhaltsikhe, the better is the knowledge of Georgian language. Some respondents also mentioned **that sometimes Armenians either pretend not to know Georgian (when they hear something not profitable for them), or do not speak it on purpose.** The opinions were divided whether **it should be necessary for Armenians to learn Georgian** by creating environment where one will not go far without knowing Georgian or **it should depend on the wish of particular person.**

As younger ones, older Akhalsikhians also consider **language problem is more apparent in villages rather than in Akhaltsikhe.** Here as well it was noted that in **Akhaltzikhe many Armenians know Georgian language.** The problem is **that they do not speak it on purpose; and some do not want to learn Georgian consciously,** while **in Akhalkalaki and villages Armenians do not need Georgian at all.**

“I think all citizens of Georgia should know Georgian. I do not mean the excellent level but it is embarrassing not to be able to respond on your “hello”. It is good for them to integrate into the Georgian society as they have created their micro cultures, to get a job, to be represented in parliament. In any public office they should know Georgian.” (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Let’s say I am citizen. Why should I learn Georgian? I can speak Russian, English; it does not interrupt with my job. If it does not interrupt, there should be no obligation. They should learn if only they need it.” (N10, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Since there have been special programs in Javakheti and the new generation of our teachers goes there to teach Georgian language and literature, I think situation got bit better. It is very difficult but our newly graduates are handling this quite well.” (N22, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“I have been a debate trainer and it was a catastrophe with Russian school. (...) Of course they do not know Armenian well; they do not know enough Russian for debates either. I addressed to the director and he asked how they can speak Georgian or Russian, when they do not speak even Armenian. They cannot speak any language well. If they leave here, they should know the language so that their rights were never

violated. When you do not know the language, than you say that you were disadvantaged...” (N18, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“It also depends on a distance from Akhaltsikhe. Those who often have to come here and trade, are more aware (of Georgian language).” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“When you go to them to talk about something they may speak to you in Russian but if they have certain financial interest, for instance it is a hairdresser and you need to have a haircut, then they understand (Georgian) very well. If you ask them to cut your hair so that you could pay for it later they will not understand because they don’t want to.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“You should not force them to learn the language but you should create the environment where Armenian realizes that he cannot get a job without knowing Georgian language. (...) I think everyone who lives in Georgia should know Georgian. Nobody says that Armenian should know Georgian language in Armenia but as we live in Georgia they should know.” (N25, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I think there should be a wish (of learning Georgian). I cannot agree with the necessity but it is desirable. The better they are at Georgian, the fewer problems we’ll come across; there will be more understanding towards each other.” (N27, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I work in the shop and any Armenian who enters it never asks the cost of the product in Georgian. They ask it in Armenian although they know Georgian. Or they ask it in Russian and when you don’t answer back they feel annoyed. I had been working in the beauty salon as well. Armenians would enter and ask if Armenians worked there. If you answered in Armenian they would sit, if not, they would leave.” (N46, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Probably everyone knows Georgian in Akhaltsikhe but there are regions where they really don’t know and it is caused by our inability of motivating them, they don’t need the language there in fact. In Akhalkalaki they note that they don’t need Georgian language. Even at the markets and bazaars, that is the place of real contact, they easily go with Armenian because the seller will anyway serve them regardless the language they talk.(...) Those who live in Akhaltsikhe know Georgian language. Another thing is whether they actively use it or not. In the villages where there are only Armenians and they are not mixed with Georgian population, many of them do not know the language as they really don’t need it. As the state language is Georgian those who do not know Georgian should not be employed at public office.” (N48, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“What are we doing for it (so that Armenians learned Georgian)? When I enter the shop, they ask what I want in Armenian. First of all I don’t know Armenian and I cannot speak. I wouldn’t talk in Russian as well so that they have to talk to me in Georgian. Let them tell the cost of the product in Georgian. That’s what I do. (...) He (Armenian) is obliged to know Georgian and talk to you in Georgian. If they can’t speak Georgian they should work neither at the shop, nor at public office.” (N37, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I don’t think Armenians have antipathy towards Georgian language. They just did not need it before. I don’t think any person in the world would refuse to study the language if given the opportunity.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

When discussing the ways of **problem solution** Tbilisi younger participants mentioned that Armenians should learn Georgian, and there should be the will of the state to make it happen. **Strict grading at schools teaching Georgian** language and **general bilingual teaching in Armenian inhabited region** were named. Participants noted that the **State should make Georgian language necessary**, so that it was clear you cannot go far without Georgian. Participants also remembered examples when Armenians sometimes express aggression towards learning Georgian as they **feel threatened that they will lose own ethnicity and become Georgianized**.

Older Tbilisians say there **should be duty to learn Georgian; there should be request and help initiated by the State, such as free language courses; providing ethnically mixed camps. Georgian language programs/young Georgian teachers in Javakheti** were also mentioned, saying that they improved the existing situation.

Akhalsikhians talk about already improved situation in this sense. Younger participants say that **the situation about knowing Georgian has improved in Akhalsikhe during last few years** as Armenians more frequently wish and consider necessary to learn the language. Several reasons of it were named: **they learn Georgian from the childhood in Armenians schools; they want to have good jobs for which Georgian is necessary, there is 0 grade in the universities, where Armenians learn only Georgian language**.

Older participants also agree that recently Georgian language became more popular and mostly younger generation of Armenians is able to speak Georgian. They are also unanimous that the local Armenians should learn Georgian. Several solutions were proposed such as **more lessons of Georgian language at school; having Georgian teacher at kindergarten, ordinary Georgians not speaking Armenian with them**.

“First of all the attention should be paid to Georgian and Russian schools where Georgian language is taught. Those who study, they learn. Those who do not study, they are anyway granted grades and move to the next stage without any problem. In case they do not get grades and are not moved to the next stage, they will actually learn. One should start learning at school; when one is older it is difficult then.” (N4, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I think if teaching Georgian is not implemented at state level, than we cannot ask them to speak Georgian. Everything should be natural; it is natural process that they are citizens of our country. School education should be bilingual naturally and then there will be natural wish to communicate in Georgian. As before they used to teach Armenian and Russian at school, there was Armenian and Russian.” (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“When my sister tried to teach them, sometimes they responded with aggression that they are Armenians and they do not want to be Georgianized. They thought this would make them losing own Armenianity. She used to tell them to come to Tbilisi for higher education as they would be more successful here. They thought it would separate them from Armenia. It was a problem for them” (N5, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“It would be very good to restore the camps with many Georgian and less Armenian kids in the places where it is impossible to learn Georgia naturally because of non-Georgian environment. Children have one unique trait – they can learn the language in a month.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“It (Georgian language becoming popular among Armenians) was also provoked by the condition that for getting a job and being successful those who are educated should also know Georgian.” (N28, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There is Armenian school in Akhaltsikhe. Armenians do not study at Georgian school. They have lessons of Georgian language but very few. There should be more lessons of Georgian. Kindergarten should also be Russian or Georgian because Armenians know Russian and Armenian. They should start learning Georgian from kindergarten. If they have Georgian teacher in kindergarten, s/he would teach them at least something. When the kid doesn’t hear Georgian in kindergarten, lives in Armenian settlement, goes to Armenian school, it is very hard to learn Georgian then.” (N45, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Georgians learning Armenian language in Azerbaijani-inhabited areas of Georgia

In all age and place category groups participants noted that Georgian children learn Armenian in communication and this happens quite naturally.

Younger Tbilisians say that in addition **Armenian is rather easier language**. Tbilisian youngsters also criticized that generally **Georgians easily turn to different language**, although the necessity of Armenians speaking Georgian was emphasized here as well.

Older participants on one hand say that especially for children **it is easier to learn the language during communication and the more language you know the better for you**. On the other hand it was also noted that **Georgians should not learn Armenian in order to communicate with Armenians**.

Both age groups from Akhaltsikhe emphasized that earlier it was more common for Georgians to speak Armenian with Armenians, while it is changed in newer generation. Despite younger Akhaltsikhians mentioned that newer generation has some kind of protest against learning Armenian, some participants expressed the wish to learn Armenian, some who already know it said that they try to display positive attitude by speaking Armenian and then Armenians also speak Georgian. They say **lot of Georgians can speak Armenian as they learn it from the communication; it depends on the wish of specific person and should not be obligatory**.

Nevertheless **some older Akhalstikhians said that they don’t want to learn Armenian/try not to speak Armenian even if they know it**. It was also noted that earlier Georgians were more prone to speak Armenian with Armenians as one hand there were more Armenians before, on the other hand because of showing off.

“He is born here and this is his country. He should learn Georgian because it is a state language. Georgian should not learn though he can learn if he wants. You should not have communication problem in your country, Georgian shouldn’t have communication problem. In Germany it is the same – if you do

not know German and the history of Germany, you cannot become a citizen. This principle is acceptable for us too. Language problem was the fault of Soviet Union. Language of communication was Russian, therefore there was need for neither Georgian, nor Armenian. Our new generation does not speak Russian. According to some research new generation learns Georgian language.” (N9, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“No, I am a patriotic mother and I will bring up my children well - they will not have a wish (to learn Armenian language) but if they have it anyway, it depends on them. In all schools of Georgia Georgian language should be taught well. (...) There should be no obligation. Not because they are majority. I am in Georgia and they should learn Georgian. But it depends on my will. There are occasions when you know (Armenian) but do not want to talk in purpose. If you force me to speak foreign language in my country, if I’m lost in Georgia, won’t I be more lost elsewhere? It depends on my will but he (Armenian) should be obligated to know Georgian as he is in Georgia.” (N13, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“When it comes to Georgians learning Armenian, even in all Georgian environment with only one Armenian the kid may make friends with this one and learn from him. I would be happy in case this happens to my kids because each language is like a science.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“I think there should be a wish (of learning Georgian). I cannot agree with the necessity but it is desirable. The better they are at Georgian, the fewer problems we’ll come across; there will be more understanding towards each other.” (N27, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“My children learned Armenian from the playground. Those Armenian kids also know Georgian. The parent should say it to you. I always say to my children to learn Russian and Armenian as well. Any language will be useful for them.” (N47, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Approximately 30 years ago when Georgians and Armenians were together, Georgian spoke Armenian to Armenians. When there were two Georgians and one Armenian they talked in Armenian with each other.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Languages of public services in Armenian-inhabited areas of Georgia

In each category-group various opinions were expressed regarding the language of public services in Armenian-inhabited areas of Georgia. Using only Georgian language can be distinguished as named in all various categories. In addition using **Georgian and Armenian temporarily in order to turn later to Georgian only** was named in both Tbilisi age groups. Both younger groups (Tbilisi and Akhalkalaki) mentioned the position translator (Tbilisians in context of using only Georgian language).

Following opinions were mentioned by younger Tbilisians concerning the language of public services in Armenian inhabited areas.

- **Georgian only (someone who helps with translating)**
- **Georgian and Russian**
- **Georgian and Armenian**

- **Georgian and Armenian temporarily (later to turn to Georgian only; Georgian should be encouraged, regarded as more prestigious)**
- **Georgian and English**
- **Georgian, English and Russian (+other language)**

According to older Tbilisians there should be used:

- **Georgian only as Georgian is the state language**
- **Georgian and Armenian temporarily (later to turn to Georgian only; Georgian should be regarded as major)**

Opinions were divided concerning the language of public services in Akhaltsikhe:

- **Only Georgian**
- **Georgian but knowledge of Armenian should be important/necessary (Organizations/state/municipality should provide free courses in Armenian language)**
- **Georgian but the employees should be able to speak Armenian, or at least Russian**
- **There should be the position of translator fluent at Georgian, Armenian and Russian**

On the other hand, older Akhatsikhians noted that Georgian should be used. According to the participants despite ethnicity no one can be employed in public offices without knowing the state language. Nevertheless it was also noted that **for Armenians public services should be provided in Armenian.**

“There should be neither English, nor Russian. There should be Georgian and Armenian. When 90% speaks in Armenian and you go and read to them or offer service in Georgian, they will understand nothing.” (N8, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I do not care if there will be Armenian, Chinese and French too but I think there should be Georgian, Russian and English everywhere. Georgian is a state language, while Russian and English is spoken by lot of people in the world. But if there is 6-7 languages, why not?” (N10, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“There should be some kind of propaganda, advertising (of Georgian language). If they speak only Russian and Armenian there, Georgian will be left behind. It’s good that they speak understandable for them language in bank, but Georgian language should be encouraged.” (N3, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“There should be Georgian and Armenian languages temporarily. When they learn Georgian, then it will be changed. In Samtskhe-Javakheti there are specific programs to teach Georgian language and youngsters learn. When they know Georgian, Armenian will disappear from usage.” (N9, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“It (bilingualism of public services) contains somewhat dangerous element. It is better to be Georgian only and in case someone does not know the language there should be a special department or a person who knows and is able to assist him/her. On the other hand if officially allowing Armenian language... Nobody knows what can happen there in 100 years...” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“We have to tell them that it (public services in Armenian) will be available for you by now because we understand the situation but from this certain date this will be changed. You have the time and opportunity to learn this language; and on the other hand, the generation will be changed. We worry about kids and teenagers that they learned; otherwise it is not a problem if a grandmother takes the kid to Pension Fund for writing the application. Let’s say that the given period will last for 5 years and after 2018 you cannot enter any public office without the knowledge of Georgian language.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“I don’t speak with them in Russian on purpose. I don’t know, I don’t understand. Am I obliged? Why should I bother myself? When they don’t know Georgian and you notice that they try hard that’s one thing but when they perfectly understand even your silent uttering that gets on my nerves.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“It (language of public services) should be Georgian. Why should it be Armenian? If there is Armenian employee, they usually stand even in long queue to get the service from Armenian staff member, while they can speak Georgian. If Armenian employee is having a break, they still don’t come to you and prefer to wait. When we are handing the pensions we usually go to the villages where there are mostly Armenians. It is really hard situation there.” (N36, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Not bilingual but there should be conditions to learn Armenian. If you got the job in the organization, they should provide 2-3 month-long language courses. I think nobody refuses such suggestion. It should be created by country, organization, government or the local municipality.” (N27, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“The language should be Georgian by all means. Any Armenian in local governing bodies of the municipality or police, should definitely know Georgian language. However there are very few Armenians (in this sector). If we are 50/50 in Akhaltsikhe, the same ratio should also be kept at such jobs but they should be able to speak Georgian. Without this they have the feeling of insecurity then and look towards Russia and Armenia. This is improving bit by bit. All the kids of age 18-20 can speak Georgian.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Additionally Akhalstikhians, younger as well as older group, expressed the grievance that Georgians are often excluded from certain opportunities because of not knowing Armenian.

Younger participants noted that **Georgians who cannot speak Armenian or at least Russian are often disadvantaged when it comes to** getting the job in public sector and participating in University-based exchange programs. Some respondents think that it is not fair as Georgians live in Georgia and in contrary, those who do not speak the state language, should learn it. Other participants think this is based on reality and Georgians who live in Akhaltsikhe should be able to speak at least Russian in order get a job in public sector. Similarly while discussing Armenian’s attitudes towards Georgians older Akhalstikhians also mentioned that **although everyday relations are good, Georgians are anyway disadvantaged in Akhaltsikhe – Georgians are more prone to learn Armenian that vice versa; Armenians are more likely to get a job.**

“Those who know Armenian language are far more privileged for getting job at public registry office compared to those who know other languages. For instance, if I speak Georgian and English I’m less

advantaged compared to those who speak Armenian. My cousin works there. She speaks Armenian and this knowledge saved her in lot of situations. (...) You live in Georgia... My country should provide environment so that they learned Georgian language not I learned Armenian.” (N25, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“In Akhaltsikhe, it is Georgians who are disadvantaged at the university. For instance, I was disadvantaged because I can’t speak Russian and could not go to Yerevan for the summer school. In the application I noted that I don’t know Russian and know bit of English but English is not required. All Armenians and Georgian who knew Armenian or Russian went there. I think when you live in Akhaltsikhe you should know at least Russian. Mostly Georgians are employed in banks. Then we should employ one Armenian who is fluent in Georgian, Russian and Armenian and will communicate with everyone... English is not popular in our city. It is in the capital and in big cities. We do not have as much tourists and Americans here as in capital. Here you should know Russian if you want to get a job in public office. So you don’t study it only for Armenians.” (N26, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“For instance, in Chinese shop they do not employ Georgian because of inability of speaking Armenian. They employ Armenians. I was dismissed from my job because of Armenian. They employed him and dismissed me, although the employers were Georgians.” (N46, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Political capital

Generally, there are mixed views whether Armenians are well represented in Georgian politics or not. On the other hand, although mostly in all category groups participants agree that those Armenians who are Georgia’s citizens should be involved in Georgian politics, it was also frequently emphasized that they should not be appointed on key positions.

I will review discussion in every category group in details.

Most of younger respondents from Tbilisi **do not know how Armenians are represented in Georgian politics, although it was mentioned that that there are more at local level. Older Tbilisians say Armenians are not well represented, at least not at central level. Likewise, according to younger Akhaltsikhians Armenians are better represented at local, than at central level.** It was noted that although deputy head of Municipality’s executive body is always Armenian, and the position of advisor-deputy was also created for Armenians, **Armenians are not really given any tools for decision making. In older Akhaltsikhe groups** some participants think that Armenians are not very much involved in Georgian politics, while according to others they are quite involved. Here as well it was noted that since Soviet period deputies of the heads have been Armenians.

While both groups of Akhalstikhe name the lack of education as one of the reasons why Armenians are not well involved in politics, Tbilisians have somewhat similar opinions: older Tbilisians **also mention the language problem and not having appropriate education as the barriers.** On the other hand, younger participants remind obstacles **such as inability of speaking Georgian language, lack of general feeling of belonging to Georgia and low civil consciousness.** It was also noted that **local Armenians do not show any initiative or interest to be involved in politics.** According to the participants **solution could be the state interference in raising civil consciousness, knowledge of**

Georgian language, providing “correct education and information” in Javakheti, and quotas or at least unofficial quotas in parliament.

Younger Tbilisians think that those who are Georgia’s citizens **should be involved** at local, as well as at national level. It was also noted that Armenians are **quite active at local level** as without local activists it is hard for any party to win. When it comes to representation in local self-government, it was noted that there should be a fair competition and it can happen that majority are Armenians, Georgian or both. However participants also admitted that Georgians will never let Armenians to be majority. **Being citizen and living in Georgia for the last few years was named as criteria** of being in self-government or parliament. Among older Tbilisians it was mentioned that Armenians are much **better represented at the local level** as promoting them was the state policy. It was noted that **although Armenians are not well represented there should not be more than currently**. On contrary it was pointed out **that more inclusion will lead to increasing civil consciousness**. Some respondents also indicated that they would not like to have ethnic non-Georgians on key positions. Younger participants from Akhaltsikhe think that **Armenians should be included in Georgian politics because Armenian can better understand fellow Armenians’ problems; also giving them such opportunity will make them feel important and provoke their sympathy towards Georgians** and they will learn Georgian. However **it was mentioned that giving them more decisive positions would be threatening on one hand because they are not as educated and on the other hand - they will be oriented only towards Armenian population’s interests** therefore it is better to ensure them with less ambitious positions for showing Armenians that the ethnic minority is not advantaged but at the same time having a control over them. Older Akhaltsikhians also agree that **Armenians should be involved in politics, in the self-government, as they are Georgia’s citizens and live together with Georgians; also in order to regulate possible conflicts between Armenians and Georgians and to present state interests to people; to understand Armenian populations needs better**. Nevertheless some participants mentioned obstacles such as not enough education for official positions. It was noted that Armenians should not hold key positions at central level in Georgia. In addition one participant said that according to Armenians in 2008 Akhalsikhe was not bombed because of Russians respect towards Armenians.

In addition younger participants from Tbilisi specifically emphasized the **tendency of Georgians to discredit other Georgian politicians by blaming them into being Armenian** while there are no similar cases of blaming in “being Azeri” for instance. 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** (as it is for instance with Turkey as it is like a window towards West); **Armenians associating with “misappropriating” Georgian cultural heritage that according to participants really have a 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**.

“All I can remember is one of the MPs. I know that there are lots of them at local level. For instance, parties were very active during the last elections as without local activists it is impossible to win the elections and the majority is ethnic Armenian there. On the other hand, they find it hard to be involved in Georgian politics because of the language problem, also because of low civil consciousness and the lack of the feeling of belonging to Georgia. (...) Apart from this, I see that politicians are stigmatized. For

instance, we had a head of parliament and later prime minister, Zhvania, who was always stigmatized as being Armenian.” (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I think our discussion goes to the point that state should take care of it. (...) State should create the ideology that if I live in this county and plan to live here, the situation of this country is directly connected to my well-being. When there is chaos in the country, I cannot be fine. In the next stage they should take care of education... or they are attached. The person who successfully completes educational system and the program is well planed, not like currently... God knows what they teach them and for what... (...) Education is very important. First of all it shapes your reasoning. That person (her Armenian acquaintance with Georgian education) is reasoning in a Georgian way today because he was given this kind of education. This is general function of education and after completing it let them work in any public office, it will not be distinguishable whether they are Georgians or not.” (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“State should make those people interested. I think the education is the head of everything. Correct education, correct information should be provided. Otherwise in Javakheti you can find literature with maps of Great Armenia where half of Georgia is considered as Armenia etc. I am not saying this about all of them though. Correct information, education should be provided.” (N3, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“If the state increases people’s civil consciousness in compactly inhabited regions, then accordingly local population will present own problems better because the necessities of this region will be different than of Imereti, for instance. I do not see any problem in the fact that this local population is Armenian. Even in current stage when civil consciousness is not as high, I think it is extremely important to have representatives in Georgian parliament. This is called unofficial quota; it happens unofficially but in every parliament there is always one Azeri... I think this is good because this concrete MP will be motivated to take more programs, to do more for his region from the civil point of view. This is good for region and for improving people’s attitudes too.” (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“When it is a state and its citizen has appropriate education and the will, nobody restricts him/her. Absolutely everyone can be involved. When one comes into politics and wants to be Prime-minister, minister or MP, they should be appropriately educated. There are elections. If he wins, then it is all right.” (N13, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“At the local self-governmental level there has been a position of Deputy Head of Municipality’s executive body for Armenians during the recent years. This was a rule. There should be Armenian and that’s all. He knew Georgian and also interacted with Armenian citizens. This is necessary because when it comes to Head of Municipality’s executive body and his deputy, he (deputy) has the same responsibility towards his citizens as others. When the new government was appointed suddenly they could not understand that it was as important and dismissed everyone. Later they understood that it was impossible to communicate (with Armenian people) and started to look for Armenian deputy. One person refused, another refused and finally they convinced the third one who is the deputy till today.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“In our Sakrebulo¹² there are 2-3 Armenians, in municipality – 1. There was deputy head of Municipality’s executive body and now there is position of advisor-deputy who is not really obliged to do anything. Just exists and sometimes does certain things. During the previous government the deputy head was quite active but by the current government it has no serious activities. It also depends on a particular person but they are not given any decisive tools, so that they decided something by themselves.” (N34, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“They live with us and even if Georgian finds it hard to understand their problems, at least Armenian would understand. They are our citizens and the government should take care of them as of Georgians. Therefore it is even obligatory that they were represented in every sector.” (N25, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“We should maximally make them feel that they matter for us. It also happens in order to gain their sympathy - as I try to make a step towards you, you should also make a step towards me. This step is expressed in learning the state language. If you are Armenian and know the state language, naturally you also know Armenian, then compared to others you’re more privileged when it comes to getting the job. I personally know the occasions when Armenian was given advantage because of knowing both languages.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There is education problem as well. When you appoint them, they should have appropriate education. Should we appoint someone without education just because he is Armenian?” (N36, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“During the Soviet period second or third person in the government should have been Armenian. It is the same today. They just appointed Armenian person as a deputy. It’s not our business what he does and what is his role, but it is important that there is one. (...) Let the God protect us from this but if someone provokes any conflict between Georgians and Armenians, it is necessary to have a person who is able to regulate it, to bring state interests to the people; this is necessary, not just because of respecting them.” (N42, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Of course they should be included. When Armenians live together with Georgians of course they also need an official who supports them. Probably it is necessary. If 10 officials are Georgian, there should be 1 Armenian.” (N40, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

If Armenians were more actively included in politics

To clarify attitudes regarding Armenian’s involvement in Georgian politics participants were asked additional question whether in case of active inclusion Armenians would be oriented towards Georgia’s/Georgian’s interests or they would be more focused on themselves.

In each category group except younger Akhaltsikhians different views were identified – on one hand, some participants think more inclusion will be helpful for raising civil consciousness, on the other hand they see a threat of Armenians focusing only on themselves, Tbilisians more emphasizing autonomy and

¹² Representative body of the village, city, region.

separatism. On the other hand younger respondents from Akhaltsikhe were more unanimous that Armenians would rather focus on themselves rather than Georgia or Georgians.

I will discuss each category in more details:

Opinions were quite mixed among younger Tbilisians. According to one of the opinions **in order to show off Armenians could be more motivated to benefit Georgia than Georgians in order to show off**, exactly like Georgian would act in other country. Apart from this it was noted that even if nationalist, when ethnic Armenian politician becomes parliament member, **being involved in the whole process and relations with Georgian MPs will have rather positive effect**. On the other hand it was noted that **Georgia's interests are not separate from those groups' interests that live in Georgia** and defending one's own interests is defending Georgia's interests. Other participants expressed doubt over the above-mentioned comment that Georgia's interests differ from their interests. **Threat of requesting autonomy** was also mentioned and opinions divided between the idea that **autonomy is intended towards separating the region from Georgia and attaching it to Armenia** and the idea that **autonomy is no matter of worry as long as people's well-being is guaranteed**. Apart from it, it was also mentioned that in case of opinion/discourse difference between Georgia and Armenia, Georgians will worry as Armenians will take Armenia's side.

Different opinions were also distinguished among older Tbilisians. Some participants think **the call of genetic/blood is more important therefore Armenians would be focused on own group's interests**. Others say **at first they would be focused on own group interests but after interaction with Georgian colleagues, they would introduce Georgia's interests to the people in region and focus on them**. According to other participants Armenians would not think about state interests. **The threat of autonomy and Armenians have been betraying Georgians historically was also mentioned**.

When it comes to Akhaltsikhe, all younger participants agree that Armenians will mostly be oriented towards own ethnic group's rather than Georgia's interest. Opinions are divided among older Akhaltsikhians. **On one hand it was noted that they would be oriented on own interests, while on the other hand it was mentioned that more inclusion and hoping for high official positions would make them feel as 'full citizens'** and discourage them to leave Georgia while currently lot of Armenians feel disadvantaged by Georgians and look at Russia. In addition it was mentioned that the **Armenian holding political position would obey the law and constitution anyway, therefore oriented on common interests**.

"I think they will be more motivated to do something good for Georgia than Georgians. As a rule it happens in this way. When Georgians were in other country, we were trying our best to show off that we were actually doing something." (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

"Even if separatist-minded person happens to be in bodies like parliament, when communicating with Georgian politicians, looking at whole picture and becoming the participant of the process... Excluding from this process causes tearing away, closing and starting various courses. The more they are included in various processes and the more they feel that their opinions, decisions matter, the better. There are two logical ways here – one - the policy of extremely oppressing and we have seen the effect of such policy in 90-s. Nothing good, we lost both, broke the bridges, committed disasters from both sides. Now we have to

learn thoroughly and act according different policy – inclusion and as many benefits as possible” (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Should the interests of Georgia’s ethnic groups differ from the interests of society? From your question it seems that on one hand there is state interest, on the other – the interest of the group that lives there. It should be the same, one should defend country’s interests by defending own interests.” (N10, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“It is not allowed to request the autonomy in this case, based on the principle of the state integrity. Autonomy is one of the reasons of nationalism; strive towards being autonomous and independent. This is visible from their demonstrations. What is wrong with allowing autonomy? It is aimed not towards autonomy but towards cutting the region away and joining it to Armenia.” (N9, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I think even if they had autonomy it is not a problem. The only problem that can be between Georgia and Armenia is the wellbeing of each person. Compared to these problems, autonomy and territorial integrity do not mean anything. The one thing I should be always able to do is go to Samtskhe-Javakheti and Tao-Klarjeti without any limitation and to talk to interact with them as freely as with the rest of Georgia.” (N8, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“The calling of blood is another thing, it is in genes. As he prefers his bad one (Armenian) to good Georgian, I also prefer my bad Georgian to other’s good one.” (N13, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“I think when they get involved in politics at first, let’s say MPs from Javakheti, of course they will be oriented towards own interests but on the other hand, they are surrounded by different atmosphere here, by 50 people. They will take back at least something and bit by bit they will be changed, leading Georgia-oriented policy. It should be the healthy process, not like talking one thing here and another - there such as ‘it seems it is their (Georgian’s) land and they are oppressing us’, in contrary – ‘This is ancient Georgian land that gave us shelter.’ I’m sure it will be like that once.” (N23, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“I don’t think so. They will not care about state interests, just the contrary. There are 95% Armenians in Javakheti and when the MP visits them... Moreover, nowadays there is a threat of misappropriation of the territory, they want to create autonomous republic. (...) Haven’t we learned through centuries who are the Armenians?that they have been betraying Georgians? (N21, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“I think they will be oriented on own interests. I remember there were some rallies in Akhaltsikhe against changing certain laws while they said it was not their business. I remember that they stood on their interests rather than Georgia’s. And it should be like this. If I were Armenian I would protect my interests as well. I would say it doesn’t matter that I live here.” (N26, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I think even if they had education from US universities they would still not be appointed because they would do nothing good for Georgia. I have this impression, otherwise it’s not a problem, anyone can hold official positions. But somehow everyone thinks that they would help only Armenians. I think if you hold a position you should serve everyone regardless they are Armenians, Tatars or Russians. Important thing is doing one’s own job. (...) They (Armenians) can work everywhere in Georgia but higher and decisive

positions should be preserved for Georgians. Who knows things better than Georgian?” (N31, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I don’t think they (Armenians) should be the heads of municipality because budget and finances would be in their hands in this case and they may repair roads only in Armenian districts for instance. Of course it is being repaired in the city and they are also people and want to live but the money could be used unreasonably. The guy who was the head of police department is currently the head of the service center that issues driving licenses. It is possible to have them on such positions and even this is for PR, to show that ethnic minority is not disadvantaged. 200-300 Armenians were kept satisfied because this guy, therefore there were voters for the previous government in the elections. (...) At the central level Armenians could be in Parliament at most. Having Armenian at the cabinet of Ministers or as a head of Ministry and giving him tools is a big mistake.” (N34, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There would be no change in interests in case of inclusion as well. As I already noted we don’t know what they have in heart and they act differently in different environments. Maybe it would be better if they were more involved because they would fully feel our country then. In case they are included and know that tomorrow his kid may become the governor of the region, minister, or prime minister, it could be better. It does not concern only Armenian but Azeri, Kurd, etc. (...) He should be the ethnic Armenian, the citizen of Georgia, having civil consciousness.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“He will not be oriented on own group interests as he would be subjected to Georgia’s legislation and do everything according our laws. Therefore he wouldn’t be a defender of Armenians’ interests; he would be a defender of common interests. Civil consciousness should be driven by internal culture.” (N39, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“They should be definitely involved. If this case there would probably be no problems we are having currently. They express grievance over the fact that there are all Georgians in banks as well. They don’t have the opportunity that Armenian representatives were employed in such structures. I think this is the initial reason of grievances and wanting Russia, because they think they are disadvantaged by Georgians. There should be some inclusion.” (N38, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Influencing local Armenian’s voting

To understand participant’s perspective towards Armenian voters they were asked whether Armenians of Georgia are somehow influenced from Armenia’s government for whom to vote.

Opinions are more mixed in Tbilisi groups. While some Tbilisi participants think it is possible to be some influence from Armenian government, Akhaltsikhians are more skeptical. According to them influence of Georgia’s government is more noticeable. The latter opinion was also mentioned in Tbilisi older group.

Speaking in more details, there is no unified opinion among participants regarding the influence from Armenia’s government on Javakheti Armenian’s voting. Some say that in fact Armenia’s public opinion could be influential rather than the government; some say that there can actually be hidden influence, while others do not agree. Overall several opinions were distinguished.

- **Public opinion in Armenia can affect the choice of Javakheti Armenians as they have relatives there, it is rather individual though.**
- **There is not a big difference between election results in regions compactly inhabited by Armenians and the rest Georgia therefore there is no any influence**
- **There will be some influence from Armenia**
- **It is impossible to know whether there is any influence from Armenian government as probably it will not be visible for public, although such influence is possible**
- **Armenian government may influence to protect the rights of local Armenians**

Older Tbilisians found it quite hard to answer whether there is any influence on Javakheti Armenian's voting. Several opinions were distinguished:

- **Armenian president will not encourage Javakheti Armenians against Georgian state rather Georgian president (Saakashvili) leads Armenian politics**
- **Armenian government influences Javakheti Armenians as local leaders have links to Yerevan**
- **There was pressure on Akhaltsikhe Armenians from Georgian president (Saakashvili) to vote for him rather than from Yerevan**

When it comes to younger Akhaltsikhians, they do not agree that the choice of local Armenian voters could be somehow influenced from Armenian government. It was noted that even if there was such influence, it would not be open for the public eye anyway. According to the respondents Armenians usually vote for the governing party; are influenced from the governing party. It was noted that **although Armenians are very active in elections, they do not have much political knowledge and mostly are asked to come by officials.** Respondents say that generally **Armenians are not very interested in politics and are mostly oriented towards business**, being artisan etc. The only interest is that they were free and not limited by government in their businesses. The difference between Akhatsikhe and Akhalkalaki was also noted, saying that **political culture is lower in Akhalkalaki.**

Opinions regarding the influence from Armenian government were almost similar in older groups of Akhatsikhe. It was noted that the local Armenians are easy to manipulate during elections, although **participants don't think that the choice of local Armenian voters could be somehow influenced from Armenian government. It was mentioned that influence usually comes from Georgia's governing party.** According to the respondents **Armenians usually vote for the governing party as this gives them the sense of stability.** It was mentioned that **Armenians are politically more active in Akhalkalaki as their interest is requesting autonomy**, and they also vote for the government. Some participants said that when it comes to voting Armenians agree with each other for which candidate it is most profitable to vote and vote collectively. In addition it was also mentioned that Armenians would rather vote for fellow Armenians rather than Georgians.

"I think this is impossible to know for sure. If there is any influence it will not. Even if it was Georgian, he would influence secretly rather than publicly. It (influence) is possible though. (...) I think there is some influence. Let's say there are parliamentary elections and one party consists of Armenians with very good ideas, good bills for Georgia. On the other hand there is another party that consists of Georgians but it is not as good. Georgian will not vote for Armenian, s/he will not take into account that s/he is better. I do

not exclude that in order to protect Armenians' rights, Armenian government may exercise some influence; so that their rights were not violated. I have no idea if there is any other evil intention but we cannot exclude the point I mentioned.” (N10, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Somehow there can be some influence. Public opinion affects anyway. Even Javakheti Georgians have relatives there (in Armenia). It depends on person anyway but the opinion from there can have some effect, such as “I know this for sure” thing.” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I used to study Electoral Geography and when it comes to election results, the difference between the Armenian population and the rest of Georgia is very low. And the difference is expressed in averagely higher results for governing party. This means that the will of local (Armenian) population coincided with the rest of Georgia. If it was not like this, we would say that Armenian government influences somehow but as there is no difference, we conclude that there is no influence either.” (N6, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I'm sure the president of Armenia will not encourage Javakheti Armenians and help them rallying against Georgia. I'm sure the president of Armenia is reasoning normally although I have no idea what he keeps in heart. However I'm also pretty sure our president (Saakashvili) leads 'Armenian politics.' I mean, when there were some conflicts between Armenians and Georgians over the land issue, he went there and blamed Georgians. And the shops have writings only in Armenian there. He is Georgian president, why does not he change these writings into Georgian?” (N23, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“The government of Armenia has huge influence on Armenian population because they have contacts with them and lots of leaders, local authoritative people have links with Yerevan, commercial and business links. The fact that Armenian population has Armenian influence is undeniable. The fact that Armenian population does not have any opportunity to understand issues of Georgian politics is also undeniable. They cannot even tell the difference between Labor Party and the New Rights Party.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“Even if there is such influence, no one would tell us about it anyway. I have never heard that Sargsyan has ever called here in order to tell for whom to vote.” (N34, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Armenian population votes for those who are in government, the majority. Most Armenians do not want to annoy the government.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Ethnic minorities are easily vulnerable target of government. Government has almost never lost elections in Marneuli and Akhalkalaki, neither Shevardnadze nor Saakashvili. They take at least 80% votes. If Misha won in October, I'm sure Georgian Dream will win this time. They vote for governing party and they say it quite explicitly. Probably they have such mentality. Even in Armenia the president is always elected for 10 years; he usually wins in the next elections as well.” (N34, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I would say that Akhalkalaki Armenians are not interested in elections at all and only arrived and expressed the opinion because there were observers from Tbilisi rather than they actually knew what they were doing. While in Akhaltsikhe they are included ordinarily.” (N29, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There is no influence from Armenia; it is rather from locals. During Shevardnadze period they voted for Shevardnadze. Then whole Georgia brought the National Movement to the power and they used to vote for it afterwards – 90% of Armenians voted for the National Movement in this elections but if on the second day it was declared that Ivanishvili won and elections were scheduled for the third day, 90% would vote for Georgian Dream. Supporting government gives them the feeling of stability. Then the rest of Georgia changes the governing party. Then they become the supporters of the new governing party. (...) Several parties have the office here but they (Armenians) are not involved in party life. They are not involved in political life. In Akhalkalaki where they are compactly inhabited they are involved, but not here in Akhaltsikhe. In Akhalkalaki they have governmental direction as well. That’s because they request autonomy. If we were 20 years ago, the same would happen in Akhaltsikhe as there were many Armenians here. Their (Akhalkalaki Armenians) political activity is focused on requesting autonomy. They would also vote for the government.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“In fact the manipulation takes place, not by Armenian government though. It is excluded that Armenian government asked someone here to vote for the certain candidate. Nobody has heard about such occasion. Here certain methods are used according to narrow interests of candidates and parties. This political activity is expressed in a fact that one whole village votes for the one candidate. Is it possible that everyone had the same opinion? It has never happened that they voted for opposition in such region and it was here. Usually wins the one with the ability of more influence and the government always has more tools for it.” (N48, male, (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“We may pretend to agree with the agitator and then anyway vote for the ones we want. If they have their own man, they would not vote for other, even if given 1000 gold for it; they would not betray own people. It doesn’t matter what Georgian candidate does for them - if they have Armenian one, they would vote for him.” (N45, female, (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

General political relations and courses of Georgia and Armenia

In the end of political part, participants were asked their opinion regarding political relations and courses of Georgia and Armenia.

Younger Tbilisians and older Akhaltsikhians both similarly differentiated between Georgia’s pro-western and Armenia’s pro-Russian political course, as well as characterized Georgia’s politics as more radical, while Armenia’s politics as more neutral (Tbilisi younger group) and balanced (Akhaltsikhe older group). Older Akhalstkhians say that **Armenia economically depends on Russia, also** as Armenia has Turkey and Azerbaijan around, good relations with Georgia is important for it; otherwise situation would be more serious in Akhalkalaki. On the other hand younger Tbilisians expressed **irritation that Armenia voted against Georgia’s initiated UN resolution regarding IDP return** in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Apart from that it was also mentioned that at public level, Armenian people are not very fond of Russian soldiers standing near borders.

Voting against IDP return was also mentioned by older Tbilisians while talking about Armenian’s attitudes towards Georgians. Here too talking about difference between Georgian and Armenian political interests caused anxiety among participants. It was noted that **Armenia is trying to swallow Georgia while Georgia does not any territorial claims towards anyone**. It was also noted that **Armenia-Azerbaijani war saved Georgia from Georgian-Armenian war and Armenia and Azerbaijan may**

reconcile on the expense of Georgian territories. On the other hand **the fear that “Georgianity” and Georgian territory will be lost soon** was expressed. In contrary Akhaltsikhian younger participants say that Armenia and Georgia **have friendly relations and common goals** such as Katskhi railway, traffic road, leaving post-soviet space, stability, and peace. Some participants think **Armenia needs Georgia much more than vice versa as they have bad relations with Azerbaijan and Turkey and Georgia is the only access to the sea.**

“As far as I know they have a problem with Russia. My neighbor was in the region closer to border where there are Russian soldiers. They simply do not express it because there is no point in cursing soldier that was ordered to come here. He said it is too much aggression and they are swearing all the time. They do not want Russian soldiers standing on the border.” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Both of us have a big neighbor Russia. I am not sure if I have the correct information but they are more pro-Russian and compared to us after August war, they cohabit with them favorably, we followed more Western course. Probably this is the difference.” (N7, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Armenia’s political orientation was proved even now, when Armenia was one of the first ones after Russia to reject the IDP’s return issue.” (N9, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Armenia wants to swallow you. Georgia wants to maintain itself. This is the basic difference. Georgia does not have any territorial claim towards anyone. Everyone has claims towards us; and absolutely every neighbor – towards Armenia. We should know that if not Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, there would definitely be the war between Armenia and Georgia as it was 1920. 100 years have not passed yet. They just did not dare to fight two wars simultaneously. However, intensive work is going on to reconcile Armenians and Azeris on the expense of Georgian territories which means Azerbaijan will concede on Karabakh because they will take some Georgian lands; and Armenia will concede on other things because they will take away Javakheti and other parts. We will manage this with our stupidity, while sitting and discussing whether Saakashvili is actually Saakyan or not. It does not matter; you can find 10% Armenian blood in every Georgian.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“We live in one region and of course we have common interests. Both of us want stability, peace and protecting common territories. This is our common interest. (...) Armenia needs Georgia much more. I’m not telling this chauvinistically that we are the spring of life but they need Georgia because they don’t have the access to the sea, neither have they contacts with the neighboring countries. The only link for them is Iran and we. We all know how ‘stable’ and ‘trustworthy’ Iran is, therefore they avoid it and we are their only access to the sea.” (N30, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Armenia pursues quite balanced politics. Unfortunately we have had quite radical politics for 9 years. (...) Although Turkey is Armenia’s enemy because of the genocide, it still has economic links with Turkey which unfortunately we couldn’t use and we were harmed by our radical politics. Despite the request of recognizing genocide, they have good economic and cultural relations.” (N48, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Georgia pursues Western political course while Armenia depends on Russian whether it will be oil, gas or geopolitics. You cannot judge Armenians for loving Russian as they have no other way. They have

Turkey, Azerbaijan, Iran and us around. A good relation with Georgia is important for it; that is why they are not doing anything in Akhalkalaki.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Symbolic capital

The topic of symbolic capital deals with understanding perceived prestige of Armenians in Georgian society. In all groups, regardless the category, most participants think that when compared to “Westerners”, a relation with Armenians is considered less prestigious.

Younger Tbilisians think that it is because **Armenians are associated with the set of negative stereotypes; also they are more familiar for Georgians** than Americans for instance, therefore there is nothing cool in having relations with them, in addition **Armenia is not developed country** while US is very developed. Less culture and less economic development compared to Europe was named as the reasons of being less prestigious by older Tbilisians as well. Additionally they explain it by **Armenians being ashamed to be Armenians themselves; and Georgians generally being arrogant**. It was also mentioned that **society mostly hates those Armenians, who hide their surnames**.

Like Tbilisian younger respondents from Akhaltsikhe also think that **lesser prestige of Armenians is connected with the fact that there are lot of Armenians around; and** compared to Armenians and Georgians **Europeans are associated with better education and intelligence**. Also “Westerners” are not as common in Akhaltsikhe. The stereotype such as Georgian’s friend Armenian is a good and trustworthy one was also mentioned. On the other hand older Akhaltsikhians explain less prestige of Armenians by **more availability (closeness) of Armenia/Armenians** and the **state attitude** such as giving advantage of English language for getting the job etc., and the **wrong approach of media** were named as reasons.

“Maybe if one says they have Armenian friends, people will say you are like them when it comes to misappropriation. (...) It’s not prestigious rather ordinary thing (having Armenian friend)” (N3, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Having American friend is not common and that is why (it is more prestigious). 5-10 years ago nobody had any American friend and somehow it is considered cool.” (N4, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“American is more developed than Armenian. For instance, when I was in Armenia with my friend, we had an impression that Yerevan looks like Georgia 10-15 years ago.” (N5, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Which will be more prestigious – having daughter-in-law from Sololaki or Ponichala? Vake or Lilo?”¹³ (N13, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“They (Armenians and Europeans) are different when it comes to culture. For instance, you cannot compare Germans with gypsies and Kurds. I think Germans are superior. Between Georgian and

¹³ Vake and Sololaki are central and prestigious parts of Tbilisi, while Ponichala and Lilo are suburbs and less prestigious.

Armenian nations, I consider Georgians superior. Maybe it is prestigious to get known and obtain autograph of Dzhigarkhanyan¹⁴ but not Valera from Avlabari.” (N23, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“We are talented when it comes to praising each other, bragging and being ‘Dzveli Bichi’¹⁵. Therefore every non-Georgian is considered as unacceptable. However as, let’s say, French are much cooler than us we do not dare to discard them because the difference is quite obvious; otherwise nobody wants to have French daughter-in-law in the family. However there is no obvious difference between Georgians and Armenians, therefore we discard them. Otherwise why should we discard Armenians and why should Armenians discard us? On the other hand, we have this peculiar trait – when there is someone famous, we say that his grandmother was definitely Georgian. When there is Georgian who actually reaches something, we try to blame him in being Armenian, as if it is an insult.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“Having Armenian friend in the city where there are no Armenians at all would be prestigious but in Akhaltsikhe it does not matter. Let’s say you’re hanging out with American girl. It would be considered as cool but when I’m hanging out with Armenian, nobody has ever told that it is prestigious. Moreover, they may say how can I hang out with Armenians but you will not be considered cool because of it, at least in our city. In places where there are no Armenians, I would be seen differently.” (N26, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There is a stereotype that if you’re friends (with Armenian), it means he is a good guy, good Armenian. If he is friends with Georgian, it means he is very cool Armenian. (...) Europeans are ordinary people as well but they are Europeans because they have mature way of thinking, education. They may be uneducated but they are still intelligent, you can talk about stereotype, gender. It is hard to talk with Georgian and Armenian about such issues. We talked about Armenian but you think there are no problems of violence and beating wives in Georgian villages? Being unemployed and not supporting the family? There are problems among us as well; it’s not all about Armenians.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“It couldn’t be prestigious to say that you have many Armenian friends, as Georgian proverb says familiar ones are less appreciated. It’s basically same thing if you say you have many German friends but in this case you’ll be perceived more positively by the society. For bragging European friends are better. This ideology was shaped by our media and the wrong approach of the journalists. You couldn’t get a job in public sector without knowing English. The attitude of the state shapes the attitude of the society; therefore we hide this and promote what supplies the demand.” (N48, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Being fluent at Armenian and being fluent at English are both knowledge of languages but knowing English is considered as more prestigious, therefore having relations with European is also considered as more prestigious. Personally I don’t care about it but I think generally people have such mentality. They consider European direction as more prestigious. If someone says he had been in Yerevan and in Washington, both are capitals but they would have more positive attitude about Washington.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Azerbaijanis

¹⁴ Prominent Armenian/USSR actor

¹⁵ Literal translation ‘good guy’ – the stage prior becoming the thief-in-law

The final question gives opportunity to see how participants perceive Azerbaijanis, another significant ethnic minority in Georgia, as well as Georgia's neighbor country, and whether there is any difference between Georgia's perspectives towards Armenians and Azerbaijanis.

According to the data the difference really exists: Although participants emphasize that Georgians are more similar people with Armenians rather than Azerbaijanis, most participants are much more positive towards Azerbaijanis than towards Armenians, however some negative traits were also named. Most commonly, Azerbaijanis are characterized as more sincere, hardworking and having fewer claims than Armenians, while 'negative traits' of Azerbaijanis mostly include limiting women's rights. Opinions vary regarding Azerbaijani's attitudes towards Georgians – while some participants think Azerbaijanis are more positive towards Georgians than Armenians, according to others there is no big difference.

The most basic dissimilarity between Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe groups is the lack of knowledge of Azerbaijanis in Akhaltsikhe. While Tbilisians were more actively involved in the discussion, in Akhaltsikhe only several respondents had any idea about Azerbaijanis, others said that they have never been in touch and are not informed.

Following opinions were identified by younger participants of Tbilisi:

- **Azeris are better friends than Armenians**
- **Azerbaijanis are more free/alive/integrated/sociable while Armenians are more closed**
- **Azerbaijanis do not emphasize that they are Azeri/are integrated**
- **Azeris' attitudes towards Georgians are more positive than Armenians' attitude**
- **Like Georgians, Azeris also try to pay for you before you do**
- **More positive attitudes towards Azeris are influenced by better political and economic relations with Azerbaijan.**
- **Georgians and Armenians have more claims towards each other's history than Georgians and Azeris**
- **Georgians are more similar to Armenians rather than to Azeris**
- **There are more problems with compactly inhabited Armenians than with Azeris who are politically less active**
- **Armenians are more integrated with Georgians than Azeris and that can be the reason of negative attitude towards them.**
- **Georgia has had less political relations with Azeris (newer state; was considered as enemy) while mostly cooperating with Armenia and usually experiencing betrayal – thus more negative attitudes towards Armenians**
- **Compared to Armenians Azeris are very unhygienic and oppress women.**
- **Azeris are misers**
- **Azeris consider Georgians as representatives of more developed nation, while Armenians always try to prove that they are better**

“My best friend is Azeri and I know others as well. My friend is from Baku but studies here and considers herself as Georgian already. There are some locals as well. There is really less difference (means between Georgians and Azeris compared to Armenians). Most of all because they feel it less, they do not

emphasize “I am Azeri!” They may tell it later, when you ask a surname. Otherwise you cannot even notice. The ones I know feel more integrated.” (N2, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Azeris are more sociable and can easily communicate. (...) They deserve more trust probably because of that. You feel freer with them.” (N1, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Despite Armenians live by themselves, marginalized in Akhaltsikhe, they are integrated in Tbilisi while Azeris are more isolated. (...) Probably this is the reason (more contacts with Armenians) that their issue is more problematic although Azeris are Muslims and therefore Armenians should be more acceptable.” (N7, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“For me Armenians are more acceptable than Azeris, from my personal experience. I used to work in Gudushauri hospital for several years and there would come villager Azeris, I’m not talking about Baku millionaires. Firstly they are very unhygienic nation; my boss even bought an air cleaner aerosol for me because otherwise it was unbearable to stay in the room. Also they have terrible attitudes towards women. One woman did not have any ID and when I asked her birth-year, she could not understand any Georgian. The man was translating and told me that she did not have any ID at all and she was 46-47. He said why she would throw a birthday party, she’s working in a farm. I was shocked. The woman did not know her birth date because she did not need it. I do not know what is happening in Baku but the attitudes of Armenians are obviously more acceptable for me.” (N11, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“I used to live in the Azeri family, where there was no water at all. Even the drinking water was brought from several kms away. The hygiene was mentioned. There was not a means of it physically. Probably this is about consciousness too. When you have 3-floor castles, you should think of the bathroom issue as well. They are quite miser nation. They had the duty of feeding me 3 times a day but they gave food twice a day actually. Maybe I just happened to be in a wrong family because many co-projectors were in good conditions.” (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Azerbaijan was always perceived as an enemy, while we had connections with Armenia that always ended with betrayal. Probably this is the reason of less trust towards Armenians.” (N8, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“In Javakheti Armenian’s attitudes are negative. They (Georgians) were going to build the church and they went there with guns, did not let them. Azeris are not politically active, they are more obeying.” (N9, male, younger group, Tbilisi)

“Azeri’s attitudes are either neutral or super-positive. They think we are more developed than they, like Georgians act when American comes to Georgia. In Armenia it is opposite. They discriminate Georgian visitors and try to show that they are cooler.” (N12, female, younger group, Tbilisi)

Following opinions were identified in older groups of Tbilisi:

- **Unlike Armenians Azeris are not annoyed by being/calling them Azeri**
- **Azeris are more loyal/they will stand by your side till the end**

- Azeris are not cheaters/sly/hypocritical; are more sincere; Armenians try to have relations with someone who can be beneficial for them, while Azeris will not do such thing
- Azeris are mostly landworkers/hardworking while Armenians try to reach everything easily
- Azeris are more civilly conscious, benefit Georgia's interests
- Azeris are more modest and do not have many ambitions (either in politics or when it comes to misappropriating something)/do not try to misappropriate Georgian heritage (Rustaveli; Tbilisi)/ do not argue with you over such issues
- It is easier to bargain with Azeri (in the market)/they are more prone to reduce price than Armenians as Azeris produce products themselves while Armenians work over products made by others (artisans)
- Azeris are part of Asian culture and therefore they are more obedient to authorities
- Azeris are more sly/quietly sly than Armenians
- Azeri men are lazier than Georgian men
- Unlike Georgians and Armenians Azeri men do not appreciate women
- Azeris have many wives and more children
- Marriage with Armenians is still acceptable while marriage with Azeri is not acceptable for Georgians
- Azeris have more positive attitudes towards Georgians than Armenians
- Azeris as well as Armenians want to misappropriate Georgian territories
- Azeris are aware of Georgians' arrogant attitude towards them and silently they think of Georgians negatively

“When during Mamaladze¹⁶ period the settling (of Azeris) began, one Azeri from Gachiani¹⁷ used to tell my husband that the Georgian government was acting foolishly by settling these people there because they couldn't behave according state's interests. He did not say ‘So good, we will become more powerful.’ ” (N18, female, older group, Tbilisi)

“Azeris are part of Asian culture, so division and obedience is very strong among them. Azeris have one leader, who thinks and others follow. The same happens in Japan and Turkey. In Georgia everyone behaves as they want like in Krilov's fable “Swan, pike and crawfish¹⁸” When it comes to this, people are also spoiled in Armenia, just like in Georgia.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“There is almost no difference. Armenians and Azeris want only one thing – you know that they did not let us to pray in David Gareja Monastery. Above Gareja there is a plain land, ancient Georgian territory which belongs to Azeris and they claim Christian Monastery there. They did not let us there to pray last year. Even today there are Georgian and Azeri border-guards and there are negotiations all the time. There is a river as well which created border and they (Azeris) fill it with rubbish so that the border

¹⁶ Kvemo Kartli governor in 1994 - 2003

¹⁷ Village in Kvemo Kartli, Georgia

¹⁸ Moral of the fable is that when everybody does as they want without agreeing with others, the common business fails

moved towards our side. The border has moved for 17 kms already. I see no difference here.” (N23, male, older group, Tbilisi)

“Negative attitudes of Georgians would create the counter-reaction. We consider Azeris as inferior, stinky and disgusting. Do you think this is a secret for them? Do you think they agree with this opinion and consider themselves as unfortunate stinky people? (...) I have travelled by Lilo mini-bus. When the Azeri woman gets in, people get up and give her own seat but only because they do not want her to sit next to them. This is totally antichristian way. Why do you think Azeris cannot see such negative attitudes or they are ok with this? They are not ok with this. They don’t like this. They silently say ‘Just you wait and I will destroy you!’ Why was everyone surprised by 500 000 (Azeris)? (...) The problem is catastrophic. While people are still all right with marrying Armenian, nobody wants to marry Azeri. There is big difference in culture, belief. There is a demographic disaster in the country and nobody reveals it to us. We live by the TV.” (N24, male, older group, Tbilisi)

Among Akhaltsikhe younger groups following opinions were identified:

- **Azeris and Armenians have different religion**
- **Although there is more difference between Georgians and Azeris when it comes to religion, Azeris try not to talk much about this issue**
- **Azeris and Armenians are quite similar when it comes to traditional dances and appearance (both are dark)**
- **Unlike Armenians Azeris can spend money/invite someone easily**
- **Georgians and Azeris have different language/mentality (due to different religion)**
- **Azeri women work all day long while Azeri men play backgammon and smoke meanwhile**
- **Azeris are very hardworking**
- **Georgians do not have conflicts with Azeris**
- **while Armenians and Azeris hate each other, Azeris have quite good attitudes towards Georgian because from these three - Azeris, Armenians and Georgians – Georgians are easiest to be cheated.**
- **Azeris of Georgia are as problematic as Armenians of Georgia when it comes to not speaking Georgian language and not having civil consciousness.**
- **Recently more attention is paid to Georgian-Azeri conflicts (Gareja Monastery) than the ones connected with Armenians of Akhalkalaki.**

“There is no big difference. I have been in Batumi as a singing choir member and there were Azeris at festivals. At first sight you cannot see any big difference between their traditional clothes, as we have khevsurian dresses. Neither there is any difference in traditional dances between Azeris and Armenians. You cannot distinguish them at first sight... They are similar when it comes to appearance as well, they are both dark. At first you cannot distinguish but then probably you can identify them based on different languages.” (N26, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I know Azeris and they are very different from Armenians. Azeris are not restricted in spending money, they can spend lot of money for your sake. Despite Azeris are more dissimilar with us when it comes to

religion than Armenians, Azeris don't discuss this topic at all because they know that you are Christian.” (N32, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“I have friends in Gardabani who say that there are serious problems as well. They have many restrictions because of religion. Women work all day long while men play backgammon and smoke all day long. They don't have another concern.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“For instance there were drivers from Marneuli at our job. Marneulians hated Armenians while Armenians hated Marneulians. Azeris used to say that Armenians are very sly, they hated each other. Azeris have most loyal relations with Georgians. You can cheat Georgian easily while Armenians are hard to cheat. Similarly Armenians found it hard to cheat Azeris. So they had conflicts with each other. We (Georgians) could never realize whether we were cheated or not.” (N31, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“One Azeri bought a place for a farm and one of my clients had some relations with him. He said that they love working. Despite they have enough income for the living they still cannot bear being idle and start another work too. They are hard-working people.” (N35, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“They (Azeris) should not be madly in love with our language either because as far as I know they also don't know Georgian language; despite the fact that they have as well been living on our territories for long.” (N36, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“As far as I know there are the same problems when it comes to civil duties and responsibilities. The difference is that Azeris have different religion. The rest is almost the same as here, the same situation and the same problems.” (N33, male, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

“Recently Georgian-Azeri conflicts have been more emphasized in TV than Georgian-Armenian conflicts; for instance issue of Gareja monastery. Such conflicts are more frequent there. Here Akhalkalaki is 'already attached' to Armenia and we don't even react; or I don't know what's happening. That topic (Azeri) is paid more attention than Georgian-Armenian conflicts.” (N32, female, younger group, Akhaltsikhe)

And finally, older Akhalsikhians opinions include:

- **Azeris have milder/softer/calmer/warmer character**
- **Although there are more Azeris in Georgia than Armenians, they have less claims/ambitions towards Georgia/Georgians**
- **Azeris host the guests in more sincere and true way while Armenians sometimes do it for showing off**
- **Azeris are very hardworking**
- **Different religion**
- **Different role of housewife/more restrictions for women (more common among local Azeris rather than in Baku)**

- There is no difference among Armenians and Azeris when it comes to attitudes towards Georgians - They both host Georgians well as **they have respect towards guests. Both try to understand on whose side is Georgian, Azeri's or Armenian's.**

“I have had relations with Azeris as well and they are milder, softer people. The number of Azeris is more than the number of Armenians in Georgia but they don't have as much claims towards the nation and the country. I have lived for month and a half in Azerbaijan. When you are the guest of Armenian they sometimes host you in order to show off, so that you saw how good host he is. I think so. Azeri would not do this. They host you in a more simple and sincere way. They don't have serious claims. The country of Azerbaijan may have but the people are milder and warmer than Armenians. Compared to them we, Georgians, are more arrogant.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“...Azeris were very calm. I can't say anything bad. In addition they are very hard-working. Georgian guys had also been working there with Azeri men. These guys (Georgians) used to skip the work sometimes while these poor ones stayed. They were 4 men from Azerbaijan.” (N39, female, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“When they are in Georgia, both (Azeris and Armenians) think of Georgian as an arbitrator. They have conflict with each other and always watch whose side Georgian takes and evaluate based on it. I think so. When Azeri, Armenian and Georgian are together in one space, they would definitely have this feeling whose side will Georgian take. Therefore this feeling defines the relations. I have no idea who loves Georgian and how much though.” (N41, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

“There were 1-2 families here. They cannot be distinguished but there are certain differences such as religion, the role of the housewife. Religion restricts Azeris that women attended the dinner; women cooks. This is not Baku which is more modern therefore the difference is apparent because of this tradition, the different culture and lifestyle. I haven't felt any difference in Baku probably because I had the status of guest – you are the guest there who will be well-hosted.” (N48, male, older group, Akhaltsikhe)

Concluding Summary

Several basic sub-topics can be distinguished that were discussed with participants: introduction/general; financial capital, social capital, cultural capital, political capital and symbolic capital (prestige of Armenians in Georgian society), and opinions about Azerbaijanis, another significant minority group in Georgia.

General part of the discussion included questions about visiting Armenia/ impressions; apart from that - associations connected with Armenians; differences and similarities between Armenians and Georgians; and impression of Armenians' attitudes towards Georgians.

Most participants who have been in Armenia, visited either Yerevan or nearby villages. Resort Dilijan was also named in younger group of Tbilisi. While Tbilisi participants mostly stressed the similarity of Georgian and Armenian people, Akhaltsikhians emphasized the positive qualities of Yerevan itself.

Generally, compared to Tbilisians, Akhalsikhians find it easier to tell the difference between Armenians of Armenia and Armenians of Georgia. Both age groups of Akhalsikhe distinguished categories such as Armenians of Yerevan, Armenians of Tbilisi and Armenians of Akhalsikhe, saying that the basic difference between them is the language and appearance. In addition Older Akhalsikhians distinguished the fourth category of Akhalkalaki (Ninotsminda/Tsalka) Armenians, where they constitute Absolute majority, saying that those Armenians are more isolated, look for independence, feel closer to Armenia and are heavily influenced by Russian soldiers. Although Akhalsikhe Armenians were considered as more educated and modern, some participants still express fear that if there is an appropriate moment, Akhalsikhe Armenians would act the same as Akhalkalakians. In both age categories it was mentioned that Tbilisi Armenians are more pro-Georgian and identify themselves with Georgia. On the other hand, Tbilisians have vaguer answers when asked about the difference between Armenians. In older group only one participant distinguished between Yerevan Armenians, Armenia's Armenians excluding Yerevan, Tbilisi Armenians and Javakheti Armenians. Younger participants either do not distinguish Armenians, saying that they are all nationalistic or they distinguish them by influence of local Georgian environment.

Commonly most groups associate Armenians with hairdressers, artisans and repairers (however older Akhalsikhians were mostly unable to name anything except own neighbors and coworkers). Apart from this while younger Akhalsikhians emphasized aspects related with appearance like big noses, pointed shoes, also achieving higher positions by speculating that they are minority and unproductive reforms related with Armenians, both Tbilisi groups stressed that Armenians are misers, love money and misappropriate Georgian's cultural heritage.

Tbilisians and Akhalsikhians think quite similarly when it comes to perceived differences of Georgians and Armenians. It was commonly mentioned that Armenians are far more cohesive and stand by each other, they have different religion, culture, traditions, different appearance, different taste and style, are money and profit-oriented, are hardworking and unlike Georgians not ashamed to do service-sphere related work. On the other hand some trends can be identified while discussing common traits of Georgians and Armenians. Tbilisi participants distinguish more common things than Akhalsikhians, also Akhalsikhians are mostly concentrated on local Armenians while Tbilisians talk more generally. Akhalsikhians say that Georgians and Armenians live in one country, adopting each other's lifestyle while Tbilisians say that both are hospitable and sociable (younger Tbilisians also mentioned "Caucasian"). On the other hand, looking at the groups in the age dimension, unlike older participants younger ones in Tbilisi as well as in Akhalsikhe emphasized nationalism and chauvinism of both people. In addition younger participants of Tbilisi mention great history/traditions, respecting own history, similar art/writing script, soviet and post-soviet experience, older Tbilisians – generosity, religion, being curious/interested, love of feasting, mentality, being traditional; and younger Akhalsikhians – being friendly.

The opinions of Tbilisi and Akhalsikhe participants does not differ that much when it comes to Armenian's attitudes towards Georgians as well. All groups mention that Armenians misappropriate or claim Georgian heritage. Both Tbilisi age groups as well as Akhalsikhe younger group stress that Armenians have been historically traitors for Georgia and ready to betray in favor of someone stronger. In this sense while younger Tbilisians share mixed view of Javakheti Armenians, in Akhalsikhe both age groups are quite unanimous emphasizing tense situation in Akhalkalaki. On the other hand, in Tbilisi both age categories it was noted that although Armenians look friendly on the surface, they do not want

Georgians to be spouses of their children; also that Armenians are competing with Georgians and generally the relations have competitive character. When it comes to age group differences, unlike older respondents both younger groups from Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe mentioned that in contrary, Georgians display snobbish attitudes towards Armenians.

Attitudes related to financial relations do not differ that much across various category groups. Although in all groups it was mentioned that personal skills and trust is more important, participants anyway distinguished on one hand positive characteristics of Armenians, that make financial relations more attractive such as being prudent in finances, more profit-oriented, appreciate/do not waste money, good at finances/bargaining, more hardworking; and on the other hand - negative characteristics such as not trustworthy, sly, misappropriator that makes respondents less motivated to have financial relations with Armenians. Only older group of Akhaltsikhe identified just positive qualities, saying that Armenians are even more trustworthy in this sense than Georgians. According to quantitative CB data collected in 2012, 72% of ethnic Georgians approve doing business with Armenians and 77% approve doing business together with Armenians of Georgia. Our qualitative data provides possible explanations for those who welcome financial relations with Armenians as well as for those who consider it non-desirable.

When it comes to smaller business, participants associate Armenians mostly with the service sphere, saying that Armenians already have their niche here, and Georgian clients mostly prefer them over Georgians. There was not any unified opinion regarding the price differences set by Georgians and Armenians. However younger Akhaltsikhians mentioned that Armenians act in a more pleasant way in such case.

While all category groups think that 1990-s situation of Georgia negatively influenced Armenian's number in Georgia, opinions are mixed about the current state. On one hand younger Tbilisians mentioned that compared to other minorities, Armenian's number is more stable, on the other hand they think it is increasing because of higher birth rates. In contrary older Tbilisians think lower fertility rates and adaptation to Georgian ways reduced Armenians, although it was also noted that their number is increasing in Abkhazia and Javakheti. Younger Akhaltsikhians are quite agreed saying that the number of Armenians has increased in Akhaltsikhe, while older Akhaltsikhians have again mixed opinions whether their number is still decreased or has been growing. However all category groups except older Akhaltsikhians say that increasing the number of Armenians could be a problem. The named reasons are not that much different in Tbilisi and Akhaltsikhe. Tbilisi participants emphasized **losing "Georgianity", Georgian culture, religion, values/ occasions of misappropriation** (younger Tbilisians), **threat of ethnic Georgians becoming minority in their country** (older Tbilisians/younger Akhaltsikhians) and named **the fear of creating Javakheti separation** (both Tbilisi age groups). **In addition younger Akhaltsikhians mentioned that Armenians may have conflicts with newly settled Meskhetian Turks and Azeris.** Although older Akhaltsikhians did not express that they see any problem in increasing the number of Armenians, they still expressed some kind of "helpless" attitude that Javakheti already belongs to Armenians anyway. On the positive side addition younger Akhaltsikhians also mentioned that increasing number of Armenians can create more competitive environment that is good for Georgians as well.

Although generally there are not significant opinion differences between the two places, unlike Tbilisians some Akhaltsikhians seem quite happy with the hypothetical situation of Akhaltsikhe without Armenians.

The opinions connected with the positive effect of the situation basically deals with disappearing of the threat of 'losing' Javakheti region and Georgians gaining more job opportunities, while common opinions related with negative effects are losing people in service sphere, as Armenians are stereotypically associated with artisans, hairdressers etc.; and losing diversity, the special 'flavor' of Georgia. Naturally, Akhaltsikhians who based on the question specificity were focused on Akhaltsikhe, emphasized aspects related with Akhaltsikhe itself. Older Akhaltsikhians say that there would be no competition between Armenians and Georgians while competition increases quality of products/services; Armenians always have the best products in their shops because unlike Georgians they import it from Russia; If there are no Armenians and Azeris in Georgia, there would be internal conflicts between Georgian regions. Unlike all the other category groups, younger participants from Akhaltsikhe note that in case there are no Armenians the prices of apartments would decrease as Armenians have good apartments in good places but on the other hand the city would be emptied.

As Tbilisians are also experienced in having Armenian neighbor, they appeared almost as familiar with them as Akhaltsikhians, especially those participants who reside in Avlabari, Armenian-inhabited ones. Mostly it was younger Tbilisians who remembered own or their acquaintances experiences and named lot of perceived distinctions between Armenian and Georgian neighbors. Certain specific 'traits' were also mentioned by Akhaltsikhian younger participants. On the other hand older participants from Tbilisi as well as Akhaltsikhe mention that there is no difference at the neighborhood level. Older Tbilisians even say that Armenian neighbors are hospitable and always ready to help, even more than Georgians, while older Akhaltsikhians distinguish between Akhaltsikhian and Akhalkalakian Armenians, where Armenians are majority and more influential.

According to 2009 CB data, 80% of Georgians approve to be friends with Armenians. Akhaltsikhe as well as Tbilisi participants say that it is common to have Armenian friends. For younger Tbilisians they are basically either friends they met at exchange programs or very integrated Armenians who speak and consider themselves as Georgians. On the other hand, although Akhaltsikhians also say that they are friends with Armenians, who are educated and civilly conscious Armenians (the latter was emphasized by younger participants), they perceive somewhat more distance between Georgians and Armenians, saying that mostly Georgians make close friends with other Georgians and Armenians – with Armenians.

Despite some respondents have nothing against it, most of them are not very happy with the opportunity of Georgian marrying Armenian, especially when it comes to their daughter/son. The data is not surprising compared to the quantitative data of CB 2012 according to which only 29% of ethnic Georgians approve Georgian woman marrying Armenian and 26% - marrying Armenian who lives in Georgia. Different culture and traditions was named as the most common reasons of disapproval among all category groups. Additionally older Tbilisians mentioned Armenian's darker physical appearance and poor health, while younger Akhaltsikhians say Armenians are more chauvinist and 'Armenianize' spouses and children, also Armenians men are more patriarchal, restrictive and sometimes abusive. For most participants of all category groups the daughter marrying Armenian appeared to be the least acceptable option compared to son marrying Armenian. Most commonly name reasons include that men influence, change their wives and give surname to children. Interestingly while younger groups were more concentrated on above mentioned gender-related explanations, older groups (in Tbilisi as well as in Akhaltsikhe) also mentioned 'specific Armenian characteristic' such as Armenian daughter-in-laws being

more adroit and flexible in the family (Tbilisi); Armenian daughter-in-laws coming with good dowry (akhalsikhe), Armenians following traditions that are not advantageous for women (akhalsikhe).

All category groups remind hospitality and the dish Dolma when discussing Armenian culture. Tbilisi groups especially mentioned Tbilisi born ethnic Armenian film director Parajanov, Armenian cognac and the unique Armenian writing script, also included misappropriation of Georgian heritage in their discussion. On the other hand while younger Tbilisians say they do not have much knowledge regarding Armenian culture, older Tbilisians and both age Akhlahtsikhians tell more about specific Armenian traditions and rituals. It should also be noted that according to younger Tbilisians Armenian and Georgian cultures are more similar than Georgian and Azeri, although Armenian culture and church has been more closed to Western influence historically than Georgian one. On the other hand, in older Tbilisi group it was mentioned that although Armenia has quite rich culture, Georgian culture is still superior.

When it comes to education, all category groups think that practical occupations and handicraft are more attractive for Armenians than higher education. In addition Tbilisi participants made distinction between Tbilisi and Javakheti Armenians considering the latter being more problematic worsened by inability of speaking Georgian language. In Akhalsikhe groups it was mentioned that Armenians mostly study at Armenian school or at least at Russian sector of Georgian school and non-Georgian speakers often prefer to go to Armenia or Russia for higher education, often staying there. On the other hand older Akhalsikhians clarified that there is a difference between the city and remote villages, the closer to Akhalsikhe the better is the situation.

The groups have also discussed the issue of Armenians speaking Georgian language. While Tbilisi participants generally consider Javakheti Armenians as problematic, Akhalsikhians distinguish between Armenians of Akhalsikhe and Akhalkalaki as well as remote villages. According to them while in Akhalkalaki and the villages there is a real problem of understanding Georgian language, Akhalsikhe Armenians know Georgian, they just deliberately do not want to speak it. However both age groups of Akhalsikhe agree that Armenians have been more prone to learn Georgian language recently. All groups think that Georgian children naturally learn Armenian during the communication. However both age groups from Akhalsikhe stressed that Georgians were more prone to speak Armenian with Armenians earlier than it is now. Although in Akhalsikhe many participants (from younger as well as older group_ talked about kind of protest against learning Armenian, some participants in fact speak it or expressed the wish to learn. The same way despite in older group of Tbilisi it was mentioned that the more languages you know the better, some participants consider that Georgian should not learn Armenian in order to communicate with Armenians.

When it comes to the language of public services in Armenian inhabited regions, various opinions were expressed in each category group. Using only Georgian was mentioned in all categories. Using Georgian and Armenian (when addressing Armenians) was mentioned by younger Tbilisians and older Akhalsikhians. Younger Akhalsikhians are more specific saying that although the language should be officially Georgian, the employees should be able/be taught to speak Armenian or they should at least know Russian. An opinion that Armenian should be used together with Georgian temporarily later to turn to solely Georgian was identified only by groups of Tbilisi . On the other hand in both younger groups (from Tbilisi and Akhalkalaki) it was said that there should be a position of translator. Unlike others younger Tbilisians also mentioned using only English or/and Russian as neutral languages together with

Georgian. During the discussion both age groups of Akhaltsikhe expressed discontent that Georgians are often excluded from opportunities such as university-based exchange programs and jobs because of inability of speaking Armenian. While some think it is not fair as they live in Georgia others say this is based on reality and Georgian living at such place should speak Armenian, or at least Russian.

The opinion about how Armenians are represented in Georgian politics is mixed across the groups, however as most groups (Tbilisians and younger Akhaltsikhians) specify they are more active/better represented at the local level. In addition Akhaltsikhians say that Armenians, who hold higher positions at the local level, are not given any real power anyway. The language barriers and the lack of education were commonly named as the reasons of underrepresentation. Younger Akhaltsikhians also add that Armenians are less interested in politics, being more focused on own business. Generally mostly in all category groups participants agree that Armenians should be involved in Georgian politics although it was also frequently mentioned that giving them key positions and more representation could be threatening.

In all category groups some participants see the threat in more active inclusion, saying that Armenians would be focused only on themselves, Tbilisians more emphasizing autonomy/separatism (often used interchangeably). However while younger Akhaltsikhians are unanimous that Armenians would rather focus on themselves, alternative opinions were also named in all other categories, saying that in contrary, more inclusion would lead to increased civil consciousness.

When it comes to voting, Akhaltsikhians are quite skeptical that Armenian government could somehow influence the local Armenian voters. According to them, in contrary, it is Georgian government that exercises influence as local Armenians mostly vote for government. Additionally both age groups say that the political culture is generally much lower in Akhalkalaki than in Akhaltsikhe.

When discussing political courses of Georgia and Armenia, younger Tbilisians and older Akhaltsikhians appeared to have similar opinion pointing at Georgia's pro-Western and more radical political course versus Armenia's pro-Russian and balanced one. The issue caused some anxiety among older Tbilisians saying that Armenia wants to swallow Georgia and Armenia and Azerbaijan may reconcile on the expense of Georgian territories. Grievance regarding Armenia's vote against Georgia's initiated UN resolution regarding IDP return was expressed in both age groups of Tbilisi, on the other hand both in age groups of Akhaltsikhe it was mentioned that Armenia needs Georgia as it has Azerbaijan and Turkey around, therefore relations are pretty good. In addition younger Akhaltsikhians name common goals such as Katskhi railway, traffic road, leaving post-soviet space, stability and peace.

Most participants in all groups think that having relations with Armenians is not considered prestigious in Georgian society, at least compared to 'Westerners'. While in most groups participants commonly explain it by Armenians being more familiar and Armenia being less developed while westerners are associated with more education and intelligence, (older Tbilisians also mention Armenians being ashamed of being Armenians and Georgians generally being arrogant), older Akhaltsikhians blame the state attitude prioritizing English and the wrong media approach.

To understand whether there is any difference in how Armenians and Azerbaijanis are perceived by Georgians, the participants were asked to compare Armenians with Azerbaijanis. According to the data, although participants find Armenians more similar with Georgians, most of them have much positive attitude towards Azeris, considering them as being more sincere, hardworking and having fewer claims

towards Georgians. However certain negative ‘traits’ of Azeris were also named - most commonly related with restricting women’s rights. Opinions are mixed regarding Azerbaijani people’s attitudes towards Georgians, while some think Azeris feel more positive towards Georgians, others think Azeris as well as Armenians want to misappropriate Georgian territory. The basic difference between Tbilisians and Akhaltsikhians is Akhaltsikhian participants’ less familiarity with Azerbaijanis and consequently less knowledge of them.

In conclusion we can say that regardless the category, Tbilisians as well as Akhaltsikhians, younger as well as older participants associate Armenians with hairdressers, artisans and repairers and think that Armenians prefer such occupations to higher education. Other most common aspects everyone agrees about are opinions that Armenians misappropriate or claim Georgian’s cultural heritage, Armenians are quite cohesive/supportive towards each other, are hospitable, are money/profit-oriented and more flexible emigrants. In addition being sly and historically traitor was mentioned in Tbilisi as well as in Akhaltsikhe.

When it comes to arranging data according capitals we distinguished earlier, we can find out that while the symbolic capital – prestige - is quite low, the financial capital for instance, is mixed - for some participants Armenians seem to be desirable business partners while for others they are non-desirable. Regarding cultural capital it should be mentioned that while participants generally consider Armenia as a country of ancient culture, they are not of high opinion about Armenian’s education. On the other hand when it comes to politics participants agree that local Armenians should be involved in Georgian politics but many of them mentioned that they should not be given the key positions.

As Armenians are quite familiar for Tbilisians often there are not many crucial differences between the opinions of Tbilisians and Akhaltsikhians. However Akhaltsikhians distinguish Armenians of Armenia and Armenians of Georgia more easily compared to Tbilisians; also while Tbilisians talk about Armenians of Javakheti more generally, Akhaltsikhians especially distinguish Akhalkalaki Armenians from Akhaltsikhe Armenians, considering them as isolated, less educated and prone to separatism. Apart from this when talking about friendship, Akhalkalakians emphasize certain distance that anyway exists between local Georgians and Armenians and prevents from very close friendships. On the other hand Tbilisians basically remind friends who are very integrated, almost Georgianized Armenians. When it comes to age dimension, here are no major differences either. However it is noticeable that both younger groups emphasize chauvinism and nationalism as common characteristic for Georgians as well as Armenians, while older groups do not mention it; in addition both younger groups say that Georgians display snobbish attitudes towards Armenians. On the other hand in Akhaltsikhe as well as in Tbilisi it was mentioned that younger generations of Georgians are more nationalistic compared to older one, especially when it comes to Georgians speaking Armenian.

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