

# Dual Boundaries: The Mechanism of Boundary Construction Operating in Interethnic Settings in Georgia

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the question of the boundary construction mechanism between different ethnic groups in Georgia. It demonstrates the duality of boundary construction strategies that operate distinctively in the public and private domains of life. By exploring this substantive issue, I utilize relatively new theoretical perspectives in the study of interethnic boundary construction by concentrating on its multilevel operational character. Drawing on rich data sources within a mixed method approach, I provide empirical evidence concerning how ethnic and national codes of identity are negotiated and combined in everyday interethnic settings. The analyses focus on three ethnic groups residing in the Republic of Georgia – Georgians, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis.

**Keywords:** ethnicity, ethnic boundary, identity, religion, interethnic cohesion, private-public spheres

## 1. Introduction

What mostly characterises ethnic boundary theory is its linearity. In almost all theoretical models, which explore the mechanism of ethnic boundary construction, the main question is directed at the set of factors defining the ethnic closure. According to the approved theoretical schemes, ethnicity, as well as ethnic identity, is always defined through a certain repertoire of symbolic codes without considering how each of these codes operate and become interpreted at different levels of life (Shils 1957, Eisenstadt 1998, Eisenstadt & Giesen 1995). Precisely, how and to what extent a multidimensionality of human life creates preconditions for the particular types of boundary construction. Otherwise, how a micro and macro, public and private level of human life generates a unique context for interpretation of each defining code of ethnicity.

Thereby, what often remains beyond attention is the multilevel character of the boundary construction process. And, the fact that each boundary defining factor itself does not function identically in the micro and macro, as well as the private and public spheres of life, and that the logic of the boundary making mechanism is essentially dual. The boundaries, constantly reproduced and maintained on the private level of human life, can become simultaneously crossed on the public level. Indeed, the ethnic boundary lines, that are conserved and maintained in the private sphere, simultaneously can become eliminated in the public domain. This multilevel operational feature of the boundary construction mechanism provides new perspectives in the study of ethnicity. Therefore, the private/public operational structure as a conceptual framework can be useful to understand the complex logic of the ethnic boundary construction mechanism in everyday life. As mentioned above, this issue has been underestimated by scholars of ethnic boundary theory. Regardless of this theoretical neglect, there have been certain studies undertaken in this spirit.

The dual character of boundary construction has been articulated by Frederic Barth. He explicitly noted that interethnic boundaries can be crossed and simultaneously maintained (Barth 1967). However, Barth didn't explore further the operational logic of this mechanism in everyday settings, especially in the context of diversified life domains. He observed that the contrastive cultural characteristics of ethnic minority groups are located in the non-articulating sectors of life, defined by the author as a 'backstage', where so called "stigmatic" characteristics from the perspective of the dominant majority culture can be covertly reproduced (Barth 1967). In fact, he implicitly describes how most "stigmatic" and "contrastive" characteristics can be maintained and reproduced in the "private" (*backstage*) sphere of life.

In their typology, Zolberg and Long define individual boundary crossing as a process of certain individual changes followed by the incorporation of the mainstream group attributes by immigrants, who "replacing their mother tongue with the host language, naturalization, and religious conversion" (1999:8) substitute their native language with the mainstream one, naturalise and convert religions. The boundary crossing process is conceptualised in a unified way, qualifying all types of boundary changes as the individual level outcome.

Based on the empirical data, sociologist Shirley Kolack (1987) emphasizes the unequal level of the value internalization process in the public and private spheres of life. Family life, on the one hand, accompanied with traditions and religious practices represents a cultural enclosure of each ethnic group. Whereas, on the other hand, work and political activity represent a public sphere. In his paper, the author asks how the internalization processes of Soviet values in multiethnic Soviet countries has “been greatest in the areas of politics and work, the least in the areas of culture and family life.” (Kolack 1987:44).

Instead of the above mentioned conceptual and empirical explorations, the multilevel character of the boundary construction process has been poorly reflected in the field. In the following sections I will provide an overview of the relevant theoretical framework for this article as well as the empirical foundations.

## 2. Theoretical Framing

This research is framed within the theories of collective identity and substantially conceptualized through the boundary making approach (Shils, 1976. Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998, Cohen 1985, Delanty, G. 1999, 1995). The conceptual linkage between collective identities and boundaries is widely reflected in social sciences literature. Just as identity does not exist without boundaries, boundaries do not exist without identity. The constructivist approach to collective identity is displayed through a set of symbolic codes of distinctions between those inside and outside of the group and serves as a main conceptual instrument for analyzing the boundary construction process in interethnic settings (Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998).

Following the constructivist model of collective identity, I differentiate primordial, civic and cultural codes of distinction which create an essential ground for the formation of interethnic boundary lines (Shils, 1975; Geertz, 1973). Additionally, I am adding a specific subjective code to the following model which reflects feelings of self-identification. Primordiality is associated with factors that are considered ‘objective’, unquestionable and inherently natural. “The boundaries of primordial communities consist of strong lines separating incommensurable insides and outsides (Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998:78). Civic codes of identity represent distinctions related to social and civic routines as well as institutional or constitutional arrangements of community (Delanty 1998). Cultural codes of identity are linked to “the realm of the sacred ...defined as God or Reason, Progress or Rationality (Tenbruck, F. H. 1989; Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998:82). Religion is considered quintessential for this type of scheme. Boundaries constructed on such a collectiveness can be easily crossed as everyone is “capable of overcoming his inferiority, his emptiness and his errors, by converting to the right faith, adopting the superior culture, and crossing the boundary (Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998:83).

The boundary lines are mainly drawn on these codings with constantly varying compositions. “These codes have to be seen as ideal types, while real codings always combine different elements of these ideal types. Therefore, concrete historical codings of collective identity are not homogenous.” (Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998:76).

These symbolic codes of distinctions between ethnic groups serve as a crucial factor for interethnic boundary construction and are considered as constructors of collective identity per se (Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998:77). This study illustrates that the coding repertoire of each ethnic group’s identity is presented as a combination of various components and vary in private and public level of life. Further, the multilevel approach of the boundary making process appears more suitable to illustrate a predominantly definitive character of the duality of boundaries in everyday life.

The research programs of social constructivist theories that explain the reproduction of collectivity based on the boundary making approach emphasize however the defining factor of situational particularity in this process. It is the situation in general that activates a certain type of coding component of identity and ascribes them particular importance and priority. The group identity is always represented through various components of these symbolic codings, “the importance of which varies in different situations.” (Eisenstadt & Giessen 1998:76) Almost all situationalist approaches (Spicer 1971, Nagel 1994) admit a definitive future of contextuality at the general level which gives a space for reinterpretation and modification of each symbolic code of distinctions between ethnic groups, without specifying a particular contextual arrangement that creates a unique basis for boundary definition. The empirical study of such contextuality can provide a new analytical tool for the multidimensional examination of the boundary making process. This research focuses on the distinctive levels of everyday life presented at the micro and macro level or, more specifically, in the private and public domains, which reveal a unique character of the boundary construction mechanism described here as *duality*.

By using the term *duality* I try to characterize the multilevel operational nature of the boundary construction mechanism in everyday interethnic settings. Popularized by the influential theory of structuration, the term refers to two distinct and independent features a phenomenon can entail at the same time, as two different sides of one coin (Giddens 1984). The concept of *duality* has been accurately utilized within the theory of ethnic identity (Deaux 2006). As a form combining both ethnic and national identity, the dual identity has been defined as one of the alternatives in the multiple identity

options ethnic minority groups have to choose from in everyday practice (Baysu, Phalet & Brown 2011).

The conceptualization of this bipolar modus of identity implicitly underlines the dual character of the boundary making process in interethnic settings. Members of ethnic minority have to choose between different strategies of identity construction as well as various combinations of ethnic and national identities (Berry 2006). The proximity to one pole of the bidimensional scheme allows members of the ethnic minority group to distance themselves from another pole. In this extreme way, the predominantly ethnic (“separated”) and predominantly national constructions of identities with respective coding combinations can be differentiated (Ruder, Alden, Paulhus 2000). Though the bi-dimensional scheme of identity can produce a dual identity form represented as a negotiated and combined construction of ethnic and national identity (Deaux 2006). Sharing a national identity with fellow citizens and at the same time their ethnic identity with their minority group members allows them to navigate successfully in everyday life. The duality of the boundary construction mechanism can be indicated as one of the strategies in the range of its potential application. The public and private normative context as well as the acceptance of cultural diversity by both majority and minority group members have critical importance in the dual identity construction process.

Though in this and other theoretical implications (Alba, R. 2005) the crucial question remains the same: What are those specific preconditions that produce a dual identity construction, on which level of interpersonal relationships becomes possible the negotiation of interethnic distinctions? I address this question using a multilevel analysis of the boundary making process. More specifically, the research will reveal the duality of the boundary construction mechanism by examining its reproduction and formation on the public and private level of everyday life separately, which will be overviewed in the next section.

### *2.1 Public and Private Structure of Life*

Public and private are one of those “grand dichotomies” (Bobbio 1989) developed in the human history of thought that functions as a conceptual tool for understanding the normative order of human life. Explicit demarcation of the human world into two domains with appropriate institutionalized normative orders and constantly reproduced boundaries can serve as a conceptual framework for understanding the logic of interethnic boundary construction in everyday life. Following the classic ancient legacy of private/public dichotomization, modern authors use this concept by addressing reference units in each sphere. Private is defined as a personal, and public as an impersonal domain of life (Arendt 1958, Habermas 1964, Silver 1997). According to Arendt, public is identified as “everything that appears . . . can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest possible publicity . . . [and] appearance – something that is being seen and heard by others as well as by ourselves – [is what] constitutes reality” (1958:50) and is “distinguished from our privately owned place in it. (1958:52) In contrast, “To live an entirely private life means above all to be deprived of things essential to a truly human life: to be deprived of the reality that comes from being seen and heard by others” (1958:58). Habermas (1964) conceptualizes a public sphere as a “realm of our social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed, access is guaranteed to all citizens [, and a portion of it] comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body . . . Today newspapers and magazines, radio and television are the media of the public sphere” (1964:49).

The explicit dichotomization in two normative order[s] is one of the crucial markers of modernity for Elias who equates the private to the intimate and secret mode of human behaviour in comparison to the public one. “. . . with the advance of civilization the lives of human beings are increasingly split between the intimate and a public sphere, between secret and public behaviour. And this split is taken so much for granted, becomes so compulsive a habit, that it is hardly perceived in consciousness.” (Elias 1939:190).

The private is considered something that “is hidden or withdrawn versus what is open, revealed, or accessible” (Weintraub 1997:5). The individual is perceived as an ontological opposition to the collective, which affects the interest of the collectivity of individuals. Private is not only ascribed to the family domain and primary groups, it functions on the base of intense emotional and intimate parts of human life. In this way “the contrast between the “personal”, emotionally intense, and intimate domain of family, friendship and the primary group and the impersonal, severely instrumental domain of market and formal institutions “becomes explicit.” (Weintraub 1997:20)

Another framework is provided by feminist discourse according to which the private sphere of life is identical to family and domestic settings as opposite to the public one conceptualized as “gender-linked in terms of both social structure and ideology.” (Weintraub 1997:28).

In the framework of sociology, further enhancement of conceptualizations is provided in light of modernity (Sennett 1977, Fischer 1981, Hunter 1985, Lofland 1998). In contemporary western urban society, the public sphere equals “the world of strangers, the cosmopolitan city” which contrasts with the private sphere of intimate relationships. . . . “The absorption in intimate affairs is the mark of an uncivilized society” (Sennett 1977: 340). The main criteria of distinction between these poles is the scale of social distance presented as an alienated and estranged interpersonal relationship. “A

world of strangers” as Fisher states, is a “world of people who are personally unfamiliar to one another” (Fisher 1981:307). Public and private are defined as different normative and mutually interdependent orders in which correlated modes of social practice are incorporated: the private, the parochial and the public social orders (Hunter 1985). The private order refers to the primary groups where “the values of sentiment, social support, and esteem are the essential resource”; the parochial order is “based on the local interpersonal networks and interlocking of local institutions that serve the diurnal and sustenance needs of the residential community”; and the public order is “located preeminently in the formal, bureaucratic agencies of the state” (Hunter 1985:233-234). Specifically, the author defined the private realm as a place of intimate ties between the primary group members who are mostly involved within “households” and “personal networks”; the parochial realm as a space of the commonality sense between acquaintances and neighbours who are involved in interpersonal networks within ‘communities’; and, the public realm as an opposite of the private sectors of urban areas where individuals are personally unknown or only ‘categorically’ known to one another (232-233). Structural positions within these different social orders create ‘equivalent’ dynamics for interactions.

By utilizing a public and private normative order as a conceptual framework I attempt to reveal a multidimensional operational character of the boundary construction mechanism. More specifically, I will try to illustrate how these normative orders which structure distinctively the domains of life are responsible for the reproduction of dual boundaries between the ethnic groups.

### 3. Design and Methods

To demonstrate how the dual boundary construction mechanism operates in interethnic settings, and more specifically, how boundary lines between the ethnic groups are defined according to the normative orders of certain life domains rather than by identity codings per se, a complex undertaking of empirical research will proceed. All dimensions of the research will be defined with a mixed method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative empirical data.

At the first stage, I will measure the symbolic codes of collective identity for three ethnic groups. This will help explore how interethnic boundary lines are drawn and what kind of composition of the symbolic codes of interethnic distinctions constitute the main characteristics of boundary lines. I will also try to reveal how the combination of defining factors of interethnic boundaries are operating in the private and public spheres. By doing so, I try to demonstrate how distinctively each of these symbolic codes of collectivity are functioning on the public and private levels of everyday life and shift the dual nature of interethnic boundary lines.

In a Caucasus Barometer questionnaire, which includes a section for measuring national identity, I selected variables compatible with the theoretical model of Eisenshtadt and Giessen (1998). The operationalization of the theoretical items helped to explore empirically how boundary lines of three ethnic groups are constructed. In sum, seven items for three groups of identity codings have been identified. The primordial dimension of symbolic distinctions which conceptually creates the basis for boundary line construction with reference to ‘origin’ and ‘nature’ includes three items such as kinship, birth and language. The civic dimension has been depicted by variables such as citizenship and acknowledgement of institutional arrangements. The cultural code consists of two items related to the systems of internalized normative order. After measuring each of these identity codes for three ethnic groups with an aim of exploring an interethnic boundary construction, I verified resulted models of boundary constructions on the private and public level. This enabled me to reveal a nonlinear, multilevel operational mechanism of the boundary making process, namely, the dual character of boundary construction, which functions distinctively at the private and public level (Wimmer 2004, 2013).

As a key variable for measuring boundaries in the private sphere I select marriage, which alongside its substantially intimate and personal nature is considered to be a strong predictor of in-group solidarity. At the same time marriage as a sacral act in many cultures is closely related to the religious connotations and intensifies feelings towards ethnic affinities. In the public sphere I select the business partnership which, corresponding to organizational structure, is fairly distanced from the familiar and intimate orbit of the private sphere. According to its intrinsic instrumental logic it relatively lacks value orientations of a substantial nature (Weber 1970).

Based on the empirical analysis the study reveals that the boundary lines constructed predominantly on primordial differences, become easily crossed in the public sphere of life. And conversely, the boundary lines essentially defined through the civic codes of identity appear to be strongly maintained in the private sphere.

For strengthening the empirical evidence by verifying this theoretical statement, qualitative methods have also been utilized. Based on the research data generated from in-depth interviews and focus-groups I identify the strategies respondents use in constructing the interethnic boundaries in everyday settings. By analysing narratives, I try to understand how interethnic boundaries as well as identities are constructed and constituted (Somers 1994:607). In sum, 7 focus groups and 23 in-depth interviews were conducted. The fieldwork was carried out in summer 2017, 2018 and 2020 in three sites of Georgia: Tbilisi, Marneuli and Akalthsike. The main criteria of location selection was the

quantitative distribution of the populated ethnic groups. The respondents have been selected by age, gender, location and ethnicity. The gender parity criteria was applied. The one generational cohort born in post-soviet period with the respondents aged 18-25 were chosen.

#### **4. Background**

Georgia represents an interesting site for the study of boundary construction in multiethnic societies. Multicultural and multiethnic composition has been a peculiar feature of the country throughout the centuries. Apart from ethnic majority Georgians; Jews, Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Greeks, Kurds, Russians, Ukrainians, Chechens/Kists, Ossetians, Abkhaz, and other ethnic groups constitute the multiethnic composition of society, which has undergone permanent changes in different historical periods. According to the census (CSEM 2016:2) in 1926 the minority groups comprised 33% of the entire population, with 11.51% of Armenians, 5.17% Turks and 3.60% Russians. The 1940s and 1980s represent historical periods of growth in ethnic diversity. Though after the 1990s, there was a significant decline in the minority ethnic groups, so that in 2014 the minorities represented 15% of the whole population, comprised of 6.27% Azeris, 4.53% Armenians and 0,71% Russians.

The political, social and cultural exclusion of ethnic and religious minorities remains one of the major challenges for the Georgian state (NITG 2008). By analyzing interethnic relations (social cohesion) academics often limit their focus to the developments of the post-Soviet period. This underestimates the essence and complexity of the problem, which is largely shaped by the legacy of Soviet times. In the Georgian academic sphere, the interethnic thematic is broadly reflected, especially, in reference to national identity (Tevzadze 2009, Nodia 2009, Zedania 2011, Wheatley 2009, Reisner 2009, Kirvalidze 2014) and the collective memory formation process in post-Soviet Georgia.

Under the ideological agenda of equality and rights, Soviet power institutionally maintained ethnicity with its crucial constitutional elements such as language, with the intention of eliminating primordial affinities through extended enforcement of social and political patterns of class identification (Kravetz 1980:14). The new secularized and ideologized patterns of identification have been assumed to establish a “set of overarching shared values of the country as a whole to replace the core values of the various ethnic groups.” (Kolack 1987:38). In fact, this process was followed by explicit ethnic hierarchies, centralized authority structures, efforts of Russification and asymmetric power relations between nations and ethnicities (Suny 1993, Shanin 1989). It should be noticed that alongside Russian, used as a lingua franca, the “nationality label and native language” remained as the basic and most stable indicators of national and ethnic identity in the Soviet Union (Silvan 48). Soviet identity defined primarily by social class (brotherhood of workers) and secularized supranational civic codes (Soviet citizen) was assumed to operate as a substitute for other primordial codes of identification. The unequal level of internalization of Soviet values in the private and public sphere and the maintenance of the distinct languages, cultural and religious traditions in familiar spheres, each ethnic group sustained its cohesiveness and the interethnic boundaries were reproduced. The concentration of ethnic minority populations mainly in rural areas in a form of compact ethnic settlement has favored the survival of traditional agents of socialization, traditional social patterns, values, and modes of behavior. Another reinforcement of feelings of ethnic identity was the survival of religion, which was closely intertwined with a sense of ethnic identity of most ethnic groups (Silvan 85).

Demographic conditions of ethnic minorities such as territorial and urban-rural dispersion was a strong predictor not only for ethnic identity maintenance but also for the degree of inequality between the ethnic groups (Silvan, 85). The concentration of the ethnic minority population mainly in rural areas in the form of a compact ethnic settlement has favored the enforcement of unequal living standards and environmental developments between the ethnic groups. The difference in the quality of life which “existed between the urban-rural settings has its effects on the different spheres of life (Kravetz 1980:152). Despite the efforts towards universal literacy accompanied by industrialization and economic developments the critical importance remained the problem of “the great disparity between rural and urban educational services: personnel, buildings, materials and access,” on the one hand and, “the cultural divisiveness within ethnic groups which result[ed]s in less schooling for women and, generally, a negative view of schooling”, on the other hand (Kravetz 1980: 22).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union national minorities have faced “specific structural handicaps” and become “particularly vulnerable to impoverishment, isolation and under-education” (NITG 2010:11). This development made the issue of interethnic social cohesion particularly interesting to research.

#### **5. Data Analysis**

##### *5.1 Quantitative Insights*

The Caucasus Barometer 2019 national survey data verifies the hypothesis of the dual boundary construction mechanism. The data reveals that interethnic boundaries are distinctively drawn in the private and public spheres of life.

More specifically, interethnic boundaries are crossed on the public level when members of one ethnic group have business relations with representatives of another ethnic group. At the same time these ethnic boundaries are maintained and reproduced on the private level when it concerns intermarriage.

There is a significant difference in how interethnic boundaries are drawn simultaneously in the two spheres of life. The low level approval of intermarriage in all three ethnic groups reveals that interethnic boundary lines are strictly drawn in the private sphere. Though at the same time interethnic boundaries are significantly eliminated in the public domain with a comparably high level of approval of business relationships among ethnic group members. According to the national survey data (Table 1) members of the Georgian ethnic group prefer to have business relations with the religiously different ethnic Azeris (71%) in comparison with the religiously familiar ethnic Armenians (64%). At the same time, more of the members of the Georgian ethnic group approve marriage with ethnic Armenians (40%) than with Azeris (33%). These empirical data suggest support for the hypothesis stated above that religious and other primordial boundaries are crossed differently in the private and public spheres of life. Additionally, it supports the second hypothesis that interethnic boundaries are defined by other social and symbolic codes of identity than the religious one.

Table 1 shows that there is a relatively similar picture in the case of the Azeri and Armenian ethnic minorities.

Table 1. Duality of interethnic boundaries (%)

Ethnic Origin Respondent	Approval					
	Business			Marriage		
	Armenian	Azeri	Georgian	Armenian	Azeri	Georgian
Armenian	-	38	72	-	30	64
Azeri	16	-	81	4	-	18
Georgian	64	71	-	40	33	-

(The question measuring the interethnic boundaries in public domain: *Can you please tell me whether you approve or disapprove of people of your ethnicity doing business with Armenians (Azeris, Georgians)?*)

The question measuring the interethnic boundaries in private domain: *Would you approve or disapprove of women of your ethnicity marrying Armenians (Azerbaijani, Georgians) living in Georgia?*)

Following the theoretical model of Eisenshtadt and Giessen (1998) I tried to explore how boundary lines between the three ethnic groups are constructed in everyday life and how they are related to the normative orders of the public and private spheres. More specifically, how the dual boundary construction mechanism can be explained with the logic of the grand dichotomies everyday life is structured by. The questionnaire of the Caucasus Barometer includes a thematic segment measuring national identity, from which I identify variables compatible with the theoretical model, and detailed in Table 2.

Table 2. Measured interethnic boundaries through the identity codes (%)

Identity codes	Interethnic Boundary Construction	Dual Boundary Construction					
		Public			Private		
		Approval business with Armenian Azeri Georgian	Approval of woman marrying Armenian Azeri Georgian				
<b>Primordial codes</b>							
To have Georgian ancestry	79	83	82	85	81	74	86
To have been born in Georgia	63	61	61	63	57	58	63
To be able to speak Georgian	89	90	89	90	88	86	90
<b>Civic codes</b>							
To have Georgian citizenship	79	80	80	81	76	75	81
To respect Georgian institutions and laws	90	92	90	91	90	86	92
<b>Cultural codes</b>							
To have lived in Georgia for most of one's life	76	75	75	77	72	70	77
To be a believer in the Georgian Orthodox Church	71	71	68	73	68	58	74

Table 2 shows that people who define their identity in general through the civic codes (Respect to the Georgian institutions and laws - 90%), in the specific domain of life, namely, in the private sphere construct their boundary lines with primordial codes (Speaking Georgian – 90%). 79 % of respondents who consider primordial codes important for their national identity appear to be less favorable to it when acting in the private sphere. Only 74 % of them with approval of interethnic marriages name ancestry as an important factor for their identification. On the other hand, in the public sphere almost 83 % of them consider this primordial code as a significant factor for their identification. By approval of business cooperation with other ethnic groups, this primordial factor of identity appears again redefined. The same picture can be displayed in the case of other identity codes.

71 % of respondents, who name religion as one of the cultural codes as an important factor for their personal identification, change their mind when considering it at the private level of life. Only 58 % of them name it in regards to intermarriage approval. The difference is also remarkable when analyzing the importance of these codes specifically in public life. Only 68% of them consider this code of identity as an important factor when approving interethnic business cooperation.

The civic codes, as one of the most definitive factors of identity displayed in the table with 90 % of respondent's approval, seems to be less appreciated in the private sphere of life. 86% of respondents who approve of a woman's interethnic marriage name respecting Georgian institutions and laws as a significant aspect of their identity.

The results of this empirical examination shows that identity defining codes appear to be operating distinctively in the private and public sphere of everyday life. This proves again the hypothesis of a dual boundary construction mechanism which operates simultaneously in the private and public domain and demonstrates a multidimensional feature of the boundary making process.

### 5.2 Qualitative Insights

The ethnic narratives and discourses attained through the in-depth interviews and focus groups provided in the following section serve for understanding the mechanism of boundary construction in interethnic settings. In particular, how ethnic, religious and other primordial codes of identity become subordinated to and eliminated by other social and everyday behavioural patterns of differences in light of the public and private spheres of life. The rich qualitative data reveals how this is harmonised within the logic of double boundary construction.

#### 5.2.1 Double Boundaries: Modern Daughters-in-Law

One vivid illustration of the double boundary making mechanism is the case of "modern daughters-in-law". These are the young women, wives and daughters-in-law who break the practices and behavioural patterns traditionally followed by women within the Azeri ethnic group. They mostly represent families with stable and good economic resources. Their spouses are not necessarily educated but have a certain amount of economic and social capital in the inter and out-group milieu. These type of young daughter's-in-law speak Georgian, are educated and mostly employed in public

organizations. It is important to note that they have a high respect and symbolic capital within their own ethnic community. Respondents discuss cases of how they manage to cross ethnic boundaries and at the same time remain recognized as respectful members of the ethnic group.

There is a category of young men who prefer to have an educated wife with a stable job. They also buy cars for them, like Georgians do. These young daughters-in-law are appreciated in religious circles, they participate in the traditional celebrations and do everything that they are supposed to do like every daughter-in-law in the ethnic minority community. (Samira, 22, Marneuli)

In one interview a daughter-in-law describes her feelings towards the interethnic boundary crossing in the private sphere of life, more specifically related to her marriage decision. In the situation of permanent interethnic boundary crossing in the public sphere, the interethnic boundaries are still strictly demarcated in the private sphere of life, namely in the case of partner selection for marriage.

I know that my life style is different from most other Azeri girls... I studied at university and have mostly Georgian friends but I never thought I will marry a Georgian boy. I would not do this to my father, to my family. (Narsin, 25, Marneuli)

The new forms of practices as well as lifestyle are essentially perceived as an elimination of distinctions which create interethnic boundaries. But the crucial thing here is that this boundary crossing process takes place in the public sphere.

They are dressed, speaking and behaving like Georgian daughters-in-law, you can hardly find a difference. And this is so different from our lifestyle... Though, they follow all religious and other traditions in their families and house. It cannot be otherwise. (Arzu, 24, Marneuli)

A boy from a village describes how boundaries are constructed between the two spheres of life in providing examples of young daughters-in-law:

When I see them in bank office or in other public places it is so obvious that they are not behaving like most of our women do, they are different, almost like Georgians. But if you visit them at home, for example, during a religious celebration, I am sure you will recognize them as Azeri daughters-in-law. (Arsen 21, Marneuli)

These passages articulate explicitly how interethnic boundary lines between ethnic groups, namely between Azeris and Georgians, are eliminated in the public sphere of everyday life. It is inverse as well - how the private sphere preserves and reproduces the symbolic repertoire for interethnic boundary lines between Azeris and Georgians.

The discussions reveal that the space factor is closely related to the interethnic boundary construction process. Urban centres appear the crucial site for interethnic boundary crossing through the adoption of new behavioural patterns, modifying the established forms of social praxis etc.

However, there are daughters-in-law who work in public institutions. This is commonly a category of family which lives in a capital or in Marneuli. Their behaviour is not considered bad. On the contrary. (Abas, 26, Marneuli)

To the question of whether this category of young women are using the traditional ethnic or religious attributes in their appearance the young Miranda replays:

When it is necessary to have a “mantia” on religious celebrations, they will use it but never in a public space every day. (Said, 22, Marneuli)

The typical milieu and social circle of these young Azeris appears more interethnic in comparison to the traditional one. Relative frequency of contacts with Georgians, friendship with Georgian families etc. leads to interethnic boundary crossing.

I know a few young daughters-in-law in my town who are employed in public space, have a friendly circle with Georgians and follow the religious traditions in the family. This happens often. (Hasan, 27, Marneuli)

From discussions it also becomes evident that economic as well as social status is not definitive for boundary crossing. And, that education and socialisation play decisive roles in this process.

There are many wealthy families who have no education. And they are not interested in teaching the Georgian language and educating their children. They are more closed people; they mostly do not have relations with Georgians. (Vagaf, 24, Marneuli)

The girl from the village discusses how the frequency of relationships and shared social milieu can eliminate interethnic boundaries.



My girlfriend was married to a Georgian boy. In their families none of them have education, nor in the boy's family. This girl's family is very close to Georgians, their parents work in the same workplace and know each other well. The religion of this girl is not a problem for the boy, they are familiar with each other's traditions and respect them. (Narmina, 24, Marneuli)

### 5.2.2 Tradition and Education

The discussions related to the topic of tradition and education reveal again the double character of the boundary construction mechanism respondents are using in everyday interethnic settings. In the narratives of young minorities, receiving an education (in Georgian) and maintaining the ethnic traditions are not strictly separated from each other as in the case of older generations. They perceive both as coexisting. The main thing is that they do not interfere or exclude each other. In most of the narratives of respondents they do not appear mutually exclusive.

Going to the Georgian school or not has nothing to do with the traditions. (Gaiane, 23, Akaltsikhe)

In the narratives, the education associated with modern values is mainly considered as a strategic resource for success in the public sphere. Tradition, in contrast, is mostly linked to their family life and the private sphere, which at the same time, seems to be sacred and remains preserved. This coexistence of inclusive and exclusive codes of identity produce dual boundary lines which operate simultaneously in everyday interethnic settings.

I can be educated in Georgian school and universities, which is a very important thing to achieve success in life. I can have a modern style of life as my Georgian classmates do, but it does not mean that I will not recognize traditions in my family, I mean they do not bother each other. (Hasan, 23, Marneuli)

I can be well educated in Georgian universities, and my religion will not have anything to do with it. (Ali, 19, Marneuli)

In these narratives respondents reveal again the double character of the boundary construction mechanism they use in everyday interethnic settings. Education in Georgian as well as a modern way of life shared with their Georgian counterparts is more related to their social life, which enables them adaptation and success in the modern world. Religion and other ethnic markers seem to be easily overcome in the social sphere though their existence continues in the private domain. This illustrates how nonlinear the boundary construction mechanism is operating with this double mechanism in interethnic settings. Interethnic boundaries are constructed and crossed, maintained and eliminated at the same time. Respondents are discussing situations of everyday life when they reproduce the existing religious boundaries at the private sphere and cross them in the public sphere (Eller & Coughlan 1993).

Respondents are talking about the radical change of attitudes towards education, but at the same time emphasize a modest circle of those who are seeking higher education.

Only three from eight in my class have become enrolled in university. Others did not want to continue study. One went to Azerbaijan, one went to Turkey, one married, and so on. But today people have woken up, they understand that education is important. (Sevil, 25, Marneuli)

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this paper is to open new directions in the nonlinear multidimensional study of boundary making processes and to tease out the significance of the private/public grand dichotomy in the boundary construction process. As crucial organizing categories of social and everyday life, public and private normative order create a unique basis for dual boundary construction processes. Both of these normative orders produce a space for the reinterpretation and modification of each symbolic code of identity that defines the lines of interethnic boundaries. This paper demonstrates that it is not the defining factors (symbolic codes) of identity per se that are responsible to the definition of the boundary lines between the ethnic groups, as it is accurately reflected in the theoretical paradigms of boundary construction, but the specific domains of life in which they are operating. It proves that the public and private level of life generates a particular logic for interpretation of each of the defining factors of ethnicity that produce a duality of the boundary construction mechanism.

This evidence-based research highlights the multilevel operational character of the boundary construction mechanism that highlights a new direction in the empirical study of boundaries. The defining factor of situational particularity in group identity formation, especially through the in-group and out-group boundary drawing process, has been broadly explored within the framework of constructivist paradigms (Spicer 1971, Nagel 1991, Waters, M. C. 1990). This empirical study of particular contextual arrangements, that creates a unique basis for boundary definitions between the ethnic groups, extends the knowledge of multidimensional operational character of boundary construction and reveals its dual nature. With the attempt to navigate from the most abstract theorizing schemes of constructivist and moreover, situational paradigms, to the most practical and immediate domains of everyday life, it seeks to contribute in the multidimensional empirical study of the phenomenon (Lamont 1992, Wimmer 2013).

The verification of this theoretical statement has been made on the basis of the empirical data related exclusively to the Georgian case. The further extension of the research focus with an aim of strengthening the following theoretical statement can be considered as a next step of this study. The list of selected variables can be regarded as another limitation of this research, as it does not cover all dimensions of the phenomenon.

The aim of this paper was to demonstrate how interethnic boundary lines are constructed in everyday life. The complex empirical data reveals that interethnic boundaries are more strongly defined by normative orders characteristic to the public and private spheres of life which create duality in the boundary reproduction process. Public and private normative categories appear as strong definers of interethnic boundary lines rather than interethnic differences per se. Each of the symbolic codes of identity that define the boundary lines can be reinterpreted and modified following the normative orders operating in the private and public spheres of life. The normative patterns that govern the way the interethnic boundaries are manifested into social actors are predominantly determined by the categorical logic of public and private orders of everyday life. The study reveals that it is not a composition of symbolic distinctions defining the boundaries between the in group and out group, but the normative order of everyday life according to which these distinctions are reinterpreted and reflected.

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