

Belonging: Argentine Armenians About Their Dual Identity

by

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Abstract

Many Armenians fled to Argentina in 1915 and the years after. In time they built a community with schools and churches which reminded them of home. Today many Argentine-Armenians find their way back to Armenia to work, study, and to experience a part of themselves. This research focused on seven interviews with Argentine-Armenians living in Armenia who shared their feelings on home as well as hybrid identities such as themselves. Research shows that family influence is vital to raise a person with high sensitivity towards two different ancestries. Those who grew up in an Armenian-speaking environment, went to Armenian schools and interacted with other Argentine-Armenians showed much more interest in letting the world know about their heritage. Some of the participants noted that they feel home in Armenia, others in Argentina. The one thing all participants agreed on was that the duality of their identities made them appreciate and respect the diversity of the world.

Introduction

The most fundamental question one can explore is that of their own identity. Who am I? Where do I belong? These questions have been subject of discussion almost as long as humans have existed. The need to feel accepted, to belong to a place or a group is an innate instinctive need that all people have. This project aims to gather as much theoretical information as possible on the issue of acculturation, assimilation and belonging and fuse theory with a real life example, i.e. understand and describe how Armenian descendants in contemporary Argentina incorporate their two identities - the Armenian and the Argentinian.

Large numbers of Armenians migrated to Argentina after the 1915 genocide from Adana, Marash, Antep, and Izmir. Argentina provided support loans for immigrants who wanted to do farming because at the time Argentina was the largest exporter of agricultural products such as grain, meat and wool in South America (Urgun, 2016). As migrants, Armenians went through the difficulties of establishing a new Armenian community, supporting their families and overcoming the trauma and fear of 1915. Today there are more than 135,000 Armenians living in Argentina. Around 5000 Armenians live in Buenos Aires, the capital city of Argentina, in a neighborhood called *Palermo Viejo*. They also call it “Little Armenia” where they have an Armenian Apostolic church and restaurants that serve traditional Armenian dishes (Urgun, 2016). Many Armenian-oriented families send their children on exchange programs to Armenia, others grow up and decide to come visit Armenia, come back to their roots.

It is fascinating to study the lives of these people and the stories behind them, get to know their ancestry, their views on identity, and to be able to tell those stories from a personal perspective.

Key Terms and Definitions

Imagined Community: concept developed by Benedict Anderson which describes nations. Each nation/state is an imagined community because one cannot know every member of a given society/community face-to-face even if the nation is small (Anderson, 2016).

Assimilation: assimilation refers to the process through which individuals and groups of differing heritages acquire the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of an embracing culture (Merriam-Webster).

Acculturation: acculturation is often tied to political conquest or expansion, and is applied to the process of change in beliefs or traditional practices that occurs when the cultural system of one group displaces that of another (Merriam-Webster).

Diaspora: diaspora is the movement, migration, or scattering of a people away from an established or ancestral homeland (its first, and principal, meaning relates to the settling of the Jewish people outside of Palestine after the Babylonian exile thousands of years ago) (Merriam-Webster).

Literature Review

Diving into the extensive previous research, interesting theories and insights came up in books and articles I chose to read. *Questions of Cultural Identity* by Du Gay and Hall (2011), for instance, is a collection of essays by various authors who discuss the issue of commonly accepted “identities” or “societies” that are based on gender, race, sexuality, class or nationality.

Each essay discusses a different perspective with its extensive research as well as poses a question whether these societies which we are familiar with are all there is or if there is a new kind of identity that is coming up which is far more encompassing than those based on mere factors of gender, race, class, and etc. Zygmunt Bauman, the author of one of the essays in the collection outlines the history of the problem of identity. He notes that through modernity the problem of identity was “how to construct one and keep it solid and stable” meanwhile today the problem is “how to avoid fixation and keep the options open” (Bauman, 2011p. 19). Another author, Homi Bhabha also agrees that there is something strange about the problem of identity as it is the “contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures” and at the same time appears as both the connector and the isolator of those cultures (Bhabha as cited in Du Gay & Hall, 2011, p. 54). In addition to that, Lawrence Grossberg challenges this notion by examining the time period before modernity. In his words, we now think of identity as a problem that came up during modernity, however it has always existed. It is just that in the past people had fewer choices - priest or a farmer, noble or a peasant and by and large this was determined by the family people were born into (Grossberg as cited in Du Gay & Hall, 2011, p. 90).

Similar ideas on the topic of belonging can be found in Steven Vertovec’s article “Transnationalism and Identity” (2001) which discusses the term “identity” as one inherently juxtaposed with the newer term “transnationalism”. Parallels can be drawn between this article and *Questions of Cultural Identity* where both find the term “transnationalism” somewhat limiting (to societies constructed based on race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.). Vertovec also talks about migration and how its ideology changed for a vast number of people starting in the 1990s. He argues that individuals have kept their ties to the traditions, families, communities which they

come from (Vertovec, 2001, p. 3). This article also emphasizes how technology plays into the linkage toward the migrants' own culture. "Most people live in social worlds that are stretched beyond the physical boundaries of countries" because of all the technology that reveals "imagined communities" (Vertovec, 2001, p. 7). He argues that the "experiences gathered in these multiple habitats accumulate to comprise people's cultural repertoire" which logically turns into a multifaceted cultural identity (Vertovec, 2001, p.8).

The Official Journal of the World Psychiatric Association published an article called "Migration, Cultural Bereavement and Cultural Identity" back in 2005. It has extensive information on how moving country/culture can affect one's mental health. Among those mental health concerns are the loss of cultural norms, religious customs, and social support systems, adjustment to a new culture and changes in identity and concept of self. These in turn can bring symptoms of anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, even suicide. Migration, according to this article, does not necessarily have to be defined as moving from country to country. It can very well be moving from one region of the same country to another and the stress level of acculturation is still the same (Bhugra & Becker, 2005). This article describes in detail why and how negative feelings arise when one migrates to another place. According to the authors, acculturation "involves the loss of the familiar, including language (especially colloquial and dialect), attitudes, values, social structures and support networks" bringing forth the need to grief. Also, the migrant is having to adapt to new ways of life, new places, new people and there is no time or opportunity to properly heal one's wounds. If the distress continues for a longer period than normally specified, it is said that the person is experiencing "cultural bereavement" - continues to live in the past, suffers feelings of guilt over abandoning culture and homeland,

feels pain if memories of the past begin to fade, but finds visions from the past (including traumatic images) intruding into daily life, and so on (Bhugra & Becker, 2005).

Connecting the problem of identity, forced migration and the postmodern world, *The Armenians : Past and Present in the Making of National Identity* by Herzig & Kurkchian (2005) brings into focus a small nation, its history and the factors due to which Armenians are scattered around the world like “pomegranate seeds”. The book talks about the historical periods of the Early Civilization, the acceptance of Christianity as a state religion, modern age of 1800-1913, the genocide of 1915 and how diaspora formed and flourished, the Soviet era and the newly independent Armenia of 1991 as well as the challenges Armenian nation faces as a fairly new country. Some of the chapters also focus on the media and its role in contemporary Armenian culture, democracy, economic development, and most importantly diaspora-homeland relations. Authors Herzig & Kurkchian argue that throughout the twentieth century “two main cleavages divided the Armenians: first was a deep socio-political divide within most of the significant diaspora communities; the second was the even more profound split between the homeland and the diaspora based on political and identity differences” (Panossian, 2005, p.235). This division created a rather significant difference between the diasporan Armenians and those who grew up in the homeland itself. Even though collectively the diaspora and homeland Armenians all comprise the Armenian nation, the amount of contrast between the two is indisputable. It includes but is in no way limited to differences of written and spoken language, customs and traditions, songs and oral history passed on to them, worldview and even self-awareness and the feeling of belonging to a nation (Panossian, 2005, p. 241).

Similar thoughts can be found in “The Emergence of the Armenian Diaspora and Genesis of the Indo-Armenian Community” by Baibourtian (2009). In this article the author explains in detail the reasons why the Armenian Diaspora formed in the first place. Those were invasion, conquest, religious persecution, political instability and massacre to name a few. Also, there were less negative reasons too such as education and commerce. Quite a few Armenians were dispersed throughout the world in order to make a living as merchants and many young men left Armenia to study in Greece, Egypt, England and other educational cradles (Baibourtian, 2009).

In comparison, “Migration, Race and Nationhood in Argentina” offers a detailed account about Argentina as a country accepting migrants. Policies of migration within the country are described and the efforts to brand Argentina as a “white” nation of the European descent are shown in this article by Bastia & Hau (2014). It explains how a certain white population (primarily Spain and Italy) has been previously targeted to be attracted by the country and what it had to offer so that more white people would migrate to Argentina. First proposal that linked the economic development of the country to European migration and agricultural colonisation was put forward in the 1820s by the President of the Republic, Bernardino Rivadavia (Bastia & Hau, 2014). Once in Argentina, immigrants faced minimal barriers to naturalisation and political citizenship, yet this was the case for only European migrants. Even so, in her article “From whiteness to diversity: crossing the racial threshold in bicentennial Argentina” Chisu Teresa Ko argues that in the past few decades Argentina has shifted those paradigms and has opened its doors to “non-conventional desirable” races such as the Japanese and the Chinese. “There has been a dramatic surge of institutional and non-institutional efforts to recognize the formerly excluded” she argues (Chisu Teresa Ko, 2014, p. 9). These days, According to Ko, Argentina is

struggling with rebranding, doing what they can to recognize their country as a multicultural and multiethnic nation.

Bringing things into perspective is the article “A Long Journey From Adana to Buenos Aires: Armenian Diaspora in Argentina” by Urgan (2016). Here the author describes the waves of Armenian migration to Argentina. Of course, the largest was at the time of the Genocide and around World War I. Numerous Armenian orphans traveled to Greece and France and from the ports there they embarked on a much longer journey to Argentina. They were welcome in the new world and worked hard in the farms or in the textile industry. Soon they built an Armenian church and were living in large communities with other fellow Armenians (Urgan, 2016).

The studies mentioned above have shed some light on the ever-growing depth of identity. Much research has been done in order to understand and to help others cope with the problem of identity. Interestingly, I did not find many studies concerning the large Armenian diaspora in Argentina. In this constantly changing world where imagined communities only grow larger and technology allows people to relate to each other, it is even more compelling to understand how Armenians in Argentina feel about their identity. This research project will focus on specifically that fraction of the vast Armenian diaspora and will bring forth the stories of identities, feeling love toward the country of origin, being immersed into a completely different culture and sometimes feeling as though you do not belong to any of those.

Statement of Research Questions

The central goal of this project is to explore how Armenians in Argentina see themselves and their dual identity and to which extent they feel belonging to one or the other culture. It is

important to understand how they incorporate their Armenian and Argentinian identities in the age of globalisation. It is also interesting to establish why and how Armenians ended up so far away from their homeland in the first place. For a lot of them, their ancestors were survivors of the genocide back in 1915 and traveled as far away from Turkey as they could. However, there might be other fascinating stories of how they ended up living in a distant country. What kind of lives do they have in Argentina? A lot of people may be very happy living in Argentina and being Armenian while others may have experienced the urge to visit their homeland. Perhaps, a lot of them are Armenian-oriented and try to preserve the culture and the traditions that they inherited from their ancestors. Or, perhaps, they are more open to the diversity in the world around them and being part Armenian does not impact their day-to-day lives. What are the relationships or connections that tie them with Armenia as perceived by themselves such as traditions, holidays, sayings, stories and fairy tales, and etc, if any? How do they feel about being Armenian in another country? Have they ever been discriminated against for being of Armenian descent or have they lived in peace with Argentinians? This could show the level of content that Armenians have living in Argentina for decades. To what extent do they feel integrated/assimilated to the culture of the country they live in? Assimilation and acculturation, as we have seen, are different things and it is important to see how people assess their own lives in terms of both. What role did their family and ancestry have in the formation of their identity? If a person grew up in a family that was Armenian-oriented and conservative in terms of culture, they would probably feel great attachment to their ancestry and Armenia itself. This could become a trigger for people to find their way back to Armenia and evoke a desire to stay and settle down in Armenia. In terms of identity, it is also interesting whether Argentine-Armenians

feel more Armenian or Argentinian because despite having multiple connections to Armenia the place where people grow up has an immense influence on their personality.

Methodology

This research has been based on existing theoretical articles and books which give detailed accounts on the meaning of identity. They explain why identity is such an integral part of human life and that regardless of where we are, everyone desires to belong and to fit into the society they live in. This may be the reason why a lot of diasporan Armenians return to Armenia and settle here. Most of the books examined for this research focus on the meaning and acquisition as well as history and complications of an identity in general. Other books and articles were helpful in understanding the history of Armenia, migrations processes and the formation of diaspora as well as its relationship with the motherland.

Connections have been established with Armenians from Argentina who are currently based in Armenia. This has been done simultaneously to allow time to form actual connections with these people and the establishment of a certain level of trust. Birthright Armenia Foundation has been extremely helpful in locating and contacting Argentine-Armenians through email. Establishing contact implies getting to meet with these people face to face or agreeing to talk via a social platform and being able to communicate openly and honestly about questions of identity.

Interviews were scheduled one on one in a quiet cafe where recording was possible. The interviewees were given consent forms that outlined their rights and responsibilities in terms of this project. One to two hour interviews were conducted and recorded for future reference. One participant lives outside of Armenia and the interview was conducted via Zoom. Another

participant did not speak any English and Armenian thus the interview was conducted jointly with his close friend who spoke both Spanish and English and was also a participant. In total, 7 people took part in this research. Some of them were born and raised in the capital Buenos Aires, others were from the city of Córdoba. As the study revealed, most Armenian-Argentines are centered around those two large cities in Argentina. There were four female and three male participants aiming for gender balance in the study. Participants' age ranged from 28 to 45 while occupations varied from opera singer to marketologist to forest engineer.

Interview questions made up for a deep conversation and provided good insight. Some of those questions were: “How did your family come to live in Argentina? Do you feel more Armenian or Argentinian? Do you think there is prejudice toward Armenians or have you ever felt like Argentina is not your home? What kind of Armenian traditions live on in your family?” Later on the questions become a bit more intimate concerning the interviewee’s identity and sense of belonging.

After the interviews were conducted, the transcribing and mapping stage began. Certain themes outlined themselves during this process and were further developed using the theories already described. Participants chose to disclose their identities, thus their names are not pseudonymous.

Research Findings and Analysis

For the majority of the participants only one of their parents had Armenian heritage and in only two cases participants' both parents were Armenian. As expected, many of the family stories of migration dated back all the way to the genocide of 1915, although some dated earlier and others

later. A vast majority of those who migrated at the time were from Adana and Izmir. They followed a pattern of getting to Greece or France and then took a long trip to Buenos Aires. The reason they came to Argentina specifically, as noted by the interviewees, was to get “as far away” as possible from the Ottoman empire and the horrors of losing everyone they loved. For Cristian Minasian it was his grandfather on his father's side who left for Greece and from there took a ship to Argentina (C. Minasian, personal communication, March 12, 2020). Maria Rosa Anazonian’s father’s family left Adana in 1908 while her mother’s family left Istanbul (Constantinople) in 1959 (M. R. Anazonian, personal communication, March 5, 2020). Occupations varied from shoemaker and textile producer to farmer and jeweller. It was noted by a participant that once migrants settled in Buenos Aires or in the suburbs and established their lives anew, they kept the Armenian spirit and bloodline by marrying exceptionally amongst each other. There were also those who were too traumatized by the whole experience and chose to leave Armenianness behind. They did not speak Armenian to their children and tried to fit into the Argentine society as much as they could.

Preservation of Armenian Heritage

As most anywhere, Armenian descendants in Argentina can be divided into two categories - conservative and Armenian-oriented and more open-minded and much less Armenian-oriented. A lot of Argentine Armenians participate in the preservation of Armenian traditions. Religion plays a huge role, the church of Saint Gregory the Illuminator in Buenos Aires gathers hundreds on Sundays. There is also the “Club” which incorporates ceremonies and extracurricular activities for young people who are of Armenian descent. Activities include hiking, football

games, dances, theatrical plays, and etc. The Armenian language is taught in Armenian schools, however only as a second language. The reason behind that is that Armenian schools have long opened their doors to citizens without Armenian roots therefore they teach Spanish as a must and only then Armenian. As noted by Alin Demirchian, to be Armenian in Argentina “you have to interact a lot with other Armeninas and be a ‘proud’ Armenian” which automatically excludes those who do not feel proud of their heritage and history or do not want to have anything to do with it (A. Demirchian, personal communication, March 5, 2020). Another major way in which the community tries to preserve the ties with Armenia is a symbolic annual trip to Armenia for those who just graduated high school. AGBU organizes a trip to Yerevan and Gyumri so that the teenagers get a feel of Armenia. Birthright Armenia also organizes short and long-term trips to Armenia for young adults as an opportunity to volunteer and give to the Armenian community.

Family Influence

The most important finding was the direct connection of a strong sense of identity of the participant and their family. In cases when the family of the interviewee self-identified as Armenian and felt a strong connection to Armenia, the same was true of the participant and vice versa. As noted by the majority of the participants, the Armenian population of Argentina is mostly mixed. According to Gabriel Meghruni “there are 100,000 Armenian last names, not Armenians” (G. Meghruni, personal communication, March 10, 2020). Only one of the seven participants’ parents were both Armenian, all the others had parents of Italian, Syrian, and Spanish descent. However, even the fact that both parents are Armenian did not necessarily point at a strong bond to Armenianness. Participants’ identity largely depended on how Armenian their

parents felt and to what extent they communicated that to their children. For instance, Maria Rosa Anazonian grew up in an Armenian-speaking environment, her grandmother cooked Armenian dishes only and she was frequently told that she should be proud of belonging to the Armenian nation (M. R. Anazonian, personal communication, March 5, 2020). As a result, she developed a strong sense of belonging to Armenia and noted that she did not feel at home in Argentina but rather in Armenia. In contrast, Alin Demirchian's family was much more open-minded and tried to fit in with the Argentinian community. They spoke Spanish at home and even though Alin attended Armenian church events and was aware of her heritage she did not have patriotic feelings about Armenia (A. Demirchian, personal communication, March 5, 2020).

Dual Identity and its Importance

All the participants acknowledged that the duality of their identity is extremely important to them. Each person interprets it differently and each person had different reasons to come to Armenia: for some it was because they have always wanted to see Armenia and have always thought about living here, for others it was the opposite and they did not move to Armenia because of patriotism but just as an opportunity to explore the world. For instance, Maia Esayan, who is a nurse, noted that she came to Armenia only because she wanted to travel the world and Armenia was cheaper and easier to get to. Similarly, Gabriel Meghruni, who is a forest engineer, migrated to Armenia to sign a two-year contract for work and has stayed here ever since. He also mentioned that he never felt "Armenian" growing up. His father who was the Armenian in the family never spoke Armenian to his children and Gabriel did not have much contact with other

Armenians living in the country. It was only after his cousin asked him to participate in the AGBU Olympic games of Latin America that he started getting to know more and more about Armenia and his heritage. Interestingly, Gabriel expressed his feelings about living in Armenia: “I don’t feel at home here” he said. He moved to Armenia by chance because there was a job offer, not because he felt like it is his duty as an Armenian descent to come see his ancestors’ country. “The problem is that when you’re here in Armenia you miss the Argentinian stuff and when you’re in Argentina you miss the Armenian lavash and stuff” said Maia Esayan. To the question of how much they value the duality of their identity all of the participants replied more or less similarly. They would keep their dual ancestry because it taught them to “respect diversity” and feel like they belong to the world rather than to one country (M. Esayan, personal communication, March 3, 2020).

Being Armenian and Argentinian: Differences

More than anything being Argentine means “being free, open-minded” in the words of Cristian Minasian, a participant who is here volunteering through Birthright Armenia. According to Cristian, Armenians living in Armenia are slightly too conservative when it comes to human interaction and relationships and especially to women. He thinks that the woman in Armenia is “constrained” and “needs to have more liberty” (C. Minasian, personal communication, March 12, 2020). Similar thoughts were expressed by Maia Esayan who notes: “at least women in Argentina stood up for themselves but Armenian women are not doing anything to be more empowered” (M. Esayan, personal communication, March 3, 2020). Gabriel Meghruni also mentioned that about ten years ago when he had been dating his wife (Iranian-Armenian) and

they were holding hands walking in the streets “and people looked at us as if we were doing something bad” which was strange for him because it would not have happened in Argentina. (G. Meghruni, personal communication, March 10, 2020).

Marcelo Kevorkian, who is an opera singer from Buenos Aires, expressed his concern about the level of patriotism in Armenia. “When Armenians find out I’m from Argentina, they immediately ask me ‘How much is the salary in Argentina’ and when I tell them how much it is, they start complaining about Armenia asking me why I came here in the first place” (M. Kevorkian, personal communication, March 12, 2020). He explained that in his opinion both Armenia and Argentina have certain problems but he would rather live in Armenia.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Certain limitations could not have been avoided in this research. Most importantly, in order to more broadly understand the issue of cultural identity, the participants should be chosen randomly and not just from a narrow group of those who came to live in Armenia. Of course, taking into consideration that it is not possible to establish contact with people from a far away country and ask them to trust the researcher with their personal identity questions, in this study the participants were chosen primarily based on proximity. This implies that the interviewees already had a different kind of commitment when compared to the vast majority of Argentine Armenians who live their lives in Argentina and have no desire to visit or settle down in Armenia. In future research it would be fascinating to meet Armenian descendants who live in Argentina and are aware of their heritage and find out how they feel about having a dual identity.

Another minor limitation is that the number of participants was limited to 7. Surely, the research would have been more informative if there were more participants. In this study the focus was to understand how people feel about their hybrid identity and how much it matters. In future research, the focus may be the Armenian Argentine community itself, how Armenianness is preserved in Argentina, or the collection of historical backgrounds of how each family fled to Argentina and what sort of acclimation they had to go through to establish a community of their own. Since most of the participants underlined that they feel Argentinian first of all and only then Armenian, it would be interesting to research not just Armenian descendants but Italian, Spanish and others who come from a different culture but were born and raised in Argentina and how they feel about their dual/triple identities and what being Argentinian means to them. This would be a comparative multicultural study that would reveal great insight into identities.

Conclusion

Seven participants shared their stories about identity and the feeling of home. Each of them has a different perspective on how their identity influenced their lives but all of them agreed that having a hybrid identity has broadened their horizons and allowed them to feel more at ease with themselves and the world around them. As the study has shown, there is no one way of identifying oneself. Each person has their own interpretation of who they are based on their experience, their family and their childhood. Family plays a huge role providing a lense through which the person views her/himself and the world around her/him. Depending on how traditional and conservative the family is, the same patriotic views become imprinted in the person's mind.

Later on, the school, teachers and friends one makes also influence the person's views about who s/he is.

Using the example of the seven participants, we can conclude that hybrid identities form mostly within families and can reveal themselves differently. Some people are very much into exploring their heritage on one side or the other, others are not. Hybrid identities are very common especially in our digitized world full of imagined communities. They are difficult to fathom, difficult to live with because one does not know for certain where he belongs and who he is. Only after a journey of self-reflection and living among people of both ancestries can a person truly comprehend his identity and learn for himself where home is.

The study also revealed that there are multiple cultural differences between the two countries discussed. Women's rights in Armenia was the largest question raised by the majority of the participants according to whom Armenian women are in desperate need of liberation and empowerment. Women in Argentina have been fighting for their rights for a while now and have reached certain victories. However, in Armenia the core of the society is still rather patriarchal and women are too comfortable not fighting for their rights.

Overall, this study showed that hybrid identities in Argentine-Armenians are as complicated and multifaceted as any other. People who came to Armenia, their homeland from which their ancestors had fled over a hundred years ago, are fascinating, intelligent and full of life. Some of them self-identify primarily as Armenian, others as Argentinian but all of them acknowledge and appreciate the duality of their heritage. Of course, there are two sides to the coin, and with the good qualities that hybrid identity possesses also comes the occasional

loneliness and feeling of estrangement. At the end of the day, however, all of us need a place to call home, and how amazing would it be to have the whole world be that place.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview Question Form

1. Could you tell me about yourself, please? Where Were you born?
2. What school did you go to?
3. Did you speak Armenian or Spanish at home/school?
4. Are you fluent in both Armenian and Spanish? How do you think this relates to your sense of identity?
5. Are both your parents Armenian?
6. How did your family migrate to Argentina? What were the reasons? When was it?
7. What is home for you? How do you feel about being Armenian in another country? Have you ever been discriminated against based on your ethnicity or religion?
8. What sort of Armenian traditions, customs, or else do you and your family still practice?
9. To what extent do you feel incorporated in Argentine culture?
10. What role does your ancestry have in the formation of your identity?
11. What made you come to Armenia?
12. What does your hybrid identity mean to you? In what ways is it important for you?

Appendix 2

Consent Form

Consent to participate in a capstone project conducted at the American University of Armenia (AUA). This is to state that I agree to participate in the capstone project conducted by Vicky Nvard Melkonyan. The capstone director is Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

PURPOSE: I have been informed that the purpose of the project is to understand and describe hybrid identities, mainly focusing on Argentine Armenians and how they incorporate their dual ancestry. Within the bigger context of the project, the interview conducted by Vicky Nvard Melkonyan is meant to focus on exploring how Armenian Argentinians ended up in Argentina, how they have been integrated and acculturated into the Argentine community as well as why some of them choose to visit and work/volunteer in Armenia.

PROCEDURES: I understand that the interview will be conducted at in participant's home or other appropriate place, and might be recorded on video. As a participant, I will be asked to explore questions of personal significance such as childhood episodes, general life in Argentina, my own interpretation of identity, comparing and contrasting my Armenian and Argentine ancestries. The interview will last from one to two hours, however, as a participant I am free to stop at any time, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the project at any given point. I understand that if I wish to extend the focus group for more than two hours, I will be provided that opportunity.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: I understand that the interview involves the sharing of my personal views and opinions, which will be treated with the utmost care and consideration. I have been informed that I am free to stop, take a break or discontinue at any time. There are no risks involved in partaking in this interview.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION: As a participant, I will have access to all the recorded material for verification purposes. Throughout the project, if and when the material produced is in Armenian, I will have the opportunity to review and verify the English translations.

I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time without negative consequences.

I understand that the data from this project may be published in print or digital format for academic purposes.

In terms of **identification and reproduction** of my participation:

I agree to **disclose my identity**. I understand that my identity may be revealed in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

I agree to the reproduction of sound and images from this interview by any method and in any media for academic purposes (which may include webpages, documentary clips, etc..)

OR

I understand that my participation in this study is **confidential**. My identity will be concealed. I will be given a pseudonym in any publications or presentations that may result from this interview.

I agree that while data from my interview may be published, no sound or images from it may be reproduced.

When photographs, artifacts or documents are scanned or photographed

I agree to let the student researcher copy family photographs and documents for use in the student project only.

I HAVE CAREFULLY STUDIED THE ABOVE AND UNDERSTAND THIS AGREEMENT.
I FREELY CONSENT AND VOLUNTARILY AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS STUDY.

INTERVIEWEE:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

INTERVIEWER:

NAME (please print) _____

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

If at any time you have questions about your rights as a capstone project participant, please contact Dr. Hourig Attarian of the College of Humanities & Social Sciences at AUA (tel.: 060 612769, email: hourig.attarian@aua.am).

