

# Studying Through War

American University of Armenia  
Capstone Presentation  
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# Outline

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# ABSTRACT



The following research is revolving around the idea of how wars affect university students. The Idea came in a form of reflection as I realized how much struggle I had to go through in order to receive my online-based education when my country got abruptly caught in a war in September 2020.

The project was in a way, a possibility for self-expression regarding the hardships that I have personally endured. Moreover, the project also helped highlight this issue, to bring it into the spotlight through interviewing people who happened to be caught in a war during their studies.

The inspiration came to me when I first read Daphne Carr's book about a famous industrial band, Nine Inch Nails and their impact on people, when the band released their first album titled *Pretty Hate Machine*. The individual stories of each participant inspired me to work towards creating this project.



# LITERATURE REVIEW

- Ahmad Oweini's "*Stress and Coping: The Experience of Students at the American University of Beirut During the Lebanese Civil War.*" The article was published in 1996 as part of the *Arab Studies Quarterly* journal and focuses on the effects of the Lebanese civil war, which lasted from 1975-1991 on university students and how the students coped with studying in a war-torn country.
- "*The War Generation and the Student Elections at the American University of Beirut*" written by Judith Harik and Lokman Meho (1996) offers insight on student protest movements that were organized by the members of the student council in a Lebanese university.
- Mark A. Uhlig's "*The Karabakh War*" (1993/1994) is a detailed chronology of the infamous war in the Karabakh (Artsakh) region between Armenia and Azerbaijan.
- David DiRamio's Robert Ackerman's, and Regina L. Mitchell's article "*From Combat to Campus: Voices of the Student-Veterans*" (2008) focuses more on post-war cases of students who actually got to serve in the army first before they were admitted to a university to pursue their degree and all the challenges that were associated with it.

# RESEARCH QUESTION

- ◆ How do university students cope with war?
- ◆ How did these students react to the war initially?
- ◆ How much did they know about the historical conflict and how did they learn about it?
- ◆ How did they react to the conclusion of the war and its aftermath?

# METHODOLOGY

- The project is based on a qualitative-research which involved three participants who all happened to be university students during a time of war. Two of the participants witnessed the 2020 Artsakh war, while the last participant witnessed the Artsakh war in the '90s as a student and the 2020 Artsakh as an adult.
- The in-depth interviews are meant to highlight the emotions and feelings of each participant and naturally, their experiences of going through the educational struggle during a war.
- The organizational flow of the interviews is constructed in a form of narrative in order to draw out the most character and emotional value from the interviews. In other words, this research was meant to tell people's individual stories and perspectives on the situations that they went through and share their experiences of coping with the situations.



# RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

## 1. Coping with War

Two of my participants happened to be university students during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The drastic change in their academic life has certainly played a role in terms of the challenges they faced as they were studying through war.

## 2. Historical Background and the Roots of the Conflict

This theme was helpful in understanding of the interviewees' perception of the conflict and if they fully understood the situation that they were in. All of the participants were showing their pride regarding Armenia's victory in the past, although the younger participants didn't really understand the context of the war until much later years. The last participant, who was much older than the former, witnessed the events unfold right before her eyes, and she also expressed her pride and joy of seeing her country combat as she mentioned, "injustice towards her nation."



# RESEARCH FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

## 3. Initial Reaction to the War

All of the participants shared the shocking feeling they had when they woke up on the morning of September 27, 2020 and found out about the ongoing fighting. Furthermore, they all initially thought that the fighting, while a horrible occurrence, will most likely end in a span of days or weeks.

## 4. Studying During War Period

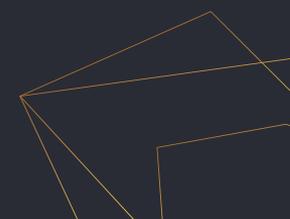
Surrounding this topic, the students who were caught in the 2020 Artsakh war, generally spoke about how they *couldn't* focus on their studies as much as they did before, although they did mention about certain points that they came to, when they realized that studying was an invaluable feature for them to distract from the conflict, and while online-based, classes were still full of people and it brought a sense of comfort to them. As for the much older participant, due to the fact that she was a student during the Artsakh war in the '90s, she experienced things a bit differently than the former.

## 5. The Aftermath of the War

This is perhaps the saddest point not just for the participants, but for every Armenian person out there. The younger participants stated how they were peacefully asleep in the night of November 9, only to wake up to the grim news that came the day before. As for the much older participant, she was, as she described “unlucky enough” to witness the news the moment they came in.



# LIMITATIONS AND AVENUE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- By including more participants, the project can include a much more accurate depiction of the events and also pave way to some new perspectives that were not covered in the project.
  - A more diverse approach to the project, incorporating students from different universities to also see if the differences between teaching methods and class structures affected their ability to study, in addition to the initial point
  - More perspectives from adults who witnessed the '90s war to highlight the contrast between the older generation and the newer generation.
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# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlighted a small fraction of an overall image of students studying at a time of war. My interviews included participants who happened to be students both during the '90s Artsakh war, and the most recent Artsakh war of 2020. Their stories told what a lot of people went through, as they were studying for their degrees during war and uncertainty. Unfortunately, I did not have the chance to interview more people that most certainly have their own unique experiences and backgrounds that would be invaluable to the overall research.

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