Rethinking Borders and Identities in Armenian Education

For Peaceful and Sustainable Coexistence

by

Garine Palandjian

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Approved April 2022 by the
Graduate Supervisory Committee:

Iveta Silova, Chair
Keith Brown
David Carlson
Brendan O'Connor

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

May 2022

ABSTRACT

Borders have deep symbolic, cultural, historical, and religious meanings, and can therefore become mobilized for various political endeavors. Using a critical educational ethnographic approach, my dissertation examines educators' memories of bordering practices and experiences to rethink national borders and identities in Armenian education. I argue that teachers have the potential to act as key change agents in transforming the Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey conflicts of the Caucasus region through their distinctive influence both on curriculum and pedagogy, and by creating supportive learning environments in classrooms. This dissertation suggests that borders are central to the defining of identity – as studied among Armenians – and that border thinking has the potential to expand pedagogical practices to not only inform/(re)define identity, but also to sustain peace and make room for an alternative way of being that refutes the dichotomies of colonialism and imperialism, and other prevalent isms. Specifically, my research focuses on the ways in which the idea and reality of "the border" – as well as teachers' memories of the "border" – shape classroom practices, textbook content, and pedagogical theory in post-conflict Armenia. This research analyzes the capacity and potential of educators to contribute to more peaceful relationships and makes clear the constraints of schools in fulfilling this role. My dissertation contributes to the current scholarship of border studies, post-Soviet transformations, and education in conflict territories by expanding the scope of pedagogical practices necessary for peaceful coexistence. Fieldwork for this study was conducted in Armenia between June 2019 and March 2020 with a one-month site visit in

Turkey. This study includes textbook analyses, interviews with teachers, fieldwork observations, as well as document and visual analyses.

DEDICATION

And we, those who feel the responsibility, must not allow them and not leave the writing of these pages in the monopoly of those who will fill them up in the same manner as the past.

– Hrant Dink, November 5, 2005, AGOS Newspaper

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am forever indebted to the Chairwoman of my Committee Dr. Iveta Silova, who graciously took me under her wing and helped me become the scholar I am today. Each committee member – Dr. Keith Brown, Dr. David Carlson, and Dr. Brendan O'Connor – made a distinctive contribution, each being irreplaceable and invaluable in building this project. Altogether, I had "The Dream Team" guiding me through each step and believing in me and the project even I doubted myself.

This dissertation would not have been possible without the generous support of various institutions and organizations including: the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sport, ASU Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian, and East European Studies, ASU Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College, American Councils of International Education, Title VIII Research Scholar Program, U.S. State Department, National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, University of Southern California Institute of Armenian Studies, Society of Armenian Studies, AGOS Weekly newspaper, American University of Armenia, ASU Health Services, and ASU Lorraine W. Frank Office of National Scholarship Advisement. Some of these entities provided financial support allowing me to pursue such a sizable project while others provided support through various other means including endorsement, recruitment, encouragement, moral support, physical health and well-being, and wisdom.

I would also like to thank various individuals who helped along the way through various stages of my dissertation and research including my Tavush family, Nane Abrahamian, Dagen Valentine, Armen Sargsyan, Dr. Gohar Markosyan, Suzanna Ghazaryan, Dr. Fırat Güllü, Sevan Deirmendjian, Setrag Hovsepian, Hayarpy Sahakyan, Suzanne Daghlian, George Balekjian, Shushan Avagyan, and Lauren Antonian.

I also would like to express my gratitude to my family – my parents Norayr & Iskouhi Palandjian, my sisters Nora Palandjian and Tamar Toufayan, my brother-in-law Mark Toufayan, and my niece Nayiri Toufayan, who became – at times involuntarily – my audience to listen to my ideas and experiences and served as cheerleaders and resources showing their love in every way.

A special thanks to my “co-principal” investigator, my ‘purrfect’ companion, Shookik. While writing and reading, Shookik was always by my side – even at every fieldwork site – patiently waiting for me.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my partner Michael Joseph Napolitano who supported and encouraged me to finish but also distracted me with his love when I needed it most.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF IMAGES ____ ix

LIST OF IMAGES ____ x

CHAPTER

1 INTRODUCTION ____ 1

The *Why* of the Study ____ 3

Ethnography: Research Approach ____ 9

Beginning Fieldwork ____ 11

Overview of Data Analysis and Findings ____ 12

Key Summary and Roadmap of Dissertation ____ 14

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: TRACING HISTORIES OF ARMENIAN BORDERS AND IDENTITIES IN EDUCATION ____ 17

Theorization of Armenian National Identity: Armenian Studies and the Historical Debate ____ 19

Several Tribes and Wars Later: Armenian Ethnogenesis and Identity Formation ____ 23

Pre-Nation-State: Armenian Borders and National Identity in Education ____ 27

Armenia en Route to Statehood ____ 30

The Rise of the Armenian National Movement ____ 32

CHAPTER Page

Drawing Lines through Coexistence: Creating Modern, Homogeneous, Ethnocultural Nation-States (Independent Armenia 1918-1920) 35

Soviet Armenia (December 1920-September 1991) 39

In Transition: Post-Soviet Armenia 42

Conclusion: Armenia's Post-Velvet Revolution and Beyond 45

3 BORDER THINKING: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 47

Background History of Border Thinking 49

Border Thinking + Geo-political and Body Political = Mapping the Armenian Borderlands 53

Border Thinking: A Multidisciplinary Approach 56

Conflict and Post-Conflict Studies 58

Social Construction of Childhood and Official Curriculum 61

The Role of Teachers 65

Childhood Studies 69

Human and Critical Geography 72

Conclusion: Orienting to Decolonial Studies - Strengths and Limits of Border Thinking 77

4 METHODOLOGY: APPLYING CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY 79

CHAPTER Page

Insider + Outsider: How I Navigated Each Fieldwork Site 83

Teacher Interviews 85

Artifacts 87

Fieldwork Observations 87

Classroom Observations 88

Cultural and Historical Sites 89

5 LEARNING BORDER THROUGH EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE 91

Planting Seeds: Learning Armenian through Ancestral Lands 94

Protecting their Soil: Teachers Becoming Border Guards 101

Challenging Armenian Patriotism from the Borders 106

Keepers of the Border 107

Tracing and Learning Ancestral Roots 109

Ever Expansive Roots: Learning to be Armenian Beyond Borders 113

Preserving Roots: Learning Histories and Borders through Museums and Memorials 119

Uprooting Seeds: Redefining Home/Land 122

What's in a Name? Place Renaming and the Armenian National Identity 125

CHAPTER Page

(Re)turning to Our Roots 127

6 CROSSING BORDERS THROUGH MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF COEXISTENCE 131

Crossing Borders through Soviet Memories 132

Crossing Borders through Teaching and Learning 136

Crossing Borders through Traditional Cuisines 138

Crossing Borders and Building Bridges through Cultural School Trips 142

Crossing Borders through Landscapes - Mount Ararat/Ağrı Dağı 148

Intersecting Borders: Nagorno-Karabakh 153

Crossing Borders as Ghosts 162

The Border Crossed the Istanbul Armenian Community 166

7 CONCLUSION 179

REFERENCES 189

APPENDIX

A DISSERTATION DATA COLLECTION INVENTORY 198

B AGOS NEWSPAPER 202

C DISSERTATION DEFENSE QR CODE 204

D SEE ATTACHED FILES 206

LIST OF IMAGES

Image Page

1. Field. Gyulameerian, 2003, page 35 ... 96

2. Kidnapped or Ill? The Story of Karen Ghazarian's Imprisonment Retold by His Mother ... 103

3. Escaping Realities, Entering the Classroom in Tavush Region ... 106

4. Orchard in the Backyard from the Tavush Region and View of the Border of Armenia and Azerbaijan ... 108

5. Home Cooked Meal with Teachers and Their Families ... 112

6. Children Carrying Flowers with Armenian Genocide Memorial in the Background. (Sargsyan, 2010/2018, p. 132) ... 116

7. Our Heroes (Sargsyan, 2010/2018, p. 125) ... 118

8. Map of Region with Pinpoint in Gyumri ... 135

9. Balyan Family Grave Site in Istanbul, Turkey ... 146

10. A Furnace with Armenian Inscription on the Silver Plate Found in One of the Rooms of the Dolmabahçe Palace ... 146

11. Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul Turkey ... 147

12. June 9, 2019, View of Mount Ararat ... 150

13. July 24, 2015, View of Ağrı Dağı ... 150

14. Children on Street in Yerevan with Ararat Landscape, Sargsyan, 2018, p. 28 ... 151

15. Cover of Aybenaran Sargsyan, 2018 ... 152

16. Child Pointing to the Moon, Sargsyan, 2018, p. 84 ... 152

17. Lunch with Mariam in Her Home ... 158

Image Page

18. Baku-Born Armenian Twin Sisters Dancing an Azerbaijani Dance with Their Azerbaijani Peers 161

19. Cemetery in Former Azerbaijani Village of Armenia 162

20. Billboard along the Walls of an Armenian Cemetery in Şişli 168

21. Navigating My Way to Üskudar 172

22 and 23. Entrance to Armenian Cemetery in Üskudar 174

24. Image from What is Believed to be Yessayan's Neighborhood 175

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, borders have served as markers of identity by including and excluding individuals, sometimes at the cost of destroying human lives and planet Earth. Much of the historical discriminatory rhetoric continues to resonate within national discourses across the world. The Caucasus region is an example of borders that have crossed lines of coexistence – absorbing some tribes while erasing others for the sake of modernity. For Armenians, national borders and identities have not been reconciled because memories and history are not a thing of the past – they resonate deeply with the present and future. Schools have played a significant role in both contributing to and preparing children for learning the Armenian national borders and identity as part of their socialization processes. Specifically, Armenian children have been socialized politically, temporally, and socially for their roles as future citizens and leaders by colonial and imperial rulers (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). These socialization tools have included the use of language and the official school curriculum to assist in the process of preparing the future citizens in the nation-building or empire-building processes.

In 2018, the post-Velvet revolution in Armenia presented an opportunity for de-linking from the past. On one hand, the ruling political party *Im qayle* (or My Step) administration developed several initiatives to reform national practices and laws associated with the former elite or Communist past towards shaping a post-modern and independent Armenia. On the other hand, Armenia expressed interest in developing peaceful relations with its neighbors. Specifically, Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashniyan reclaimed interest in redeveloping relations with Turkey. In this respect,

Armenia's changing geopolitical space and time calls for a decolonial lens to examine how (re)thinking borders can help redefine education and identities in more inclusive ways, recognizing the plurality of visions for future education.

This dissertation suggests that borders are central to the defining of identity, as studied among Armenians and that border thinking has the potential to expand pedagogical practices to not only inform/(re)define identity, but also to sustain peace and make room for an alternative way of being that refutes the dichotomies of colonialism and imperialism, and other prevalent isms. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the processes by which educational policies are passed onto teachers and analyze how teachers (re)interpret the policies through their personal lenses. In this study, I examine the role of national borders in (1) the teaching and learning of the Armenian national identity through school textbooks over different historical periods; (2) childhood memories of coexistence among people belonging to different ethnic groups; and (3) cross-border dialogues with "others" in education projects. This critical educational ethnography examines a collection of textual materials and oral historical interviews with current and retired educators in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey. Additionally, this study includes ethnographic participant-observation in classrooms, on school field trips, at teacher workshops, and at conferences until the ethnographic immersion was cut short by pandemic-related emergency evacuations.

Prior to the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, I had a deep interest in conducting this research because I believed in the possibility of building peaceful relations amongst Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Turks. Throughout my life, I learned and unlearned what it meant to be Armenian. As a granddaughter of an Armenian Genocide survivor, I hoped to

see the day where people of the Caucasus region met to battle on chess boards not on war fronts. I was inspired by individuals I met and learned about throughout my life - who I refer to as border thinkers in this study - and believed in building peaceful relations, even at times, at the cost of their lives. I also participated in several cross-border educational research projects where we developed lessons on promoting alternative approaches to teaching history. Altogether, I felt the need to highlight the voices of the pioneers of modern-day peaceful relations.

The *Why* of the Study

Throughout history, Armenian borders have been redrawn, defended, and crossed by many foreign powers, including the Byzantine Empire, Seljuk domination, Georgian domination, the Mongol Empire, Kingdom of Kilikia, Ottoman Empire, Safavid Empire, and the Soviet Empire, to name a few (Hewsen, 2001). Over time and space(s), Armenians aligned their identities based on the group they preferred, “not a single people with a clear national sense but rather an intricate, multifaceted society with conflicting loyalties, some to one great noble clan, others to an external power” (Suny, 1993, p. 4). And yet, within the literature, Armenian identity is projected as a homogenous identity which speaks, reads, and writes in Armenian and practices the Christian faith. Through a tumultuous history, as borders were redefined, the Armenian national identity remained constant over time and across different spaces. However, 1918 marked a significant turning point for the Caucasus region. With the introduction of borders and establishment of modern homogeneous, ethnocultural nation-states, the Caucasus region shifted from being seen as spaces of crossing and collaboration to serving as lines of separation. In the name of modernity, long periods of coexistence were disrupted, and many wars resulted in displacement of

thousands of people. A century later, that same vein of wars continues to separate and displace by wreaking havoc upon the borders of that region.

In the months shortly after my emergency evacuation from the fieldwork for this study, cross-border shootings and tensions increased along the borders of the Tavush (Armenia) and Tovuz (Azerbaijan) regions. The cross-border skirmishes led to intense fighting for several days, which preemptively led to what would be the second Nagorno-Karabakh war. Tavush was the second field site in which I conducted fieldwork for my dissertation in October 2019. Transcribing interviews and sifting through the data slowly became emotionally disturbing as the teachers' stories and actual headlines began to reflect similarities. By September 2020, as I made the final touches on the data exhibit I had originally prepared to feature in Yerevan, I read the headline from an Armenian news agency declaring that Azerbaijan launched an attack on the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic (NKR). For the next few weeks, I listened to daily war reports and consumed hours of news articles on the war. Over the course of six weeks, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) helped Armenia and Azerbaijan to agree to four ceasefires – each one was broken within minutes of the agreed time. Unlike the first war, Turkey provided direct support to their ethnic Turkic ally, Azerbaijan, as confirmed by analysts and former diplomats (New York Times, Jan. 2021). The phrase "one nation, two states" was pronounced based on the military training, supplies, and Syrian Jihaddist mercenaries provided by Turkey as support to their brethren (New York Times, Jan. 2021; Forbes, 27, 2021). Following numerous statements by President Aliyev, it appeared results were only marked on military terms, dismissing the process outlined by the OSCE Minsk Group. More importantly, the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War was the victory Aliyev needed to

consolidate his rule in Azerbaijan, “boosting his popularity to levels he never experienced during his 17 years of authoritarian rule” (RFEL, December 17, 2021). And ironically, former US Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Matthew Bryza, referred to the Karabakh War of 2020 as “the greatest military and diplomatic victory in Azerbaijan’s history” (RFEL, December 17, 2021). Based on these recent events and also the interpretation from both sides, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict remains unresolved.

In Baku, the Military Trophy Park was created to celebrate the Nagorno-Karabakh Victory with displays of actual helmets of Armenian soldiers who died on the battlefield or from those who continue to endure torture while remaining as prisoners of war at the time of writing (Hərbi Qənimətlər Parkı, 2022). The Park was celebrated by President Aliyev and became a major attraction for adults and children alike. Tickets to visit the park can be purchased on their website. While visiting, Azerbaijani media captured imagery of Azerbaijani children who were encouraged by their parents and relatives to choke and harm the displays of Armenian soldiers as seen in photos during their visits (Asbarez, April 15, 2021). On the other side of the border, in Nagorno-Karabakh, approximately 90,000 Armenians were displaced, of which the United Nations (October 19, 2021) claims 88% were women and children. A few months later, the UN reported (October 19, 2021) that “As of May 2021, 36,989 displaced people still reside in Armenia in desperate conditions. At the time of writing, civilians living in Nagorno-Karabakh continue to experience threats and cease-fire violations by Azerbaijani troops on a daily basis despite the presence of a Russian peacekeeping force on the ground. Azerbaijani military continues to taunt innocent Armenian civilians in Karabakh in what they claim is Azerbaijan’s attempt for Armenians to voluntarily vacate the territories (Tatoyan, 2022).

Within the context of education, there is still a significant amount of work to be done from all sides of the borders. The national curriculum in Turkey isolates "other" groups of people and refers to them as 'the enemy of the nation' and considers Armenians traitors of the Turkish state (see Akpinar et al., 2019). The national curriculum in Azerbaijan endorses Armeniaphobic language and encourages violence and hatred towards ethnic Armenians (see Xenophobia Prevention Initiative, Non-Governmental Organization, 2017). Based on Armenian educational policies and several different curriculum analyses (see Akpinar et al., 2019, Zakaryan and Zolyan, 2008; Palandjian, 2014), the Armenian curriculum does not explicitly demonstrate violence against either Turkey or Azerbaijan; however, textbooks refer to both neighbors as their enemy. In the context of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict, Zakaryan and Zolyan (2008) claim "authors have to a considerable degree managed to avoid reproducing negative ethnic stereotypes and radical nationalistic approaches that had taken roots in the Armenian society in the conflict period" (p. 27). Nevertheless, education policy and curriculum in all three countries need to address these significant issues to help societies move towards a future of sustainable, peaceful coexistence.

From Positionality to Methodology

As an Armenian-American, I recognize my positionality is shaped by learning the history of my ancestors who survived the Armenian Genocide of 1915 and the stories of my parents who lived through wars in Syria and Lebanon. My childhood was spent in the Armenian-American community of Providence, Rhode Island, where I learned the Armenian language, culture, and history. My family and community ingrained in me the

importance of our history which led to my choice of career: an educator focusing on social studies curriculum. Together, these elements influenced my rethinking of borders and identities in Armenian education. Throughout my graduate studies, I developed an appreciation for decolonial scholarship as it recognizes a third space or way of being. Here, I understood how border thinking and decolonial approaches informed my research both theoretically and methodology. Applied to my dissertation, I wanted to examine how marginalized members of society – whose voices were excluded over time and space – experienced the histories and conflicts that fill the gaps in what we read the dominant, official historical narratives. I found that I was not alone when I heard others who questioned dominant histories of borders and identities. I learned from their stories that there was another world where border thinkers live in spirit, trying to rebuild what ethnic nationalism and imperialism have destroyed. Some were still in the process of unlearning and delinking from what they had learned and accepted from national curriculum and official political narratives. In my generation, we needed to have martyrs like Hrant Dink[1] to remind us that peace comes at the price of one's life. Still, I was determined to honor those who lost their lives for trying to restore justice and create a space for humanity to live in peace.

While conducting research for my dissertation proposal, I reached out to Dr. Richard Hovannisian, a famous Armenian-American historian whose work I had read to

[1] Hrant Dink was a Turkish-born Armenian and editor-in-chief of Agos newspaper based in Istanbul, Turkey. Hrant was a human rights activist, intellectual, and father who believed in the need to work towards democratization of Turkey. He advocated for developing peaceful relations between Turkey and Armenia. Hrant received death threats for his statements about the Armenian Genocide and Armenian identity. On January 19, 2007, Hrant was assassinated in front of the steps to the entrance of the Agos newspaper office.

help me prepare for this study. In my email correspondence I expressed my frustration with the way history had been written and felt the need to ask him especially, "Armenian history seems to be written and reported mainly as wars, conquests, and empires. I never got a sense of any periods of co-existence – could this be due to the limitations of resources and individuals who documented history at those times?" He responded, "You are right about how we portray history, because it has been primarily political history rather than cultural/cross-cultural and sociological, which can present quite a different picture. [A shift in the research] seems to be beginning" (Email correspondence, April 27, 2019). For these reasons, a critical educational ethnographic approach to my dissertation best aligned with both the need for a critical lens and an ethnographic approach to understanding how borders and identities are taught, as well as how they are learned and unlearned.

When preparing my dissertation proposal in 2018, I did not imagine that my fieldwork would not only be interrupted by a global pandemic, nor that the histories and wars of my project would reignite as I sat transcribing and translating interviews in COVID-19 isolation away from my family and friends. Although a ceasefire agreement was signed on November 9, 2020, at this time of writing, Azerbaijani forces continue to threaten and shoot civilians in Nagorno-Karabakh. There is no doubt that the timing of this project and purpose are essential for re-examining the histories of the Armenian-Azerbaijani and Armenian-Turkish conflicts now more than ever. However, it is important to acknowledge that with every research project, there are limitations. Over the last ten years, I have actively tried to specifically include Azerbaijani teachers and was met with resistance and hesitation for their fear of interacting with their "enemy." Nevertheless, I

have participated in collaborative projects with other professionals from Azerbaijan. Moreover, taking on the task of a project with this scope required a considerable amount of financial support. A significant amount of this project was funded through Title VIII US Department of State Funds for which I had to accept the terms and conditions which excludes visitation and inclusion of Nagorno-Karabakh in the study. For these reasons, my project will remain incomplete as some voices and stories remain tightly clutched by politics. But more importantly, I feel that in order to achieve truly genuine sustainable peace in the region, there must be significant efforts made by government officials, specifically holding government leaders accountable for their actions.

Ethnography: Research Approach

Initially, I planned my dissertation to be comprised of three individual case studies wherein which the common thread of national identity, borders, and pedagogy wove the themes together. At the time, I was unaware that what I had prepared in fact would become an ethnography. My dissertation committee members heard me describe all of the attributes of an ethnographic approach: living with and shadowing teachers, observing teaching and classrooms, analyzing curriculum and official textbooks, attending school field trips or visiting sites such as museums and memorial sites, among many other aspects. Moreover, I followed literature on critical ethnography particularly for this study and subscribed to what Madison (2020) explains is, "an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain" (p. 4). A critical ethnographic approach aligned with my epistemological and ontological approach. However, in considering the need to study border thinkers, I followed an approach that Madison (2020)

describes as one that “takes us beneath surface appearances, disrupts the *status quo*, and unsettles both neutrality and taken-for-granted assumptions by bringing to light underlying and obscure operations of power and control.” (p. 4).

I conducted fieldwork for 10 months (June 2019- March 2020) primarily in Armenia, as well as one month in Turkey. My fieldwork year consisted of all sorts of surprises. On one hand, I credit much of the uncertainty to the nature of my study of ethnography. On the other hand, I was aware that the post-Soviet and post-conflict environments are known for unexpected and unique opportunities. Added to these uncertainties, the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe and suddenly the world closed down. By March 2020, I had just returned from my fieldwork in Turkey and was in the process of finalizing my last field site visit to the Syunik region in Armenia. Once schools closed, everything started to spiral out of control, while I worked day-to-day, hoping things would shift soon.

On Friday, March 20, 2020, I received an email with a subject line, “Cancellation of Title VIII Program in Armenia” from the American Council’s office staff in Washington, D.C. US Government officials recalled all American citizens to return immediately to the United States. Within 48 hours, on Sunday, March 22nd, I packed my belongings, cleared my apartment in Yerevan, Armenia and was on my way back to the United States. Prior to the evacuation, I had conducted 39 interviews with current and retired teachers, completed fieldwork in Yerevan, the border villages of Shirak, and the Tavush regions of Armenia. I also completed one month of fieldwork (February 2020) in Istanbul, Turkey. There was enough material to unearth that I could have focused my dissertation entirely on the Istanbul Armenian Community, if not for the lack of time. I

hope to return to the region to expand on my findings in the future. For a full list of museums, sites, and other sources, please see Appendix A.

Beginning Fieldwork

> *"Today we've only begun to establish trust and rapport. During one interview, we've only scratched the surface of memories of coexistence in Shirak. And yet, each time I set off to visit a site, interview, school, or meeting, I always begin the day by asking myself, "who am I to be allowed to enter these spaces, these people's lives, classrooms, homes and memories?" Conducting fieldwork is both a great honor and humbling reminder of how fortunate we are to be able to enter [our] communities and conduct research. Through this process, I am trying to reconcile my researcher and community identities. This will be a topic for another blog I'll have to return to soon." (From my fieldnotes, September 3, 2019)*

Throughout my fieldwork experiences, I understood the privilege I had to be able to travel throughout Armenia and to Istanbul, Turkey to conduct this study. I also recognized my researcher identity as both an insider and outsider of the community, which came with additional layers of ethical responsibility. When introducing myself, the participants wanted to know why I chose to conduct this research and more importantly, how I identified as Armenian. There were perhaps three main reasons that gave me credentials to enter the communities. First, the fact that I am a granddaughter of an Armenian Genocide survivor allowed me to be *one* of *them,* as this shows how my intergenerational connection to learning to be Armenian is passed on from my ancestors. Secondly, as an Armenian-American, my "Armenianness" was surprising to them. My ability to speak, read, and write in the Western branch of the Armenian language, and my awareness and focus of things related to Armenia in my research were unexpected. Many participants assumed most diasporan Armenians were unable to communicate in the Armenian language and therefore, I impressed them. Finally, my interest in meeting with

them and visiting their communities – particularly villages along the borders – was admirable. For some students and teachers, I was the first foreigner to visit their school.

Prior to visiting these school communities, I tried to build connections with people from these communities. My personal relationships from previous collaborations and network connections in the American Councils for International Education office in Yerevan helped me gain trust and navigate these community spaces. In addition to these connections, I also had documentation with the RoA MoESCS approval of my research, which granted me permission to be able to enter any school in Armenia. For my research in Istanbul, my credentials and entrance were marked strictly by the three reasons stated above, but also based on my connections with local community members and organizations such as the AGOS weekly newspaper.

Overview of Data Analysis and Findings

Weaving together insights from critical ethnography and border epistemology, this dissertation foreground both empirical data as well as knowledge that embedded within the body and extends beyond the cognitive aspects, including feelings, affect, and emotions. My data collection consists of a variety of sources. First, I kept notes in journals and in my electronic notepad on my phone. I referred to these notes to help recall details and descriptions of locations, people, experiences, and other interesting information. Second, I scanned and collected textbooks from Armenia and received a complimentary set of Armenian curriculum used in the Istanbul Armenian community. While visiting museums, historical sites and cultural events, I made sure that in addition to taking notes, I collected handouts and kept track of the advertisement or

communication of these events. Throughout my research, I tried to write blogs to share publicly on social media and with colleagues and friends around the world. In these blogs, I would share some of my preliminary experiences and findings and in return, would receive individual messages sharing their interest in my study and their support for additional suggestions and resources. When possible, I took photographs of places or artifacts that allowed me to contextualize my findings.

While the topic of engaging with the "other" is societally considered a taboo topic – Turkish people or Azerbaijanis are seen as the enemy in the eyes of Armenians – I tried to create ways for the participants to determine how intimately they would be willing to share their experiences. Drawing on Smith's (2012) experiences from twenty-five indigenous research projects, I built opportunities for the interviewees to self-identify their experiences through testimonies, storytelling, remembering, negotiating, protecting, and reclaiming. For the interviews, I utilized Saldaña's (2015) strategy of thinking emotionally as some of these memories – especially memories of coexistence or crossing over – would likely trigger the participants. For example, even though the participants may directly answer the questions, Saldaña (2015) suggests to follow up with strategic questions such as, "What was going through your mind at that time?", "What were you feeling when that happened?" or "How did that make you feel?" (p. 83). Throughout the process, the interviewees controlled the interview as well and skipped questions they did not feel comfortable answering, but also provided other sources of data to help demonstrate their ideals. Additionally, as the participants responded, I added follow-up questions to inquire about additional details, as well as opportunities to expand on their responses.

Memories are kept alive in various ways, but some memories are not meant to be held or passed onto the next generation. In order to take into account both the known and unknown sensitivities and ethical boundaries of this data, participants were invited to share memories through oral histories and artifacts such as pictures and diaries. The combination of oral histories and visual aids produces, as noted in Roulston (2010), "good history" where individual's accounts are verified through visual documents. Moss (1977/1996 as cited in Roulston 2010) suggests a range of documents that can help construct the data – which is not limited to pictures and diaries – such as transaction records (i.e., certificates and laws), contemporary descriptions (recordings from events) and accounts by other sources. All visual sources used in this study were co-constructed, that is, given the interviewee's consent in ownership and allowing the interviewee to determine how the image was used (Clark, 2012). My interviews were semi-structured based on three key theme areas: demographic background that can inform general information about the interviewee and contextualize the experience; memories that can offer a direct and explicit approach to soliciting information about their childhood and what they recall; and finally, exploring the experiences of crossing borders and coexistence that helped me to understand how the individuals experienced, learned, or witnessed the act of coexisting with "others."

Key Summary and Roadmap of Dissertation

In writing this dissertation, my goal was to ensure that the chapters were built up to represent the essence of ethnographic research. It is important to understand the historical background that contextualizes the details and experiences in the data. Chapter Two is a historical overview from the late 300 A.D. to present day – of when and how Armenian

borders shifted and how these changes reshaped the Armenian identity over time and space. The focus of this historical overview is to highlight the role of education in defining identity within these border changes.

Challenging the current scholarship on the conflicts and histories of this study, I rely on border thinking and a decolonial approach to frame the theory. Chapter Three provides an overview of border thinking as my theoretical framework, which is based on decolonial literature and informed through an interdisciplinary approach. I examined border thinkers to understand how delinking and unlearning applies to the context of post-Soviet Armenia and the Istanbul Armenian Community. Applied to my theoretical framework, border thinking is viewed through the following disciplines to offer an interdisciplinary approach to my dissertation: childhood studies, comparative and international education, conflict and post-conflict studies, decolonial studies, human and critical geography.

Chapter Four outlines my methodological approach and details the methods I used for this critical educational ethnography. Here, I offer in-depth details from four of the five completed fieldwork sites, and explain why I was unable to complete the fifth fieldwork site visit due to the COVID-19 pandemic and emergency evacuation. Chapter Five provides an analysis of how learning the Armenian borders takes place everywhere – both in formal and informal spaces representing different times and spaces. Based on the analysis, learning to be Armenian entails learning the border(s) – both real and imagined – as well as the ways in which Armenians define what lies in and outside of the borders.

Moving beyond what can be learned, Chapter Six travels across time and space through memories and oral histories of current and retired teachers who crossed borders -

both physically and metaphorically – where they found themselves interacting with the "other." For each border thinker, their stories of border crossings are different and unique, offering important insights about the past but also opportunities for future projects. Chapter Seven pieces together the previous chapters for the conclusion of the dissertation with highlights on key findings and possible directions for further research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: TRACING HISTORIES OF ARMENIAN BORDERS AND IDENTITIES IN EDUCATION

> *We believe that history is also about justice, that understanding history will enlighten our decisions about the future. Wrong. History is also about power. In fact history is mostly about power. It is the story of the powerful and how they became powerful, and then how they use their power to keep them in positions in which they can continue to dominate others.* (Smith, 2012, p.35).

Linda Tuhiwai Smith, a notable scholar of decolonial theory, provides a conceptualization of history highlighting some of the important factors to consider when re-reading history. Smith's (2012) framing is particularly helpful to recognize the power dynamics used in writing history and how these narratives remain(ed) dominant over time. Through a decolonial lens, Smith (2012) offers tools to identify the power dynamics and go deeper in learning and unlearning the past. Applying these tools in the case of re-reading Armenian history of borders and national identity illuminates the power dynamics and moments of exclusion and inclusion. This literature review examines the role of education through tracing the history of the Armenian national borders and national identity, at times refocusing from the center to the periphery of the dominant narratives to help explain the past.

Throughout history, Armenian borders have been redrawn, defended, and crossed by many foreign powers, including the Byzantine Empire, Seljuk domination, Georgian domination, the Mongol Empire, Kingdom of Kilikia, Ottoman Empire, Safavid Empire, and the Soviet Empire, to name a few (Hewsen, 2001). Over time and space(s), Armenians aligned their identities based on the group they preferred, "not a single people with a clear national sense but rather an intricate, multifaceted society with conflicting loyalties, some

to one great noble clan, others to an external power" (Suny, 1993, p. 4). And yet, within the literature, Armenian identity is projected as a homogenous identity which speaks, reads and writes in Armenian and practices the Christian faith.

As a geographic reference point, Hewsen (2001) refers to Armenia's beginning as 387 A.D. in reference to the partition of Armenia between Rome and Iran. Likewise, the Armenian national identity is traced back to pre-modern times, and, depending on the historian, one will encounter a range of ethnogenesis theories. The Armenian Church was the major resource for maintaining the Armenian national identity within smaller communities that provided space to cultivate and maintain the identity, particularly through religion and education (Sarafian, 1930). Kevork Sarafian's (1930) *The History of Armenian Education* is one of the only comprehensive studies available. The sources used to document Armenian education in Sarafian's literature are a reflection of those who managed to document their perspectives – oftentimes these individuals were the elites, political figures, nobility and clergy members of the community (Sarafian, 1930). Therefore, the available literature of Armenian borders and national identity provides a limited scope for a complicated history. I argue that this gap in the literature is concerning not only for historians and scholars alike, but also for the way in which the Armenian national identity has been problematically taught through a narrow interpretation. Moreover, I find that claiming all Armenians have always been a homogenous, Christian group of people is problematic considering the history of borders being redrawn multiple times prior to the establishment of the modern nation-state.

The roadmap of this literature review includes four sections of historical analysis. Before examining education in Armenia, I provide a brief discussion noting the history of

Armenia’s ethnogenesis to contextualize the literature. Here, I also include a brief discussion of the current debates on the Armenian national identity within the literature. The second section examines the history of the Armenian borders and national identity and the role of education in Armenia between the early to mid-eighteenth century. In the third section, I provide the continuation from the mid-eighteenth century to the present day. The division point is intended to examine the pre- nation-state Armenian identity through the establishment of the Armenian nation-state. Finally, this review concludes with a brief discussion of how the available literature can help think of possible alternative ways of understanding Armenian national borders and identity and how schools can promote more inclusivity for peaceful futures.

Theorization of Armenian National Identity: Armenian Studies and the Historical Debate

Within the field of Armenian studies, there is debate over theorization of the Armenian national identity specifically between scholars/historians from Armenia and from the diaspora. In a recent analysis, Danny Fittante (2015) refers to the debate amongst (mainly north American) Armenian historians and diasporan Armenian scholars regarding theories of the Armenian national identity. One of the first modern sources on ancient and modern Armenian history was published in 1993 by Ronald Grigor Suny, an Armenian-American historian, entitled, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History*. Suny (1993) expresses concern for the way in which Armenian historical writing fosters:

> a positive view of an endangered nationality...both in the diaspora and Armenia handed down an uncritical historical tradition replete with heroes and villains, and scholars who might otherwise have enriched the national historiography withdrew

from a field marked by unexamined nationalism and narcissism. (p. 2)

As one of the major contributors to modern Armenian history, Suny (1993) published and presented critical approaches towards understanding Armenian history inviting scholars to "rethink the modern history of the Armenians and to promote an integration of the somewhat isolated historiography of Armenia into more general theoretical and historical concerns" (p. 3). Such an approach is understood as a threat to the Armenian nationalistic and essentialist position of Armenian history. Armen Aivazian, a historian from Armenia, is an example of a scholar who supports a positivist and essentialist approach to analyzing Armenian history. Any Armenian studies scholar – particularly Armenian-Americans – who offers a critical examination is questionable and labeled a falsifier or "pro-Turkish."

Within the field of Armenian studies, Fittante (2015) outlines the tension Suny (1993) referred to amongst Armenian historians and diasporan Armenian scholars regarding theories of the Armenian national identity. In response to Suny's book, Aivazian published *The History of Armenia as presented in American Historiography,* intentionally responding to – what Aivazian (2002) claims to be – Western scholars falsifying historical accounts. He also provided what he argues is, "a scientific point of view, with the intention of defending and establishing the truth" (p. 5). Aivazian (2002) specifically referenced primarily Armenian-American scholars in North America and argues, "Armenian studies are endangered in America," suggesting that Armenian-American historians wrote from pro-Turkish perspectives or showed "friendly" language towards Azerbaijanis. Moreover, Aivazian (2002) claims all Armenian-American contributions to the field were manipulations of Armenian history and argues, "the falsified version of Armenian

historiography and Armenian studies in the West, is more dangerous and harmful than the Turko-Azaerbaijani historical fallacies" (p. 6).

Notably, Aivazian's (2002) response to Suny's work is an example to help contextualize how the Armenian studies field is divided on the theory of Armenian national identity. Aivazian's attack on Suny's book illustrates how some scholars in the debate hold a primordial or essentialist view, and if questioned, receive a hostile reaction (see Fittante, 2015). This scholarly debate represents some of the hostility among Armenian scholars in trying to openly criticize the Armenian identity. Unlike Aivazian's analysis of Armenian history, Suny's account offered more room in my mind to begin exploring the essentialist view that perhaps a homogeneous Armenian national identity might not have been possible at that point in time.

Based on several historical analyses and cartographic references, to me it seems that historically the Armenian identity was established in an effort to differentiate Armenian people from other ethnic groups and tribes of the Caucasus region; specifically as a group of Christian people from as early as 300 BC with a distinct language (Suny, 1993; Panossian, 2006; Zekiyan, 2005). Up until the establishment of the Armenian nation-state, the number of times the Armenian borders were redrawn suggests that there had to be a history of collaboration or at least coexistence with "others" was highly likely, if not inevitable. Considering these controversial viewpoints, it is clear that there is a division in Armenian studies but also among the Armenian community about how the Armenian national identity should be defined.

I feel it my responsible to disclose the rationale behind my collected sources for this analysis. Despite fieldwork being conducted in the Armenian language and the subject

of the study being Armenian history, English will be the language that my dissertation is written in, as this is required by my institution. The resources I currently have access to are primarily in the English language, which may be critiqued for being English-only primary and secondary resources, rather than Armenian. However, for the purposes of this dissertation, I drew on the work of scholars from Armenian studies, most of whom had to either translate the primary sources themselves or worked with other individuals who translated the primary sources. In particular, I read and analyzed seven books by Armenian historians, which are considered to be the canonical (or seminal) sources, and which have often been cited and used globally to study Armenian history. Additionally, I included Aivazian's book as the eighth resource to widen the analysis despite his aggressive attack on most of the other scholars in the field.

In the course of redefining borders, identities reflect migration flows and displacement as well as interactions and relations among ethnic groups (Barth, 1969). In his timeless book, Frederick Barth (1969) argues that having an ideal definition of an ethnic group is problematic as it serves to maintain one understanding or "a unit which rejects or discriminates against others" (p. 11). Moreover, the notion of *one* identity also assumes ethnic identity is occurring in a vacuum not "in response to local ecologic factors, through a history of adaptation by invention and selective borrowing" (p. 11). By applying categorizations of identities, the debate on national identity will continue to perpetuate and impose limitations on human relationality especially in drawing borders of *who* is included and *who* is excluded. In doing so, I am not suggesting that national identities and borders are not real, but rather, to consider Brubaker and Cooper's (2000) thinking *beyond* these categories or "What is problematic is not that a particular term is used, but how it is used"

(p. 5). Therefore, in *rethinking* borders and identities, my dissertation aims to widen the discussion of Armenian national identities and borders and build on the possibility of peaceful futures, imaginaries, and visions.

Considering Armenia's diverse history of rulers, how did Armenians experience these shifts in borders and identities? And, how did education (re)define the Armenian national identity? Clearly, Armenian society interacted with various foreign rulers but also along various trade routes such as the Silk Road that crossed through Armenian borders (Hewsen, 2001). At one point in history, Panossian (2006) reflects on how the border changes influenced society such that some converted to Islam, while a critical mass who did not convert would later "retain a separate identity both against the east and the west, and their unique brand of Christianity was the means to do so" (Panossian, 2006, p. 57). While establishing themselves, Armenians did not set out to recruit and convert people from outside of their inner circle, instead, their focus was "on maintaining cultural boundaries that would assure their uniqueness" (Panossian, 2006, p. 44). Through an entangled history of wars and conflicts, the Armenian national identity was shaped over time, maintaining a unique Christian distinction – dependent on its past – and an emphasis on consistent existence within and connection to the same space (Panossian, 2006; Sarafian, 1930).

Several Tribes and Wars Later: Armenian Ethnogenesis and Identity Formation

In this section, I provide a brief analysis of Armenian history and geography by going back and forth between geographic coordinates and historical moments to re-examine the ethnogenesis and identity. Of the seven historians whose work I analyzed for

this research, Levon Abrahamian (2006) provides an inclusive historical analysis and avoids explicitly defining the Armenian identity in rigid terminology. By using a metaphor for a park-identity – reference to the English method of developing paths – Abrahamian (2006) suggests using a combination of twelve approaches or paths to understanding the Armenian identity including The Path of Selection, The Path toward the Roots, The Path of Prestige, and The Path toward Everywhere, to name a few. Both Bournoutian (2002) and Abrahamian (2006) incorporate diverse models and understandings of Armenian identity and history, allowing the reader to view the concept more broadly. However, for the purposes of this analysis, the ethnogenesis history most commonly accepted within the Armenian scholarly community begins with the Urartu Kingdom (or also commonly known as Biainili), which was comprised of several different Indo-European tribes. Of these tribes, the "Armen" absorbed some of the other tribes (Hewsen, 2001; Garsoian 2002; Panossian, 2006). The history about the fall of the Urartu Kingdom refers to the term absorption since the leaders of different tribes were fighting to take over (Hewsen, 2001; Garsoian 2002; Panossian, 2006; Matossian, 1962).

Some claim that the Urartian leaders were in fact Armenian, but others suggest there is not enough evidence to make any clear conclusions. However, several scholars note that the first reference to Armenia comes after the fall of the Urartian as noted in a Behistun carving or "a monument designed in c. 520 BC to commemorate Darius' achievements and conquests" (Bournoutian, 2002, p. 21). Specifically, Suny (1993) claimed Armenians were first referenced in 520 B.C. when Armenians were conquered by the Persians and eventually made their way to eastern Anatolia, later known as the Armenian Plateau. The first ruling dynasty would become the Yerevandunis, which

demonstrated the first instance of Armenians having a politically unified space and a reference point of when the Armenian national identity was solidified (Panossian, 2006).

Armenian territory, like the identity, was not bound to rigid borders, but traces back to the Armenian plateau or Armenian highlands in eastern Anatolia. Panossian (2006) asserts that the Armenian national identity was founded on neither a homogenous conceptualization nor an association with a state. While there may be genetic connections of Armenian people and space (Aivazian, 2002), an analysis of Armenian identity cannot dismiss the number of wars, migrations, ethnic mingling and mixing that took place over time. Some may suggest language connects these people, but even within the language, dialects and branches also vary, carrying different cultural meanings.

In addition to this historical analysis, James Russell (2002) incorporates a linguistic analysis to offer his theory of origination by connecting Armenains or "*Hati-yos*" or "Hay" (Armenian) with the Hattian or Hitte people. Russell (2002) uses linguistic analysis to differentiate among the group of Indo-European tribes and says, "linguistic affinities are important data in determining the origins of the Armenian people" (p. 22). For this reason, tracing the Hittite people offered a significant contribution, particularly as they lived in western and central Asia Minor around this time period and later "moved eastward onto what later came to be called the Armenian plateau" (Russell, 2002, p. 25).

Additionally, Russell (2002) considers the natural frontiers of Armenia to be unclear not only because of the natural frontiers, but other factors such as: the other tribes that did not absorb into the Armenian prototype; the arrival of the groups who brought Islamic influence into the region (Kurds, Persians, Turkem and Turks); the loss of the Armenian monarchy's traditional lands; and the forced migration from their homeland. For

these reasons, as Panossian (2006) claims, "national identity can be constructed without a state" (p. 11). Resources and individuals (or non-state actors) outside of the homeland may also (re)formulate identity and nation (Panossian, 2006). Therefore, for Panossian (2006) the Armenian national identity is based on a modern formation. The national identity, according to Panossian (2002), can be defined briefly as "constantly in flux, dynamic, and evolving" (p. 123). Based on theories of national identity Panossian (2002) categorizes three major influences on the national identity: the myths and symbols of the nation, the people's imagination of belonging to the same community, and how these factors interact with the socio-structural dynamics. According to Panossian's (2002) analysis of the contemporary Armenian national identity, the following three historical events are considered influential: pre-Christianity, the first Christian nation, and post-Genocide diaspora. Altogether, the findings from the field of Armenian studies highlighted here do not attempt to provide a thorough historical analysis, but enough to identify the geo-political context of their neighbors, invasions, and movements.

In a more recent effort to examine Armenian national identity, Fittante (2015), a contemporary Armenian studies scholar, identified the gaps and opportunities for further analysis. Some of the limitations outlined earlier in this essay were reflected in his analysis, specifically as Fittante (2015) suggests, "scholars of Armenian identity and history should go beyond categorical and nomothetic understandings of identity, recognizing, instead, the variety of social forces (in different places and at specific times) informing those expressions microanalytically" (p. 73). In an analysis of Armenian identity categories, Fittante (2009) analyzed four prominent Armenian historians who are the primary scholars referenced in the discussion of Armenian national identity categories. Specifically, Fittante

(2015) critiques the idea of borrowing national identity models and claims, "theorists have borrowed the terminology of nationalists who often use rigid models of national identity (or, analytical categories) to describe a dynamic and fluctuating phenomenon" (p. 57). Instead, Fittante (2015) proposes using ethnographic approaches to analyze national identity, which can avoid the limiting categories of identity and provide a wider range of findings as, "identity is the result of spatial and temporal socialization processes that must be studied finitely by the communities informing it in order to bring to light its variations" (p. 78). Even though national identity is not defined in strict terms, there is enough information to define key concepts that constructed the Armenian identity such as language and religion. What were other ways in which the identity shifted over time and space(s)? How did education in Armenia teach national borders and identity over time and space? Let us now turn to the historical analysis of the role education played beginning in the year 1000.

Pre-Nation-State: Armenian Borders and National Identity in Education

To my knowledge, Kevork Sarafian is one of the first to document the history of education in Armenia using a collection of primary sources including ancient manuscripts and other sources. His contribution is the first of its kind to the field of comparative and international education. Published in 1930, Sarafian takes into account the period of Armenia after the introduction of Christianity through to the beginning years of the Soviet Armenia period. Sarafian (1930) notes that the historical account of education in Armenia is based on the available sources, which do not take into account all regions or every kingdom of Armenia. Sources documenting pagan or pre-Christian Armenia were

destroyed. Also, the historical archives focus on the account of political figures, nobility and clergy.

The purpose of Armenian "public" education was established as a means of facilitating the spread of Christianity in Armenia. Armenia's early teachers were mostly Greeks and Syrians (Sarafian, 1930) and the curriculum focused on Syrian and Greek language and literature and teachings of Christianity. The first instance of national identity in Sarafian's (1930) account refers to 387 AD when the Armenian national entity was threatened as a result of the Armenian territory being between the Persian and Byzantine Empires (p. 35). Since early times, the history and teaching of Christianity was of major importance for Armenians and continues to be to this today. Churches and monasteries were the center for education in the Armenian communities. The purpose of education was meant to teach the Armenian alphabet, grammar, literature, and sacred music, in order to be able to study and practice Christianity. In the 1300-1400s, the term "universities" "is used to describe the school centered at the monastery of Kailatzor, near Erivan" (Sarafian, 1930, p. 110). Medieval "universities" were influenced by European models and considered equivalent in their teaching, licensing, and pedagogical practices (Sarafian, 1930). Some students went abroad for their education to cities like Athens or Alexandria (Sarafian, 1930, p. 58). Latin Missionaries and the Christian Crusaders had a major influence on education in Armenia. Of particular interest here, Sarafian (1930) referenced a Catholic missionary from Rome that published an Armenian "alphabet and primer" in 1643 used in Catholic schools. Aside from the Christian Crusaders, the Jesuits also had made contributions to Armenia's education. As early as the eleventh century, through Greek and Roman influence, Armenians studied David the Invincible, Plato, Aristotle,

Homer and many others (p. 77). Education was reserved particularly for men who entered either a school for leaders or for common folk during the Golden Age of Armenian Culture (p. 45).

Sarafian (1930) refers to the 13-16th century time period as "The Darkest Age of Armenian Education" and "The Long Siege of Darkness." The refers to the number of invasions Armenia experienced by Tartars, Mongols, and many other Turkish tribes, which led to what Sarafian (1930) describes as Armenians vanishing entirely from this part of the world. As a result of wars and invasions, Sarafian (1930) claims that it was natural to experience a decrease in attention towards arts, learning, and education. Many Armenians scattered throughout other parts of the world including Italy, Poland, Russia, Moldovia, India, Romania, and many other countries (Sarafian, 1930). The Armenian awakening eventually evolved as a result of the development of printing in the Armenian language in the late 1600s. Armenian monasteries served as centers for re-awakenings. These included Etchmiadzin, New Julfa, and Amrdolou. At the Amrdolou monastery – through the school of John Golod, in particular – the re-awakening aimed to "prepare an educated clearly to lead the nation not only in religious questions, but also intellectual and political affairs" (Sarafian, 1930, p. 135).

From 1678-1828, Armenian history calls this period the 'Age of Meliks,' referring to the Mekhitarist Congregation, or as Hewsen (2001) describes it, "the sole higher cultural life of the Armenians in this period." This period marked the beginning of the national liberation of the Armenian people but was possible only after seeking Roman rule for protection (Hewsen, 2001). According to Hewsen (2001), originally there were six Melik ruling houses, which were designated territories with autonomous governing powers.

Hewsen (2001) claims a particular area was the center of focus for Armenians during this time in history, notably, "Karabagh and Siunik' represent the only political life Armenians possessed, the movement for the national liberation of the Armenian people beginning precisely among these few remnants of the Armenian nobility" (p. 163). Within this section of Armenia, the Mechitarists – a group of Armenian Catholic monks – managed educational and cultural activities to promote and maintain a strong sense of Armenian identity and "to educate and enlighten the Armenian nation" (Sarafian, 1930, p. 138). The Mechitarists aimed to promote "apostleship and scholarly learning" (Sarafian, 1930, p. 141). Despite being under Persian rule, Armenians were able to maintain strong identities as a result of the activities organized by the religious leaders of their respective communities. Aside from the Persian Empire, Russia had gained some control of Armenian provinces in the early 1800s (Sarafian, 1930). Through *Polojenye*, Russians took control of the Armenian elementary schools, and the Armenian church no longer enjoyed a close relationship (Sarafian, 1930). Over time, many wars took place both in and outside of Armenia that required schools to close and then be reopened several times. The next section will focus on Armenia's path to statehood with moments of pause for disruptions and interventions in Armenian education, national identity, and borders.

Armenia en Route to Statehood

In the 19th century, scholars discussed the redefinition of the features of Armenian national identity – across the Ottoman, Persian and Russian spaces – in response to Western European imperialism and modernization (Kurkchiyan & Herzig, 2005). Education became a space of ideological disputes dominated by the elites between political agendas for empire building, as "Armenians had become a minority in the Turkish-controlled

section and formed only a slight majority in Russian Armenia" (Hovannisian, 1971, p. 1). Over time, several disruptions by revolutionaries took place across several different spaces: in Turkish Armenia, the "cradle of the nation," and in Russian Armenian provinces. Revolutionaries were protesting Armenians' rights to self-determination as they considered themselves "victims" of the endless foreign invasions (Hovannisian, 1971). In this section, borders will narrow even more as the focus on education in Armenia folds over the Armenian plateau, Russian Armenia, the first Republic of Armenia, Soviet Armenia, Independent Armenia, and eventually to today's post-independent Armenia.

The period from the 1850s to the early 1900s is referred to as "the secularization of Armenian culture" (Matossian, 1962). Within this time period, Matossian (1962) claims the most influential forces were "1) the increase of the Armenian population; 2) the penetration of capitalism into Transcaucasia; 3) the influence of Western education; and 4) the awakening of Armenian national consciousness" (p. 12). Matossian (1962) describes how these forces influenced all aspects of daily Armenian life. When language experienced secularization, classical Armenian was spoken solely by the religious members of society such as clergy, while the eastern vernacular became the common form of Armenian language (Matossian, 1962). In education, new literature introduced content that included "patriotic" feelings, resulting in schools which shifted from "parochial in form, but secular in content" (Matossian, 1962, p. 16). The major focus of the curriculum included, "Armenian language, literature and history and the teachings of the Armenian church" (p. 16). In the 1860s, Matossian (1962) noted the expansion of the schooling system, which was separated for boys and girls. Matossian (1962) described the experience for boys to: "adopt European dress...learn Russian, German and French, to read newspapers and

magazines, and to discuss national and international politics" (p. 15). As for girls, the schooling experience was most heavily influenced by socioeconomic class, where girls in the villages were less likely to attend school as it was believed to have a "demoralizing" influence (Matossian, 1962). Compared to girls from the wealthier families who, "received tutoring at home, or were sent to a private boarding school or Russian government secondary school. They learned arithmetic, history, geography, foreign languages, and such social graces as playing the piano and dancing" (p. 17). Of importance, Matossian (1962) created a third category of girls who she described as "rare cases," which were girls that "become 'free thinkers', attend a university or embark on a career" (p. 17). Within the Russian Empire, schooling shifted where Matossian (1962) claims that "to get ahead," one had to obtain "thorough knowledge of the Russian language" (p. 17).

The Rise of the Armenian National Movement

The first wave of Russification was experienced in the 1880s when policies replaced non-Russian or local ethnicity and language with Russian (Suny, 1991). Education in Armenia experienced this replacement in 1885 by an order from the Governor of the Caucasus, Prince A. M. Dondukov-Korsakov who declared, "all Armenian parish schools [be] closed and [they be] replace[ed] by Russian schools" (Suny, 1991, p. 45). The temporary shut-down affected Armenian schools specifically, "five hundred schools, attended by 20,000 students and which employed 900 teachers" (Suny, 1991, p. 45). Over the course of the year, there were forms of resistance through "secret schools" led by what Suny (1991) referred to as "more radicalized Armenian intelligentsia" (Suny, 1991, p. 45). This could be understood as the first wave of Russification, as another wave would appear in the 1920s within the formative years of Soviet Armenia. In 1886, when these schools

reopened a year later, “staffs had been purged and stricter state surveillance over teachers had been established” (Suny, 1991, p. 45). In 1889 the teaching of Armenian history was prohibited and Armenians were “imprisoned or exiled at this time as a result of their agitation against the Hamidian massacres” (Arkun, 2005, p. 83). By 1900, Russian officials further applied repressive measures to the point that censorship was enacted: “Armenian benevolent societies were no longer permitted to publish books...or open or even subsidize libraries. The press and arts were subject to strict censorship, especially of anything resembling nationalism” (Arkun, 2005, p. 83). These Russian policies only “stimulated” the Armenian nationalist movements (Arkun, 2005).

The mid to late 1800s gave rise to Armenian revolutionary organizations including the Hnchak and Dashnak parties (Suny, 1991). Hovannisian (1971) claims it was ‘logical’ that the Dashnaktsutiun formed in Tiflis “dedicate itself to the emancipation of the Turkish Armenians” (p. 4). On the eve of World War I, Hovannisian (1971) describes how a shift in Armenians’ and Georgians' relations takes place. Despite the fact that Armenians and Georgians shared religious traditions, Hovannisian (1971) claims, “in some ways [they] become rivals” such that Georgians settled into the countryside, where “a favorable geographic position made the world beyond the Caucasus readily accessible” (p. 7). However, Armenian merchants remained in the Georgian landscape. According to Hovannisian (1971), there were two million Armenians in the Romanov Empire in 1914 of which 60% of the population were in Yerevan. In the Ottoman Empire, there were approximately two million Armenians, which Hovannisian (1971) claims, “were even more widely dispersed than those of the Russian Empire” (p. 8). For Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, the Armenian identity was hard to maintain given the pressures to convert

to Islam and economic exploitation (Hovannisian, 1971). Given these pressures on the Armenians, Hovannisian (1971) claims, “they learned to live in peace with their Muslim overlords and neighbors" (p. 9). Peaceful coexistence in the Ottoman Empire was temporary at this point in time, when the Armenian Zartonk (Awakening) movement took place simultaneously across spaces and was reflected in education (Hovannisian, 1971).

The Armenian nationalist movement was dealt with differently in the Ottoman and Russian Empires. For the purpose of this essay, I will focus on the eastern territory formerly under Russian rule, which later became the modern territory of the Republic of Armenia (RoA). However, it is important to acknowledge schooling was limited at this time due to World War I and the Armenian Genocide. The history of the Armenian Genocide (1890-1915) is considered to be “the most significant factor in Armenian identity in the twentieth century...mass displacement and emigration even from non-Ottoman parts of the Caucasus, and the loss of a huge part of the homeland under the terms of eventual political settlement” (Kurkchiyan & Herzig, 2005, p. 7). At the time, the Young Turk ideology promoted Turkish nationalism and Islamism and any Christian minority living in the Ottoman Empire was under strict surveillance by the state (Hovannisian, 2005). With the “movement towards Turan – homeland for the Turkish people” – all other ethnicities were forced to be displaced (Hovannisian, 2005). April 23/24, 1915 is noted as the day when Armenians in the Ottoman Empire experienced, “arrest, imprisonment, torture, and execution of teachers, priests, and intellectuals” (Hovannisian, 2005, p. 92). For Armenians worldwide, the Genocide impacted the Armenian national identity significantly – many today will recall their families’ stories of survival. Hovannisian (2005) notes, “The Armenian psyche has been so traumatized that the Genocide haunts the entire nation and colours how it views

itself and its neighbors" (p. 94). The history and experiences of 1915 redefined relations, crossed borders, and eventually time. Hovannisian (2005) describes it as, "Time collapsed as 1988-90 became an immediate sequel to 1915 and the Azerbaijani was no longer a Caucasian neighbor but rather the ruthless traditional Turkish perpetrator" (p. 94). For these reasons, schooling was disrupted significantly during this time.

Armenians from Western Armenia/Ottoman Empire became refugees and orphans and some settled in Yerevan (Hovannisian, 2005). Within Armenian territory under Russian rule, society enjoyed certain liberties that were not available to Armenians in the Ottoman Empire (Hovannisian, 2005; Sarafian, 1930). Many Armenian teachers were trained by Russian and German intellectuals which influenced Armenian society significantly (Sarafian, 1930). Following the Genocide of 1915, Armenians needed to overcome the trauma of Genocide and experience of World War I, and rebuild/establish the first Republic. In the next section, I will focus on the impact of the regional and international effects on Armenian national borders and identities and the role of education during this period of time.

Drawing Lines through Coexistence: Creating Modern, Homogeneous, Ethnocultural Nation-States (Independent Armenia 1918-1920)

Before World War I, Armenians "lived everywhere between Constantinople to Baku" (Hovannisian, 2005, p. 89). Despite the different political, economic, social, and cultural experiences across the Ottoman and Russian Empires, Armenians maintained the national identity, "a sense of belonging to a common nationality with a common destiny" (Hovannisian, 2005, p. 89). Education was widely enjoyed by both males and females and the intellectuals of society were educated in Europe and "returned home to form the modern

identity for their people" (p. 89). However, this time period is significantly important as national borders were officially established to produce independent, homogeneous nation-states within the Caucasus region.

Since Armenia was split into Eastern (Russian Empire) and Western (Ottoman empire), Armenians fought on both sides of the war through the Russian and Ottoman army during World War I (Hovannisian, 2005). The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 ended the Russian Tsarist rule but was also short lived as the Transcaucasian Commissariat later took action with "the liquidation of the 'Bolsehvik adventure' and the restoration of 'Russian democracy'" (Hovannisian, 2005, p. 96). The Transcaucasian Commissariat was formed in Tiflis but did not act as an independent government. The Commissariat included representation from all neighbors: Armenian, Muslim, and Georgian (Hovannisian, 2005). Armenians from the Western part of the Armenian homeland (near Mount Ararat plateau) still had hope to return home and overtime, the reality became clear that it would not be possible to go back (Hovannisian, 2005). The Commissariat heard the Armenian delegation's requests and attempted to restore pre-war borders, but this was not possible for various reasons including the Bolshevik Revolution, but also Turkey's "ambitions extended to territories far beyond the limits set at Brest Litovsk" (Hovannisian, 2005, p. 97). At the end of World War I, France, Great Britain, Italy, and the United States had significant influence on decisions over borders. The Transcaucasian federation collapsed as Georgia and Azerbaijan became independent nations in May 1918 and Armenia in June 1918 (Hovannisian, 2005).

As an independent nation, Hovannisian (2005) describes the beginning period as "unbearable," when shifting from dependent relations through the Transcaucasian

Federation to homogenous nation states cost Armenia even more as it lacked a formal economic and agrarian infrastructure and needed to care for 300,000 embittered and impatient refugees. While Armenia could not resolve all of these issues overnight, there was progress in other areas of building the nation, including a judicial system and educational system (Hovannisian, 2005). According to Hovannisian (2005), one of the challenges in building the nation was the Muslim population's refusal to "recognize the jurisdiction of the Yerevan government" (p. 101). However, Armenia's statehood ended as Armenia became an independent socialist republic officially on December 2, 1920 (Suny, 2005, p. 113).

While there were several historical events within this time period, it is important to note that some of the conflicts were never resolved. This is particularly important when analyzing how borders were determined but also, how these borders redefined national identities (and relationships). After World War I and just before the formation of the Soviet Union, let's examine the possible ways borders are/were defined and possible reasons for justification. One possible justification is that (colonial) power/leadership matters – being a member of one of the alliances or appealing to the Triple Entente (Britain, France, and the United States of America) seemed to help play an important role in the decision making processes. Another justification might be based on a certain magical or quantifiable number when deciding land ownership or national boundaries. For example, there were instances where Armenians were a majority in some spaces (i.e., Nagorno-Karabakh or Akhalkalakh) and tried to use numbers to justify territorial ownership. A third possible reason to justify borders could be based on economic stability within borders – does the government have sufficient resources to maintain the population/land?

With the establishment of the first Republic of Armenia in 1918, Yerevan struggled to develop the country as they had not developed the agrarian or economic infrastructure and could not afford to regulate Artsakh or also referred to as Nagorno-Karabakh despite a majority Armenian population (Hovannisian, 2005). Therefore, Armenian and Azerbaijani governments made an agreement in 1918 that although Armenians claimed to have a majority population in the area of Nagorno-Karabakh, it would serve the interest of being under Azerbaijani leadership with the understanding that they would be treated fairly; but that agreement was not kept (Hovannisian, 2005).

Also in 1918, the governments of Armenia and Azerbaijan agreed that Nagorno-Karabakh would serve the interest of being under Azerbaijani leadership with the understanding that Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh would be treated fairly, even though that agreement was not kept by Azerbaijanis (Hovannisian, 2005). However, Karabakh Armenians claimed mistreatment and, "blamed Azerbaijani authorities for an assortment of cultural and economic discontents, and open friction occurred from the 1960s onwards" (Suny, 2005, p. 121). The relevance of this history is in contextualizing the origin of the border conflicts of this region. While the conflict spans multiple decades, it originated at the time when borders of the nation sates were first drawn. As a result of the ongoing conflicts, over time, Armenians of Karabakh petitioned their mistreatment to Soviet Azerbaijani authorities, submitted grievances to Soviet authorities, and requested transfer status to Soviet Armenia. Soviet authorities denied the Armenians' request, which led to violent clashes and demonstrations that eventually escalated to what became the first war in Nagorno-Karabakh war in 1988 (Suny, 2005). The first war ended with a

ceasefire in 1994 and resulted with mass population displacement and thousands killed on both sides.

Considering all of the wars and bloodshed due to differences, one may ask, would the Caucasus have been better off with the Transcaucasian Federation leadership? Although the Transcaucasian Federation was not an official government body, they served to represent the different populations of the region. In the next phase of history, the newly formed nation-states transferred power to the Soviet leadership and established the Union of Soviet Socialists Republic (USSR). Here, I will highlight the role of Soviet Armenian national identity within the context of the Soviet borders and how these components informed/influenced education.

Soviet Armenia (December 1920-September 1991)

In the initial stages of the Soviet Union, December 2, 1920, one of the major issues noted by Soviet leadership was the uneven development across nations. In order to address this concern, Soviet leadership instituted the policy of *Korenizatsiia* or indigenization between the 1920s and 1930s, which encouraged Armenians and other non-Russian peoples of the Soviet Republics to develop their national identity and indigenous language (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). Silova (2006) notes that the Soviet policy of indigenization aimed to establish "a harmony between national and linguistic identity through setting up ethnoterritorial autonomies to promote national cultures, languages, and cadres" (Silova, 2006, p. 31). Therefore, indigenization was seen as a non-threatening approach to build trust towards and awareness of the Socialist ideology or "Stalin's own form of indirect rule" (Hammer, 1997 p. 15). Over time, the number of schools increased significantly and education became compulsory up to the tenth grade and shaped the future ideal Soviet

citizens (Matossian, 1962). Soviet schools played a significant role in shaping the Soviet Armenian identity and were "the principal instrument in the hands of the Communists for the diffusion of their ideology" (Matossian, 1962, p. 81).

Soviet education defined and prepared children to become future Soviet citizens (Kirschenbaum, 2001). The Soviet childhood process began as early as primary school or first grade and continued throughout the schooling process. As noted in a recent textbook study, Soviet children's socialization process took place both during and after school and occurred across political, temporal and socio-spatial spaces (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). Between 1917-1922, the number of children attending schools increased significantly and an increase in a highly literate population (Silova, 2006; Matossian, 1962, Sarafian, 1930) with a largely Armenian teacher workforce: "over 80% of elementary teachers and almost all teachers in seven-year and secondary schools" (Matossian, 1962, p. 83). This was an important political method that Soviet rulers used to disseminate messages, develop trust and spread the ideology rapidly (Silova, 2006; Slezkine, 1994). By the end of the 1930s, Matossian (1962) claims, "enrollment in general elementary, seven-year, and secondary schools increased steadily" (p. 192). Through Soviet schools, the process began from the first grade through graduation:

> "The elementary school level (grades 1-3), children across all Soviet republics were sworn into *oktiyabri- yata* or 'little Octobrists'; at the primary school level (grades 4-8), they became *pioneri* or 'Young Pioneers'; and at the high school level (grades 9-10), they could finally become *komsomoltsy* or Komsomol members." (Silova & Palandjian, 2018, p. 153)

Upon graduation, youth may continue to carry on the Komsomol ranks in their adult lives. Outside of school, children were rewarded opportunities to attend summer camps or visit movie theaters (DeWitt, 1955). The Soviet school system had several major

achievements. Notably, the increase in literacy shifted from 1926 male/female with 34.5% to 73.8% by 1939 (Matossian, 1962, p. 193). In the late 1940s, Soviet leaders shifted their focus towards *Russifikatsiia* or Russification to ensure a common language would be communicated easily. This policy provided non-Russians the opportunity to join the ranks of the Soviet leadership, which ultimately consolidated the Soviet Empire's rule. Gradually, more attention was given towards studying the Russian language – a campaign to train Russian language teachers and introducing the Russian language in the grade school experience by 1949-1950 as early as first grade (Matossian, 1962).

Next, the *Russifikatsiia* (Russification) policy allowed for the consolidation of Soviet rule and management between the late 1930s and 1950s. Suny (2001) describes the new direction from the *Russifikatsiia* policy as, "The goal no longer was the development of backwards peoples within their own culture... but assimilation of non-Russians to the greatest extent possible" (p. 55). Using Russian as the common mode of communication, the *Russifikatsiia* policy was "achieved by convergence and acculturation of different ethnicities in order to allow for more effective management and control of Soviet nationalities" (Silova, 2006, p. 37). The number of Russians living in non-Russian Soviet Republics increased (Silova, 2006), which included added pressure on the Armenians to study Russian and led to a rise in the number of Russian language teachers (Matossian, 1962). *Russifikatsia* formalized the Russian language and served as the obligatory second language (Silova, 2006; Matossian, 1962; Sarafian, 1930).

Soviet citizenship was defined as "both an ethnic and a national identity, and the national extended for many to the Soviet Union as homeland as a civic identity" (Suny, 2012, p. 33). On one hand, Soviet citizenship and national identity ideals were instilled

through education. The local/national language was taught parallel to the Russian language to cultivate a sense of national identity. On the other hand, education was a critical source in developing the Soviet empire and Soviet citizens (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). The implementation of Soviet policies varied across the Soviet space based on the geopolitical location of the post-Soviet nation – from the states closest to the center of the Empire (Moscow) to the states along the periphery (ie. Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan) (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). For example, the Russian language and non-titular language policy was significantly different compared to other Soviet republics, and in Armenia's case: "the percentage of students studying in the Armenian language declining to 80% by 1989 and the percentage of students studying in Russian increasing to 15% only" (Silova & Palandjian, 2018, p. 152; see also Pavlenko, 2013). The Soviet modernization project was meant to address the nationality question by promoting national differences and promotion of USSR citizenship. While Soviet schools and textbooks presented images of Armenian heroes and other forms of political indoctrination, these concepts were interpreted through Marxist-Lennist approaches but remained Armenian at core (Matossian, 1962; Silova & Palandjian, 2018; Palandjian, 2012). Despite decades of Russification policies, Armenians were able to maintain the national identity through schooling (Silova & Palandjian, 2018; Palandjian, 2012).

In Transition: Post-Soviet Armenia

The year 1991 was marked as a turning point for post-Soviet Armenia, requiring a transformation of institutions, infrastructure, and values within the post-Soviet space to conform to new international norms. Added to the complexity of this historical moment, Armenia was influenced by the Nagorno-Karabakh War and the earthquake of 1988, which

weighed additional challenges onto the post-Soviet nation-building. According to Suny's (2001) analysis, the "transition to democracy" noted that "ordinary Armenian citizens experienced rapid impoverishment, radical social polarization, and dismal prospects for the future. Hundreds of thousands voted with their feet and left the country" (p.863). Ultimately these events factored into the Republic of Armenia's government's decisions about which reforms were to be prioritized. Building on the Soviet education legacy, the post-Soviet Armenian education system continued to serve society "[by] keeping the system "alive" (Khachatryan et al, 2013) with its highly educated population (Kurkchiyan, 2005). In other words, education was not broken, but rather it became a space where post-Soviet reforms were developed based on Soviet education achievements (Sidorovitch, 2006; Kutsyuruba, 2011; Surucu, 2002). The RoA government remained committed to education reforms in order "to sustain its educational system despite the drastic fall in the resources available" (Kurkchiyan, 2005, p. 217).

With Armenia's independence, the Armenian national identity required a shift "both at home and abroad" (Kurkchiyan & Herzig, p. 14). Kurkchiyan (2005) refers to Armenia's reforms as having "a population that was already highly educated, [with] an enrollment rate close to western levels and an increasing popular demand for lifelong education" (p. 217). Moreover, the government of Armenia needed to focus on "how to sustain its educational system despite the drastic fall in the resources available" (Kurkchiyan, 2005, p. 217). While keeping Soviet education structures intact, the first act of educational reform implemented was the required removal of Soviet ideology from the curriculum (Kurkchiyan, 2005). Post-Soviet schools continue(d) to operate within the Soviet infrastructure and experienced challenges implementing new educational reforms

as similarly noted by Silova (2006): "school principals and teachers have been forced, at times, to resort to the 'old', well-learned mechanisms of survival in order to ensure some continuity for themselves, their students, and their schools" (p. 125).

Meanwhile, post-Cold War political narratives introduced critique of the Soviet education system. The critique of Soviet education claimed pedagogical practices and institutional structures were "too Soviet" (Silova, Millei, Chachkhiani, Palandjian, & Vitrukh, 2021). For this reason, the post-Cold War narratives positioned "Western education policies and practices as ideals to emulate" (Silova et al., 2021). Post-Soviet countries were positioned on a trajectory from Soviet to Western democracy (Silova et al., 2017). The wave of educational reforms in the 1990s-2000s required the RoA government to revise standards to reflect new standards or "modern learning outcomes such as critical/creative thinking and cooperative working style" (OSF, 2013, p. 6). However, the educational content transferred to the learners was still derived from the previous textbooks (OSF, 2013). In this context, textbook and curriculum reforms became a playing field for Western and international agencies working in Armenia, often triggering tensions between Western ideals and Armenian traditional values in education reforms. Recent textbook studies of Soviet and post-Soviet Armenian *aybenarans* (or alphabet textbooks) reveal a tendency towards cultivating a strong sense of Armenian ethnocultural identity based on national symbolism and mythology (Silova et al, 2014, Palandjian, 2012). Despite claims by world culture theorists, *aybenarans* present citizenship ideals in relation to the Armenian homeland (Palandjian, 2012). During this time period, RoA produced a citizenship law, which was described in the following manner:

> An ethnically tinted citizenship law in Armenia [...] the most ethnically homogeneous of the Soviet republics, is arguably the post-Soviet state that is closest to having a historically formed and dominant conception of national identity; this conception sees the nation as 'a historically constant, held together by blood, territory, religion, language, and history. (Shevel, 2009, p. 278)

By assessing modern Armenian law on citizenship, Shevel's (2009) insight resonates with trends noted earlier in this essay. Specifically, from pre-to post-Soviet Armenian history, Armenian national identity and borders consistently appear to represent being in the same territorial space with the idea of being "held together" by ethnocultural elements. While Armenian national identity may have adopted additional ethnocultural elements throughout history, the national identity was transmitted and protected within the Armenian community through institutions such as the church and school.

Conclusion: Armenia's Post-Velvet Revolution and Beyond

In this chapter, I provided an overview of the history of Armenian national borders and identity, and focused on the role of Armenian education. As significant moments occurred, borders were redefined and the Armenian national identity remained constant over time and across different spaces. Schools played a significant role both in contributing to and preparing children to learn the Armenian national borders and identity as part of their socialization process. Specifically, Armenian children were socialized politically, temporally, and socially in preparation for their role as future leaders (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). Within the schooling process, colonial and imperial rulers relied on children as the future citizens and leaders of Armenia. Tools included the use of language and the official school curriculum to assist in the process of preparing the future citizens in the nation-building or empire building processes. Noted earlier in this chapter, the year 1918 marked

a significant turning point for the Caucasus region such that the establishment of modern homogeneous, ethnocultural nation-states' borders changed from sites of crossing and collaboration, to lines of separation. Long periods of coexistence were disrupted in the name of modernity with the establishment of nation-states that are yet to be normalized.

Considering the historical journey outlined in this chapter, how will Armenia redefine the national identity and borders for the post-Velvet Revolution future? As borders shifted from empire to empire, and war to war, the Armenian national identity held the community together despite the geographic location and time. Prior to official national borders, multi-ethnic communities existed albeit with some tensions. However, the period of coexistence prior to 1918 indicated that an alternative to homogeneity was possible with the Transcaucasian Federation, which served to represent all people across the region. Perhaps, at that point in time, it was too soon for both the length and geopolitical environment of the Caucasus region to transition fully into the Transcaucasian Federation.

CHAPTER 3

BORDER THINKING: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

> *Various dissenting voices within indigenous communities maintain a collective memory and critical conscience of past experiences. Many indigenous communities are spaces of hope and possibilities, despite the enormous odds aligned against them.* (Smith, 2012, p. 101)

Border thinking is the epistemology of disobedience or disruption in relation to the colonial or imperial world (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). According to Mignolo & Tlostanova (2006), border thinking or theory was understood "as a response to the violence (frontiers) of imperial/territorial epistemology and the rhetoric of modernity (and globalization) of salvation" (p. 206). Altogether, border thinking is a decolonial project that Tlostanova & Mignolo (2006) refer to as the exteriority or "outside created from the inside" (p. 206). To take on a border thinking study or initiative entails delinking or unlearning as a response to the coloniality of knowledge and a moving towards alternative ways of being or the decolonial shift (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012). The purpose of this chapter is to develop a border thinking theoretical framework for my dissertation by expanding Mignolo and Tlostanova's theoretical framework across several disciplines and geographical locations in order to understand how delinking and unlearning apply within the context of post-Soviet Armenia and the Istanbul Armenian Community.

Applied to my theoretical framework, border thinking will be viewed through the following disciplines to offer an interdisciplinary approach to my dissertation including: childhood studies, comparative and international education, conflict and post-conflict studies, decolonial studies, human and critical geography. Additionally, border thinking will be situated according to geo-political and body locations – in Armenia, Azerbaijan,

and Turkey – as an attempt to unveil marginalized or silenced stories and experiences of crossing borders in hopes of creating more space for peaceful coexistence in the Caucasus. While most historical analyses of Armenian identity and borders focus on national narratives, this study aims to shift the current scholarship to focus on marginalized members of Armenian society, particularly, teachers who are both metaphorically and literally found along the borders of Armenia.

Through a decolonial approach, my dissertation aims to shift the focus from (post)colonial, (post)modern, "normative" research – such as national(istic) narratives – to border thinkers' memories and lived experiences from these histories and conflicts that result in (re)membering and (re)imagining inclusive, peaceful futurities. My dissertation seeks to focus on and empower the silenced and marginalized voices of border thinkers about these contested histories. Through a decolonial lens, I seek to dwell in the borderlands where border thinkers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey coexist and transgress borders through their pedagogical practices and classroom teaching. More importantly, a decolonial lens allows my research to be situated with respect to the geo-political and body political locations.

For the purposes of my dissertation, applying a border thinking theoretical framework is necessary and intends to go beyond critical, anti-racist, and social justice projects (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In other words, border thinking is not applied as an artistic proposition in my theoretical framework; rather it is recognizing the invisibilized dynamics of modernity and coloniality (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009) and allowing decolonization to take shape according to the local or contextualized needs (Tuck & Yang, 2012). Moreover, border thinking and decolonization do not have a standard approach or

measurement to justify their legitimation as it is a highly personal(ized) experience. While (re)thinking Armenian national borders and identities, my dissertation examines how teachers can begin to teach towards peaceful futures of coexistence in the Caucasus region. The first section of this chapter offers a brief overview of the history of border thinking in decolonial scholarship – how it evolved over time, and in the post-socialist spaces. This section also highlights the major concepts of border thinking from the literature that helped me think through my theoretical framework. I present this overview in order to ground my study in decolonial literature and to offer new ways of applying theoretical perspective to the Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey conflicts. In the second section, I apply these concepts to locate and define the geo-political and body political contexts of border thinkers from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey and how these map onto the Armenian borderlands. This section takes into account the work of those who have come before me, including political prisoners and martyrs, allowing my entry point in this journey to be less averse. In the third section, I examine border thinking through a multidisciplinary approach highlighting key concepts that inform my study. Finally, this chapter will conclude with a brief discussion of my theoretical and conceptual approaches, highlighting the intersections of national borders, identities, and landscapes and the strengths and limitations of orienting my dissertation with border thinking and a decolonial approach.

Background History of Border Thinking

The use of global imperialist language was initiated from Europe dividing the world into two distinct categories: civilized and modernized societies and under-developed societies or barbarians (Mignolo, 2013). This classification is rooted in the context of the European Renaissance of the Middle Ages when colonization of time and space was

constructed (Mignolo, 2013). It seems that the scholarship of theorizing decolonial thinking did not begin until after a series of events leading up to the 1950s, with the Bandung Conference in 1955 as a significant point of departure (Mignolo, 2013). Mignolo (2013) claims that at this point in history, several countries were already looking for a third way of being, doing, and thinking as forms of rejecting the dominant ways (i.e., colonialism, communism, capitalism, etc.). The Bandung Conference was an effort coordinated by Asian and African countries to take a united stance against racism and colonialism. Countries that participated in this conference included nearly all of Asia and "most of independent and nearly independent Africa" (Kahin, 1956, p. 1). The motivation of the conference, Kahin (1956) claims, was an act of protest "against the failure of the Western powers to consult with them and to share with them sufficiently in decisions affecting the countries of Asia…that they have the right to take a greater and more active part in such matters" (p. 4). Initiated by the Indonesian Government, the conference attendees shared the "common experience of previous enforced subservience to the West and that colonialism was as yet by no means dead" (p. 11). Specifically, they were gathered to discuss a wide range of problems related to "human rights and self-determination, dependent peoples and colonialism, promotion of world peace and cooperation, and economic and cultural cooperation among the Asian and African countries" (Kahin, 1956, p. 1). Altogether, the conference was a step forward in border thinking and enacting decolonial projects by Asian and African countries.

Mignolo's (2013) starting point for decoloniality and one of the major concepts from border thinking literature is seeking a third way of being or refusing to follow colonial ways of thinking and doing – as seen with the use of Latin or Western languages, new

epistemologies and ontologies, and new methods and theories. The classification is important as it informs but also takes into account where and how border thinkers dwell in their specific geo-political and body-political locations. Thus far, the type of people who choose border thinking are not only those who participated in the Bandung Conference from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, but also individuals residing in Western Europe and the US who have the "immigrant consciousness" (Mignolo, 2013). The need to take a border thinking approach enables agency and freedom from exterior forces and rejects subjugation to colonial or imperial projects.

The process of border thinking involves delinking and rejecting the territorial and imperial epistemology, which leads to the immigrant consciousness. Enacting immigrant consciousness requires a dual sense of awareness of colonialism and imperialism as well as the ability to move in and out of colonized spaces and ways of thinking. Here, Mignolo (2013) claims that an individual will either accept a level of inferiority for their inability to speak the privileged language, demonstrate their equal status, or choose to assimilate. Border thinking and border epistemology fall in the third category; it is assimilation, and acceptance of inferiority, with the mindfulness that one is playing a game that is not their own (Mignolo, 2013). While inheriting this game, border thinkers delink where an individual rejects territorial and imperial epistemology – including capitalism and communism, and other constructs that have organized and categorized individuals to be inferior to imperial powers (Mignolo, 2013). For these reasons, border thinkers and border epistemology enact an epistemology of disobedience, "to think and do decolonially, dwelling and thinking in the borders of local histories and confronting global designs" (p. 137). These behaviors and ways of thinking lead to contributing in powerfully alternative

ways benefiting research with pluri-versality, where multiple worlds can exist as a result of border thinking, or "shifting the geography of reason to geo- and body-politics of knowledge" (Mignolo & Tlostanova, 2006, p. 210).

Finally, Mignolo (2013) suggests that border thinking is based on "dewesternizing" and conducting decolonial projects that "argue from the exteriority of modern Westernization" (p. 146) and allow the creation of a 'new inside.' On the whole, the underlying major concept that informs the framework for decolonial projects and border thinking is recognizing the "hidden" or "darker" side of modernity, whereby the universality of capitalism was enabled not exclusively as an economic project, but also the global order with the political and epistemic basis (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009; Mignolo, 2007). Mignolo (2007) suggests that border thinking and decolonial projects emerge at "[the] inter-connections between the peripheries and the geo-political and body political location" (p.159). Applied to Armenia, the third way or decolonization is balancing relations with the West while simultaneously maintaining connections to the East or the region. To summarize briefly, border thinkers enact a third way of being or think exteriority when they delink from the colonial ways, simultaneously acknowledging but refusing to play "the game."

The next section considers how border thinkers must locate their borderlands to inform the geo-political and body political contexts within which they dwell and from where they speak. I am aware of the following scholars who extend decolonial scholarship and border thinking to the post-Soviet space, most notably Madina Tlostanova who examined how coloniality – compared to the Spanish and British colonial projects – emerged through the Soviet project of modernity as an epistemological framework

(Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2009) setting it apart from the other empires. But also, Tsolstanova bridges the post-Soviet and post-socialist spaces with decolonial and border thinking, as seen in a recent afterward chapter for a new, co-edited book by Iveta Silova, Zsuzsa Millei, and Nelli Piattoeva entitled, *Childhood and Schooling in (Post)Socialist Societies Memories of Everyday Life.* Silova et al.'s (2018) book, which compiled post-Soviet and post-socialist childhood memories, applied decolonial strategies as an approach to "delinking from the colonial knowledge production about child(hood) in (post) socialist spaces" (Millei et al., 2018, p. 231). These scholars and their contributions inspired me to (re)think the post-Soviet Armenian national borders and identities within education through a decolonial approach. It is through collecting and centering silenced stories and hidden memories of coexistence with their "Others" or enemies (Azerbaijanis and Turks) that I seek to help move forward the peace process in the Caucasus region.

Border Thinking + Geo-political and Body Political = Mapping the Armenian Borderlands

Border thinkers are individuals who dwell in between "other" ways of being, oftentimes rejecting distinct aspects of colonial influences. These individuals are found along the margins of societies – both spatially and conceptually – as their epistemological and ontological worldviews are shaped from a transmodern positionality that is (always) enroute to or (be)coming of modernity, but never fixed. This section aims to define the process of border thinking and examine border thinkers from their respective geo- and body-political locations. I will wrap up this section with a brief discussion of how border thinkers from Armenia, Turkey, and Azerbaijan map onto the current state of Armenian

borderlands. More importantly, this section aims to offer an alternative theoretical approach to scholarship on Armenian borders and identity by recognizing border thinkers of different geo-body political locations across time and space, thus shifting the way histories of the Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey conflicts have been documented.

Border thinkers and borderlands are concepts that have been significantly influenced by Gloria Anzaldúa, a scholar who wrote from and resided within the borderlands. For Anzaldúa (2012), the borderland space is inhabited by those who are "prohibited" and "forbidden," but also those who "cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the 'normal'" (p.25). Anzaldúa (2012) wrote from the US/Mexico border, where she identified the white race (and others who aligned with their ways) as having "power." However, her concept of the border can be applied in many different contexts (Anzaldúa, 2012). Border thinking can be carried into and across other in-between spaces, such as the global North/South or East/West dichotomies, but also counter narratives to gender, nationalism, racism, late capitalism, and classism. Dwelling, as a border thinker, requires a very keen awareness of what belongs within and outside of the borders but also, over time, the ability to develop ways to transgress the borders.

As noted earlier, border thinking does not accept the ideals of modernity and imperial domination but takes form as an 'other' way of being. Entering the borderlands calls for decolonial projects with an anti-capitalist and anti-communist option, which includes both of my geopolitical body spaces simultaneously yet independently from each other. Within the process of unlearning the coloniality of knowledge, Tlostanova & Mignolo (2012) suggest a move from the current postcolonial world toward the decolonial shift to enter other worlds, where possibilities of new futures and visions of education can

be reimagined. Therefore, to contextualize the geopolitical body and political context of my dissertation, it is important to consider that this research defies the “normal” confines of research. On the one hand, it takes into consideration time as a non-linear conception in which the past – whether Soviet or Ottoman – exists within the present moment. On the other hand, space also takes into account both the Soviet and Ottoman imperial powers but also becomes estranged with my geo-body context as a diasporan-Armenian, grand-daughter of a Genocide survivor.

Ancient historical conflicts begin on the Nagorno-Karabakh region, where both the countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan claim historical rights to the territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. The conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh erupted into war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1991 and ended with a ceasefire agreement in 1994. As a result of the outbreak of war, 20,000 people were killed and more than a million people lost their homes (DeWaal, 2010). When the Nagorno-Karabakh war erupted, the borders between Armenia and Turkey were closed. Negotiations to reopen the borders for Armenians have been blocked by the politics of memory and history regarding the Ottoman campaign of forced displacement and genocidal violence against the Armenian population in 1915. Applied to my dissertation, border thinkers recognize and operate outside of the colonial parameters and actively transgress and dissolve the borders in various different ways. While borders change over time and space, individuals' memories and experiences of the borders remain and will not always be measured according to the national border or dominant national narrative. For these reasons, studying memories allows us to go beyond the official historical narratives to understand how borders and identity were lived and understood by ordinary people.

Based on the legacy of these ancient historical conflicts, this study explores how educators from Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey enact border thinking through their influence both on curriculum and pedagogy, and by creating supportive learning environments in classrooms. The act of engaging in border thinking may be considered by some as an act of treason. For example, in present day Turkey, speaking out about the history of 1915 or seeking social justice for non-Turks is blasphemous. In present day Azerbaijan, publicizing solidarity, or relations with Armenians is treasonous. And in Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, interacting with these "others" would all be considered acts of treason. In respect to the geo- and body-political locations, border thinkers are allowed to cross-over whenever they are ready and as often as they need, because the process of decolonization is truly a unique process. Altogether, people on all sides of the borders face obstacles and risks within their communities when attempting to cross borders. In this section, I specifically address the above concerns and draw from several different disciplines in order to address significant components that impact the way border thinkers (re)act and dwell.

Border Thinking: A Multidisciplinary Approach

Through the schooling process children are positioned at the front of the nation-building projects and assigned the ultimate responsibility to be prepared to take over the future of the nation (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Silova & Palandjian, 2018). Within the field of education, John Dewey (1915) reminds us that learning and education are not merely the act of memorizing or reciting information, but that schools are representations of society, "a miniature community, an embryonic society" (p. 15). Building on Dewey's (1915) philosophy of school and society, this study uses an interdisciplinary approach to

consider how reconceptualizing borders can help us reimagine new education futures in hopes of inspiring "a spirit of social co-operation and community life" (p. 14). Bridging these ideals together, I seek to use comparative and international education as a framework to connect scholarship across borders and various disciplines. This framework centers the role of teachers and teacher agency as they navigate between policy/talk and policy action/implementation in their pedagogical practices.

For the purposes of border thinking, the following four disciplines and theoretical strands inform my dissertation particularly: conflict/post-conflict environments, social construction of childhood and the official curriculum, human and critical geography, and decolonial studies. In this section, I outline some of the important theoretical contributions from these disciplines to inform my dissertation's theoretical framework and continue to build on these areas with my border thinking approach. Specifically, these disciplines outline how knowledge (and education policy) moves from the national level, where educational policy is developed, to the school level and curriculum, where it is implemented by teachers in classrooms. Teachers are in between the national and school levels as they are responsible for interpreting and implementing policies within their classrooms.

First, the context of these environments – either a conflict or post-conflict settings – will demonstrate unique educational outcomes and particularly, the importance of official curriculum complemented by the role of teachers. Secondly, within the classroom experience, children develop their individual level of agency and sociospatial awareness much thanks to the pedagogical practices. Third, human and critical geography uses a multidisciplinary approach to examine how national borders and identities are theorized

and applied in geopolitical literature. Finally, decolonial studies enable us to see how teachers may enact their agency and defer to alternative pedagogical approaches within classrooms. Combined, these disciplines highlight the process of teachers enacting their agency and the influence of official knowledge and curriculum in shaping national identities.

Conflict and Post-Conflict Studies

Education is seen as a powerful resource within the context of armed conflict, transition, and post-conflict reconstruction, and more generally in situations of fragility (Davies & Talbot 2008; UNICEF, 2011). According to the Save the Children's *Rewrite the Future campaign*, "of the 37 full peace agreements signed between 1989 and 2005 that are publicly available, 11 make no mention of education at all" (UNICEF, 2011, p. 26). Within this context, UNICEF (2011) argues that efforts to use education to support conflict and post-conflict spaces should not be stereotyped and reduced to peace education alone, but should rather encompass the broader role of education and reflect the specific context of the conflict. A gap in the literature suggests the need to conduct country- or conflict-specific case studies to assess the situation more closely, while doing so at different stages of the conflict and ensuring education is conflict sensitive (Smith, 2005; Barakat, Connolly, Hardman, & Sundaram, 2013). Moreover, Rappleye & Paulson (2007) express concern about transferring educational policies in conflict settings where *local contexts matter*. In theorizing about different educational policy models, Rappleye & Paulson (2007) question the transfer process: "how are ideas external to the original conflict transferred into it by the international community?" (p. 255). While it is important to learn from the past and other experiences, Rappleye & Paulson (2007) question the transfer model approach to

conflict education. Finally, Rappleye & Paulson (2007) call upon scholars in the field of comparative education to rethink these models and approaches in hopes of inspiring more critical approaches for future scholarship. Combined, the implications from these studies influenced my dissertation in several ways. First, there is a need to move away from grouping all of the post-conflict and conflict spaces. The context of each post-conflict and conflict environment are unique based on the political, social, economic and cultural aspects which cannot be not carried over. Secondly, the idea of *local context matters* aligns strongly with my approach to the dissertation research. Notably, while I refer to examples of other post-conflict and conflict histories – Northern Ireland, Palestine-Israel, Turkish-Cypriot-Greek Cypriot – I understand that the dynamics of these conflicts have different historical contexts and experiences that offer lessons to be learned but not necessarily to be applied. Finally, I do not seek to treat the conflicts of the region as *one* universal conflict. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan must be approached significantly differently compared to the conflict between Armenia and Turkey.

In the field of conflict and post-conflict studies, scholars consider the need to develop conflict-sensitive approaches to offer a variety of different entry points for education to be supportive – from peaceful environments to times of violence or the reconstruction phase (Smith, 2005). Particularly important is to consider the content of the curriculum "carries values with the potential to communicate implicit and explicit political messages" (Smith, 2005, p. 380). According to Smith (2005) there are several areas of concern in terms of conflict and post conflict education in the twenty-first century. Some of the examples Smith (2005) refers to include: the role of history curriculum, which may be used to promote or revise the past and the role of teachers and teacher education, which

accounts for their role in “mediating the curriculum and the values it conveys” (p. 381). Notably, Smith (2005) also assesses that when a teacher is also a member of the community in conflict, the teacher may “find it difficult to challenge the values of their own community without becoming emotionally involved in the issues” (p. 382). Applied to my dissertation, teachers need to revisit the national curriculum to understand ways that currently promote animosity or promote the conflict and look for ways to promote dialogue and peaceful futures together.

Other scholars claim that interventions by international development agencies are not sufficient in rebuilding societies as they continue to neglect the role of education and “listening to the least heard” voices of teachers, parents, students, and school administrators (Weinstein, Warshauer-Freedman, and Hughson, 2007). Weinstein et al. (2017) focused on a study on four countries that experienced genocidal violence and ethnic cleansing – in Croatia, the UN-administered province of Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Rwanda. Weinstein et al. (2007) claim the current development interventions – UNESCO EFA (1990) and Dakar Framework for Action (2000) – are not sufficient tools and note: “rarely heard are the voices of those most affected by these wars and, further, that little attention is paid to the integration of education reform into the overall process of societal development” (p. 42). In their criticism, Weinstein et al. (2007) argue that while millions of dollars are spent on reconstruction of buildings and textbooks, “there is little coherence to the process over the long term and, further, that school policy and curricular changes are frequently devised in a decontextualized manner” (p. 43). Altogether, policymakers are often relied upon for determining the progress of educational initiatives in these contexts, however, least heard, or visible are the voices of teachers and

administrators (Smith, 2005; Weinstein, et al, 2007). For my dissertation I aim to reverse the top-down approach (i.e., an approach that normally focuses on policymakers-teachers/administrators) to examine the teachers' agency and role in building more peaceful futures. I want to address the gap by focusing on teachers who are closely affected by the conflicts, particularly teachers in communities along the borders and closest to the conflict zones. Finally, these findings have implications for my dissertation in that relevant interventions in the education area should not only take into account the role of teachers, but also be contextualized accordingly.

Social Construction of Childhood and Official Curriculum

Scholarship in curriculum studies reveals that there are multiple and even competing curriculums in a classroom. Considering what is taught in schools, Apple & King (1977) analyze the long-held debate of what is taught in school as mindlessness (Silberman, 1970 as cited in Apple & King, 1977, p. 341). Schooling, Apple & King (1977) argue, is the design of institutions with social and economic ideologies engineered by curriculists. Specifically, Apple & King (1977) claim, the "knowledge (both overt and covert kinds) one finds within school settings imply notions of power and of economic resources and control" (p. 343). Through a close analysis of 'meaning and control in schools', Apple & King (1977) claim that the idea of a "hidden curriculum" is in fact not hidden at all. "Educational knowledge is a study in ideology" which Apple & King (1977) refer to as the knowledge distributed through schools designed to promote "institutional arrangements in society" (p. 342). Therefore, what counts as knowledge and by who is not a question left to be unscrutinized, as Apple & King (1977) repeatedly reiterate and demonstrate in their analysis.

Moving from what is taught in schools to what counts as "official curriculum", Apple (1980) builds on his previous study and argues that schools are economically and politically structured to reproduce and maintain social inequalities. Apple (1980) claims that ideologies embedded in the curriculum are not politically neutral and aim to reproduce educational, economic, and cultural reproduction. Moreover, Apple (1980) examines the way school has been organized over the years, allowing for cultural reproduction to continue and become accepted in the norms of schooling. In his findings, Apple (1980) calls upon scholars to re-examine the traditional way of schooling for alternative pedagogical approaches. Applied to my dissertation, how does the official knowledge and curriculum taught in Armenian schools define national borders and identities? How do textbooks deliver this content compare to teachers' pedagogical practices? If teachers cross the boundary of the official curriculum, what does this look like within the context of their classroom? Official knowledge and curriculum play an important role in determining *what information* is taught, however, teachers' agency determines *how* this information will be delivered within the classroom.

Current history lessons and textbook studies underscore the need to examine closely the role of school textbooks to understand the bordering process and national identity. In an analysis of Armenian history textbooks, Zolyan (2016) referred to the climate in which historians experienced several challenges in writing complicated and complex history including the influence of Soviet historiography and nationalistic discourse. For example, Zolyan's (2016) analysis referred to themes such as periods of time where Turks were absent but also referenced in the context of the 1915 Genocide. Similar themes were also noted in the Akpinar et al.'s (2017) analysis, which offered a parallel critique illustrating

the construction of the "other" or "enemy" and how these narratives permeate through the textbooks.

In addition to history and civic textbooks, post-Soviet early literacy textbooks teach national identities in particular ways. Of interest is the way in which post-Soviet countries (re)define or legitimize national identity in the nation building process (Silova, Mead, & Palandjian, 2013). Primarily, post-Soviet nations are concerned with demonstrating the homeland for its *rootedness* to a space or consistency over time (Silova et al., 2013; Palandjian, 2012). Such rootedness refers to the metaphorical and literal connection of homeland within nature and is expressed through idioms such as "blood" and "soil" (Malki 1992; Silova et al., 2014). Silova et al. (2014) also refer to the notion of homeland as being "cemented" with the national language as "within the national borders, real or imagined" (p. 121). Therefore, homeland in the post-Soviet context encompasses national identity, language, borders, and landscapes, which may change over time and be celebrated or maintained over generations (Silova et al., 2014). Texts and images in post-Soviet Armenian, Latvian, and Ukrainian early literacy textbooks present the national identity as all-encompassing of the primordial or pre-modern era symbols and images with disruptions by modern or postmodern associations (Silova et al., 2014). For example, in an Armenian literacy book published in 2010, a lesson about rules for crossing streets includes an image of Armenian children wearing backpacks in a crosswalk of an urban space, with modern high rise buildings and the majestic Mount Ararat as the central and dominant focal point of the image peering in between the buildings (Sargsyan, 2010/2018, p. 28).

Within the nation-building process, women have an important role to play, illustrated in post-Soviet early literacy textbooks (Palandjian, Silova, Mun &

Zholdoshalieva (2018). In a comparative analysis of Armenia, Latvia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan, early literacy textbooks indicate that *nationalism is gendered,* presenting women as unqualified and within private spaces occupied as the reproducers, caretakers, and nurturers of the nation (Palandjian et al., 2018). Compared to women, men are depicted within the public space as the nation builders, either by their physical roles in construction sites or by their appearance in business suits representing official or government responsibilities (Palandjian et al., 2018). However, modern gender dynamics also disrupt early literacy textbooks in which women were represented as Goddesses which "undermines traditional gender hierarchies" (Palandjian et al., 2018, p. 183). In many ways, textbooks presented official knowledge through complex messages of national identity and gender, offering important insights for my upcoming dissertation.

Thus far, early literacy textbooks reflect the contemporary period and offer insights into the nation-building process and reshaping of the national identity for postmodern Armenia. Unlike the former textbooks, our latest study examined Soviet early literacy textbooks and the role of children and education in empire-building (Silova & Palandjian, 2018). This study examined the history of Soviet education and compared the uneven experiences of Armenia, Latvia, Ukraine and Russia. Moreover, Silova & Palandjian (2018) analyzed how Soviet childhood was socialized across political, temporal, and sociospatial literacies. Altogether, this study considered how childhood socialization patterns and practices contributed to the building of the empire but also how the experiences varied across the Soviet space (see Silova & Palandjian, 2018). Based on this analysis, I realized that the sample of *aybenarans* used in this analysis did not include messages or images of diverse people, which I thought to be strange considering the Soviet

Friendship of All People[2] campaign. The sample I had used in that analysis dated between the late 1980s and early 1990s. Therefore, one may interpret that coexistence shifted earlier on.

For these reasons, I expanded the scope of textbooks to examine when the shift from the Soviet Friendship of All People occurred and how this was illustrated in texts and images. I built out this scope by locating earlier literacy textbooks across Armenia and through the archives of the Ministry of Education & Science. Here, my dissertation aims to fill the gap on how this concept was understood prior to the 1980s-1990s and identify patterns or shifts in coexistence through the official curriculum. Equally, if not more important than textbooks, are the teachers who have significant influence in terms of how lessons are taught and discussed in classrooms. The next section considers the role of teachers – do teachers always stick strictly to the textbooks? Or, do teachers reconceptualize or reinterpret the content of these textbooks? The role of teachers is perhaps one of the most crucial to the schooling process but are often considered the least important.

The Role of Teachers

Parallel to textbook and curriculum analyses, children's socialization is curated through the teacher's pedagogical practices and approaches within the classroom space. When conducting studies about teachers, often the emphasis is on providing quality teaching (Khatchatryan, Petrosyan, and Terzyan, 2013) and performing on national and

[2] The Friendship of All People was a campaign that aimed to promote unity across different ethnicities of the Soviet republics and, "united by Russian language and a sense of Soviet patriotism, manifesting in such political slogans as 'friendship of all people,' 'interethnic equalization,' and 'internationalism'(Silova & Palandjian, 2018, p. 150).

international assessments (UNESCO, 2014). Few scholars focused on conflict and post-conflict spaces to examine the role of teachers (Baraka et. al, 2013; Paulson & Rappleye 2007). Yet, teachers are responsible for covering the official curriculum and transmitting official knowledge. In most cases, the lesson scripts are prepared for teachers to simply read aloud or as Apple (2009) claims, "everything a teacher was to deal with was provided and prespecified" (p. 201). However, there are also some teachers who unofficially may go off-script and use their own methods in delivering their lessons. In this section, I highlight how teachers can use alternative delivery methods for their pedagogical practices available to them from decolonial studies. These methods can be applied to a range of different lessons including alternative approaches to teaching history.

In one study, Zembylas (2005) shifted his focus from teachers as "information-processing models" to studying teachers' emotions. Although it is the least encouraged to talk about or discuss in general, Zembylas (2005) claims it is one of the most important aspects for teachers to study. "Teacher knowledge" is a concept Zembylas (2008) refers to that encompasses teachers' values, beliefs, and emotions which "come into play as teachers make decisions, act and reflect on the different purposes, methods and meanings of teaching" (p. 467). Specifically, Zembylas (2005) argues that studying teachers' emotions is critical because "teaching is not just a technical enterprise but is inextricably linked to teachers' personal lives" (p. 468; see also Nia 1989, 1993, and 1996). Another important factor to consider is the role of the teacher in relation to the conflict, as they may "find it difficult to challenge the values of their own community without becoming emotionally involved" (Smith, 2005, p. 382). Some teachers may relatively be inexperienced in being

able to assist and support their students when the conflict is socially or politically too close to their community values (Smith, 2005).

To challenge issues within and outside the community, Miner (2013) offers a case study based on a course he developed at Michigan State University entitled, "Art as Social Justice." In this class, Miner (2013) describes his teaching as "pedagogical tactics to challenge hegemonic social relations, not only in the classroom, but outside it as well" (p. 2). Using art, Miner (2013) assigns literature focused on contexts about radicalism through Smith's (2012) twenty-five indigenous projects or through leaders that promoted social change such as the Zapatistas. As an instructor, Miner (2013) understands his responsibility or role through "facilitating the classroom and studio as a collaborative and prefigurative environment, artmaking functions to both help initiate radical change in addition to actually operating as the change itself" (p. 13). However, Miner (2013) also recognizes the limitations set by institutions yet, he argues, "As teachers... we may be unable to control the parameters of the institution, yet we may nonetheless imagine the classroom as the utopic space we want it to be" (p. 13). Through interdisciplinary approaches, Miner (2013) is an example of how teaching can be reconceptualized and reinterpreted and art offers an important space for students to identify and demonstrate their understandings.

Teachers not only set up the parameters of their classrooms with their pedagogical approaches, but they also can decide what lessons to teach and skip. In a study on how history textbooks teach multiculturalism in Macedonia, Petroska-Beshka & Kenig (2017) claim that when teachers taught in the Macedonian language, "the content related to Albanian people is ignored" (p. 204). The same is approached in the inverse or the Albanian language history (Petroska-Beshka & Kenig, 2017). Through a mono-ethnic approach to

history, students would learn about their individual ethnicity and leave out the Serbs and Turks who are considered their "enemy" or "common conqueror" (Petroska-Beshka & Kenig, 2017). These omittances would occur particularly "in lessons on the Ottoman period and on the wars waged in the region during the early twentieth century" (Petroska-Beshka & Kenig, 2017, p. 241). Some of the criticism from this approach results in lack of awareness of shared historical coexistence but also fixed "notions of psychological boundaries in the minds of students, as they separate entirely their own ethnicity from that of others" (Petroska-Beshka & Kenig, 2017, p. 241). These lessons result in promoting a narrow understanding of who belongs to Macedonia and Albania (Petroska-Beshka & Kenig, 2017). The authors of this study recommend using a genuine approach to multiculturalism for teaching history in order to create critical learning opportunities.

In another study, *Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation*, Simpson (2014) describes the indigenous approach to knowledge and pedagogy where the intellectual traditions are understood from and through the land or "from the roots up" (p. 9). This learning approach takes into account the full process – not just extraction, reappropriation, or reproduction. Unlike the national educational curriculum, the Nishnaabeg children learn from various daily modalities taking into account the spiritual, inter-relational, compassion, and other ways of being as part of the practice needed to develop in order to graduate (Simpson, 2014). Unlike the western approach to knowledge and data, Nishnaabeg children are taught the following: "Individuals carry the responsibility for generating meaning within their own lives – they carry the responsibility for engaging their minds, bodies and spirits in a practice of generating meaning" (Simpson, 2014, p. 11). By requiring individuals to be responsible for

knowledge production, it creates a sense of openness and allows diverse ways of knowing and learning, but also "engag[es] in a way of living that generates a close, personal relationship with our ancestors and relations in the spirit world through ceremony, dreams, visions, and stories" (Simpson, 2014, p. 12). Here, the concept of interconnectedness allows individuals across divides to build meaning together or act in *sympoiesis*. Such a *sympoiesis* can serve an important role in areas where individuals experienced destruction in their homeland and unfold new ways of connection with the land and being respectful of the past. But also, holding individuals accountable for their knowledge production by focusing on generating meaning provides a radically different approach that may shift the way we view each other, from neighbors across borders, to members of local communities. And finally, relying on relationships with ancestors or intergenerational knowledge – including the spiritual world – can create meaningful learning possibilities. Applied to my dissertation, how can individuals across borders develop a sense of connection through mutually shared spaces of memories with the lands and yet maintain respect for each other? By viewing land as pedagogy, individuals develop responsibility to protect these spaces based on mutual sense of respect.

Childhood Studies

Today, the ongoing disputes over borders positions children's bodies in vulnerable situations. Children learn their identities in relation to these border constructs in both material and non-material ways, at times challenging the accepted and assumed norms of their identity, while simultaneously pushing the boundaries of their agency whenever and wherever possible (Christou & Spyrou, 2014; Grinberg, 2014; McKnight & Leonard, 2014). In this section, I highlight how children understand agency through their

socialization practices that are influenced by histories, borders, landscapes, memories, and identities. The interplay of these key concepts in childhood socialization are articulated in different ways where bordering practices in transition remain contentious.

Children are socialized through the nonhuman and human interactions taking place within their geosocial lives (Kallio, 2018). In a recent study, Kallio (2018) proposed a methodological approach – through social, political and spatialities – to understanding how people learn about socialization within their environments or through topological *polis*. Kallio (2018) defines geosocialities as "interaction with natural, material, and immaterial elements, as part of the ongoing constellation of lived realities that people experience and enact diversely" (p. 3). Of importance to her research, Kallio (2018) asks, "How can we relate geopolitical and geoeconomic understandings, always biased, with other geosocial knowledges without emphasizing the already existing power relations that condition our lives?" (p. 24). Kallio (2018) continues to build on this theory and methodological approach to better understand children's relationships with environments and how their political agencies are socialized and cultivated in their communities and daily lives.

Beyond the notion of developing agency, children in conflict and post-conflict settings offer insights as they enact their agency with borders and identities on a daily basis. I selected the following childhood studies to draw upon theoretical practices applied from border thinking in the following contexts: Jews and Muslims of Morocco, Catholics and Protestants of Northern Ireland, Greek and Turkish Cypriots in Cyprus, and Jews and Palestinians in the contested territory. While there are similar concepts influencing children's socialization, the differences remain in how the border practices are experienced in various contexts either temporally or spatially. To be clear, I do not suggest that

childhood socialization is a universal process across these studies, but that their border practices can contribute to informing the various ways in which border thinkers make sense of their experiences. Although I do not intend to analyze children, I felt the need to examine some of the childhood literature to understand the effects of official knowledge and curriculum but also the role of teachers on children's learning and the process of their socialization to the national border and identity.

In 1974 the Green Line divided Cyprus between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities, which is not recognized externally but observed internally (Christou & Spyrou, 2014). Christou & Spyrou's (2014) conducted a study to examine children who have at least once crossed the Green Line and created a space for children to share their perspective of the experience when crossing over. In this study, children from both sides were asked to draw maps and pictures to illustrate the crossover experience and provided descriptions. Christou & Spyrou's (2014) analysis allows readers to trace children along and across the border. By highlighting children's narratives and images, Christou & Spyrou (2014) remind scholars to shift the focus to children or take a "bottom-up approach to border studies". (p. 136)

In a study on Palestinian children, Grinberg (2014) traces children as they cross over to the Occupied Palestinian territories (OPt) by Israel. Children of the Junction (CotJ), are children who cross the boundary between the OPt and Israel on a daily basis to "peddle various goods, beg for money, clean windshields or alternate between all three" (Grinberg, 2014, p. 149). Palestinian children's bodies cross legal and cultural boundaries daily as they are seen as destabilizing the official authorities (Grinberg, 2014). In his ethnographic study, Grinberg (2014) analyzed how the occupation through spatial control and

manipulation affected Palestinian children's particularly in the shift from childhood to adulthood. Specifically, Grinberg (2014) analyzed two Israeli representations of the CoTJ and compared their insights with his ethnographic observations. As a result of this study, Grinberg (2014) highlights how Palestinian children's lives are organized based on the geopolitical separation and violence that continues to limit their mobility and how these realities influence their upbringing. Such studies are important to keep in mind when considering how children growing up in bordering spaces are the most vulnerable within conflict environments and warrant further support and attention.

Between 1968-1998, the conflict between Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland resulted in segregation and polarization. McKnight & Leonard (2014) conduct a study in Belfast, a "post-conflict city" to examine young people's understanding of belonging and their daily practices ten years after the conflict. Catholic and Protestant children living in the border landscape participated in a study that used mainly qualitative methods including questionnaires, focus groups, photo prompts and several others to understand children's daily lifestyles or perceptions (McKnight & Leonard, 2014). One of the findings from their study indicated that although Belfast became a post-conflict city, the conflict still feels very real and cannot simply drop "contested memories, histories, cultures, practices and processes that fuelled/fuels violence" (McKnight & Leonard, 2014, p. 176). One of the important take-aways from this study is to ensure that policy agendas include diverse voices - not just policy makers - to take into account how young people are implicated in these types of transitional spaces (McKnight & Leonard, 2014).

Human and Critical Geography

From a traditional approach, boundaries represent the intersection of politics and geography, emphasized by lines to demarcate the territory of the modern nation state (Newman & Paasi, 1998). As a result of these boundaries, identities are formed based on the way individuals interrelate within as well as relations with identities from outside these lines (Newman & Paasi, 1998; Paasi 2008). Within this context, political identity is informed by borders in three different ways: identities are inherently territorial, group-formed and perpetuated, and finally, define who belongs in/outside of the borders (Agnew, 2008; Paasi 2008). More recently, scholars are questioning the relationship of borders and identities with regards to the ongoing conflicts, displacements, and migrations (Newman & Paasi, 1998; Agnew, 2008). In the field of political and critical geography, many scholars including Newman & Paasi (1998) do not identify theories nor a concrete definition of boundaries. Instead, Newman & Paasi (1998) call on the need to theorize from a diverse range of disciplines to conceptualize boundaries and identities.

From a post-modern approach, Newman & Paasi (1998) offer a multidisciplinary and multidimensional framework, which highlights the influence of boundaries and landscapes in the social construction of identity. On one hand, boundaries, if they exist, serve as a line of communication, national security, and identity (Newman & Paasi, 1998). These lines layout spaces of social and cultural symbols some with contested meanings but also contested in defining where lines or boundaries of the state or territory ends and begins. On the other hand, boundaries construct and define social distinctions which are rooted, "deep symbolic, cultural, historical, and religious, often contested, meanings for social communities" (Newman & Paasi, 1998, p. 187). For this reason, Newman & Paasi (1998)

claim that boundary studies require a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding representations and reproduction of national identity including the role of education.

Extending Newman & Paasi's work, Silova, Mead, & Palandjian (2014) bridge the field of comparative and international education by examining the pedagogy of space and the national sociospatial consciousness across post-Soviet Armenia, Latvia, and Ukraine. *Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks* explores how the nation-building process of the 1990s is more than the remapping of the physical space for cartography or government officials (Silova et al., 2014). It involves a socio spatial consciousness that is remapped to a particular association of *context* and *text*. The experience of the post-Soviet nations implicates how education was one of many different mediums enacted to articulate the social and cultural constructions of nationhood (Silova et al., 2014; see also Gellner 2006).

Landscape, boundaries/borders, and homeland are the pedagogical constructs that are not all of the constructs but the three major ones which "(re)produce particular understandings of space as a social, cultural, and political field" (p. 107). For instance, landscapes are defined through descriptions and images of ways in which people identify themselves and focus on what is both *inside* and *outside* of contested national borders (Silova et al., 2014). Boundaries and borders depict the imaginary lines of legal spaces, which simultaneously reinforce an outside or what is not included (Silova et al., 2014). Last but not least, homeland plays an important role in articulating the generational history and relationships between people and land, which plays an important role in the nation-building process (Silova et al., 2014). Altogether, *Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks* allows me to return

to a work-in-progress I initiated in 2012 in ways that allow my dissertation to build on and expand primarily on the context of the Caucasus.

On a personal level, *Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks* was an important opportunity for me to revisit memories of my childhood – how I came to learn my Armenian national identity and what I was taught about *being* Armenian. As I flipped through the pages of *aybenarans* (alphabet textbooks), I recalled my own recitals and performances of "I love you Armenian tongue/language." However, at that point in time and space, I re-read and analyzed familiar texts from a critical discourse analysis lens, which allowed me to begin my process of unlearning what I had learned. There are some parts of that study that feel incomplete and I find my dissertation lends an important opportunity to expand on where I had left off with *Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks*. Specifically, I incorporated a wider range of textbooks but also, and perhaps more importantly, textbook analysis brings the official curriculum and knowledge into discussion with memories and pedagogies of the past and future.

Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks is an important study and contribution to understanding more about the post-Soviet education transformation processes. With independence, post-Soviet nations required redefining national borders and identities. Former Soviet nations' borders were "transformed" to the nation-state (Silova et al., 2014, p. 105), which ushered in various implications depending on the conflicts or issues that had not been resolved. *Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks* aimed to expand Newman and Paasi's (1998) theoretical framing to

suggest that the learning constructs are plural *pedagogies,* implying that they are multiple, "Never finalized and fixed, these pedagogies are constantly shifting" (p. 106). Moreover, *Pedagogies of Space: (Re)Mapping National Territories, Borders, and Identities in Post-Soviet Textbooks* was meant to re-read the imagined national spaces based on the national(istic) narratives and discourses inscribed in children's literacy books known to "cleave quite closely to hegemonic narratives" (Silova et al., 2014, p. 109).

The role of education in the nation-building process can be examined from "school textbooks, atlases, poems, paintings, and posters," which continues to serve an important role, "to make space incontestable inasmuch as they provide an authoritative 'reading' of social norms, values, and symbols attached to it" (Silova et al., 2014, p. 194; see also Newman & Paasi, 1998). This study is particularly important with regards to the shifting geo-political environment of the Caucasus, where governments on all sides of the border communicate these messages of preparing people for more peace through resources available within the schooling environment (See Kucera, 2019).

Soviet nationality applied a "science" to national identities which grouped people according to ethnic characteristics and were "conveniently sequestered into their own physical spaces – territories drawn on maps, ostensibly representing homogeneous ethnorepublics" (Silova et al., 2014, p. 105). Considering the history of coexistence, the Soviet space demonstrated that multifaceted identities lived together but were not reflected with the official borders (Silova et al., 2014). These multifaceted identities, to my knowledge, have not been written about extensively. Up until recently, the Governments of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey have made (and continue to make) public statements in the mainstream media. Reflecting on recent public television shows and other sources,

media analysts highlight the messages of coexistence with the "others" (Mejlumyan, 2019; Kucera, 2019). Such a deviation from current "national(istic)", war and enemy messages, in my view, call upon border thinkers to inform this process of transforming narratives towards (re)building peace. The opportunity to return to these memories of coexistence may serve as an important reminder that although borders are real, they can disappear and allow individuals to rehumanize and reconnect in many ways. While coexistence may resemble the promotion of a neoliberal market-economy and support development, I believe that there once was and still can be more beyond such a transactional relationship to coexistence and rehumanization.

Conclusion: Orienting to Decolonial Studies - Strengths and Limits of Border Thinking

Thus far, recent scholarship from childhood studies, border studies, critical and political geography, decolonial literature, history, and education highlight important ways that help frame my research plans. In the field of critical geography and history, the question of whether borders are disappearing remains clear: borders continue to enact and reinforce power relations defining and dividing who or what is in and out (Newman & Paasi, 1998; Hakli & Kallio, 2018; Brambilla et al, 2015). Decolonial methodology guides my research and questions to seek ways to (re)claim the past and future, record testimonies, and share people's stories (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012; Smith, 2012, Silova et al., 2018). Childhood studies provide examples of ways in which education has shaped and defined these complex questions of national identity and boundaries through a variety of different strategies (Silova et al., 2018; Mead & Silova, 2013). The conflict and post-conflict examples of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots or the Palestinian and Israeli conflict

provide insights into how children have experienced these complex moments and how the education space allows rethinking of these historical conflicts, eventually centering humanity and human relations as the ultimate goal (Christou, M. & Spyrou, S., 2014; Griberg, 2014). History educators in Armenia and Turkey are currently working through these issues by developing lesson plans and educational materials to support educators in the teaching process (see Akpinar et al, 2016). Combined, the scholarship emphasizes that children have a sense of agency in various degrees depending on the context. Therefore, how can Armenian education provide a supporting role to rethink the current narratives and create spaces for new voices and interpretations? This research aims to capture moments and different phases of enacting agency and ways in which education can take from these lessons new ways of rethinking Armenian national identities and borders.

To my knowledge, there has not been a study that uses a decolonial lens to analyze the Armenian national identity and borders, Armenia-Turkey relations, and the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Today, one can find many publications by historians, government officials, political scientists, and many others from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey, and respective Diasporans who published (and continue to) about the contested histories of borders and identities in the Caucasus – many with a victory-loser or enemy-hate approach. However, the silenced and marginalized stories are the harder ones to locate – either due to language, geographic location, or political reasons. And yet, Armenia-Turkey borders remain closed and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has not been peacefully settled yet. Perhaps the voices of border thinkers who have been missing all along may provide better insights and ways to guide us in rethinking borders, identities, and education.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY: APPLYING CRITICAL EDUCATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHY

The primary methodology of research in this dissertation is first-person, ethnographic approach. The purpose of this ethnography is to understand how border thinkers can contribute to reimagining education futures. The purpose of my dissertation is to bring together and empower the border thinkers of Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkey within one space. A decolonial approach allows these border thinkers to come together – especially educators – to re-evaluate how national borders and identities are learned and taught. With Armenia's decolonial turn particularly, I see a need now more than ever to (re)think and (re)imagine peaceful futurities. If the borders between Armenia and Turkey reopened tomorrow, how would our educators be able to explain or discuss this within their classrooms? And, it would not be idealistic to also question if the NKR war ended tomorrow, how would children on all sides of the borders – Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Turkey – understand their neighbors? Would educators on all sides of the borders be prepared to move beyond the (post)colonial narratives? Who would develop new narratives and how would these narratives enter Armenian classrooms, textbooks, and other spaces? In my approach, I sought to unravel the uncertainty of the future by revisiting past memories and current ways of teaching. These are contours that my dissertation aims to address, while supporting border thinkers from all sides of the borders. In the spirit of border thinking, I defer to the last lines from Hrant Dink's essay: "And we, those who feel the responsibility, must not allow them and not leave the writing of these pages in the monopoly of those who will fill them up in the same manner as the past" (Agos, 2005).

For this dissertation, I chose a critical educational ethnography as the most appropriate approach to understand the contexts of border thinkers from a holistic perspective, moving beyond the traditional attributes of ethnography. A critical approach to ethnography calls for the researcher to situate their study beyond the context of the analytic categories so as "to highlight their ideological aspects and the interests that benefit from the maintenance of current definitions" (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). In educational research, critical educational ethnography served as a "merger between critical ethnography and ethnography in response to conducting empirical research in an unjust world" (Barton, 2001, p. 906). For these reasons, Lawrence Angus (1986) claims the critical approach to educational ethnography is the preferred method in part due to the ideological components and school dynamics. According to Angus (1986), the critical approach to educational ethnography is important for two reasons: (1) the relationship between theory and data and (2) the organization of social structures and relationships and the resulting tensions as a result of their interactions. Within this context, Angus (1986) argues the interpretivist approach of knowledge production is the 'appropriate way' over the positivist approach that "produces volumes of statistical data but does not question the social circumstances out of which such data emerge" (p. 59). Some advantages of the interpretivist position include: (1) locating the researcher alongside participants and sharing experience, (2) commonality between interpretivist and "liberal democratic approach to freedom and democracy", and (3) understanding meaning construction from a micro level but researchers' structure on the macro level. (Angus, 1986, p. 64) Applied to my dissertation, the post-conflict and post-socialist environments include a deep history

and cultural values that require a critical approach to developing the multilayered issue of national identity and borders in education.

Applying a critical educational ethnographic approach, I used a variety of methods to examine the school policies, culture, and environment. My research activities included a collection of oral histories, interviews, textbook analyses, and participant observations over an extended period of time. I focused on understanding the contexts and processes in which educational policies are passed onto teachers from which teachers (re)interpret the policies through their personal lens. I examined a range of pedagogical approaches that are produced as a result of this process within the contemporary context of the geopolitical environment of the Caucasus. These methods include oral histories, classroom observations, textbook analyses, and school field trips where educational policies are implemented and often reinterpreted across spaces and times. Throughout my fieldwork experience, I approached all of my activities from the lens of my study, in other words, Wolcott's (2005) definition of fieldwork resonated as I "immersed personally in the ongoing social activities of some individual or group for the purposes of research" (p. 58).

Aligned with Levinson & Sutton (2001), my study moves away from the official policy narratives to examine bottom-up approaches specifically to seek out alternative narratives or "unofficial and occasionally spontaneous normative guidelines developed in diverse spaces" (p. 2). My research activities were designed to "*see*" with and through teachers' memories of coexistence and experiences of crossing borders – "a practice of cultural interpretation that attempts to reconstruct the cultural logic, the embedded meanings, of discourses, institutions, and actions (cf. Wright, 1994)" (Levinson & Sutton, 2001, p. 4). These unofficial narratives provide a more in-depth approach to understanding

how educational policies are reinterpreted or resisted by teachers and practiced in Armenian schools today. Combined, Levinson & Sutton's (2001) understanding of policy analysis resonates with the goal of my study to foreground the voices of the teachers who are usually excluded from official policy making decisions. By "seeing" and, even at times living with the teachers, my dissertation aims to shift from the official policy narratives towards understanding how teachers reinterpret these policies through their daily pedagogical practices.

Throughout the duration of my project (between June 2019-March 2020), I was primarily based in Yerevan where I collected data on an ongoing basis and traveled to Shirak and Tavush regions and stayed at each site for an extended period of time. I selected Yerevan, Tavush, Shirak, and Syunik as the focus of my study for their geopolitical location with the bordering "others," but also for their unique local contexts. For example, the capital Yerevan allowed me to reflect on the narratives circulating closest to government officials. The Shirak region, bordering Turkey, allowed me to examine the narratives of "closed" borders with Turkey. Finally, Tavush is a region known for the daily reports of cross-border violations and shootings with Azerbaijani citizens. My study was approved by the RoA MoESCS and I was granted open access to interviewing teachers in Shirak, Tavush, and Yerevan. In each region, I coordinated with several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to identify teachers who participated in prior educational projects or activities, and used these contacts to get connected with principals, teachers, and school communities. Throughout the project, as participants learned about my research and developed a sense of trust, they would often suggest their friends or colleagues to participate in my research. All participants were given the option not to participate or

withdraw from research at any time, as per the Arizona State University (ASU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol.

Insider + Outsider: How I Navigated Each Fieldwork Site

Within each fieldsite, my living arrangements varied and impacted my data collection experience. Wolcott (2005) raises the question of “how intimate is intimate” referring to the depth of the researcher’s knowledge on the given research topic and the participants of the study. In my study, the level of intimacy varied depending on the specific fieldsite location and community dynamics. In some school communities, the relationship ended with the end-of-day school bell rang, while in other communities, the relationship extended with some teachers to where I spent time outside of the school and work hours as well as living with them. While these relationships varied, I believe teachers who chose to have a close level of intimacy did so due to their personal interest and level of trust with me. For these reasons, I believe the depth of knowledge I gained from these fieldsite communities is due to the strength of the relationships I built with the participants.

Beginning with my first fieldsite visit to the Shirak region of Armenia, there were no lodging accommodations in the villages therefore, I stayed in Gyumri at a bed and breakfast and then rented a hotel room. Daily, I took a public transportation mini-bus from the city center to the villages. On these mini-buses, I met and interacted with teachers. Aside from the villages, most of the passengers were in fact teachers, which sparked opportunities for interesting conversations and engaging with other teachers not only at the schools I visited but other schools as well. While traveling on the mini-bus, I was interested in learning from the passengers’ perspectives and observing the landscape. Along the road, I was inspired by the abandoned cemeteries, which had Islamic symbolism on the

tombstones that likely included former Azerbaijani residents of the village community. Road signage also offered interesting insights into where some of the villages referenced Azerbaijani names revealing their past of coexistence. But also, teachers indicated how some Armenian villages were renamed and offered insight of the previous Azerbaijani names.

For the second fieldsite in the Tavush region of Armenia, I stayed at a home-stay arrangement with a school principal's family. I was not only welcomed to stay at his house with his family, but also, to work with him and his teachers. The principal also made arrangements with the neighboring village schools so that I may gain a better understanding of their region. Public transportation was not available between villages and this principal helped coordinate my trips as well. On their time off from work, the principal and his family included me in all of their activities, including all meals but also special excursions just to show me more about their village community. The principal and his wife didn't treat me as a stranger – they treated me as one of their family members even though I had only known them at that time for a very short period of time.

For my fieldwork in Yerevan, I rented an apartment near the American University of Armenia. While in town, I would work from an allocated office space on campus and utilize the library resources and materials. The school I selected for my fieldwork in Yerevan was on the outskirts of the city in a poor neighborhood. The MoESCS has designated lab schools and this school was one of them. Built on the ideals of Armenian philosophers, the school administration trained and equipped their teaching staff with international pedagogical practices. For example, this school did not require students to memorize or cite the official curriculum or textbook. Instead, the teachers encouraged their

students to seek alternative resources and learn beyond the national curriculum. Truly this school was literally built and shaped with a curriculum that supported critical thinking and independent learning.

Finally, at my fourth fieldwork site in Istanbul, Turkey, I rented an apartment in a neighborhood where I could easily and quickly access public transportation that was also located in an environment safe for tourists, considering my lack of fluency in the Turkish language. Unlike my fieldwork in Armenia, I did not seek the Ministry approval for my research. The Armenian schools of the Istanbul community are considered semi-private schools, yet the Ministry of Education in Turkey refuses to accept responsibility for these schools. However, the Armenian schools are still required to teach the official Turkish national curriculum and hire Turkish teachers. Teaching Armenian history is not allowed – only Turkish history, which is taught by Turks (not Armenians born in Turkey). Based on my previous projects with colleagues from Turkey, I was able to coordinate with various schools and principals, community members, and educational leaders in the Istanbul Armenian community.

Teacher Interviews

In each region, I worked closely and shadowed 3-4 current and retired teachers across 1-3 schools. In total, I shadowed and interviewed 39 current and retired teachers in 10 schools. I recruited teachers for my study through various approaches. I primarily relied on my network of colleagues who had worked with most of these teachers before for other educational projects. From the four fieldwork sites, I received support from one of the major newspapers in the Istanbul Armenian community. The newspaper Editor invited me to issue an article, which included a brief background about how I came to conduct this

research and why it's important. I also referenced other field sites where I had conducted the study and the interview questions. This article helped me increase my transparency and raise awareness about my research, and the newspaper editor disclosed that it was also important for them to show the community projects like mine. In some cases, the interviewees had read or seen the article about me ,which also gave me some credibility. (AGOS, 2020)

Prior to conducting each interview, I spent time with each teacher to build rapport and trust either at schools, in teachers' lounges and visiting their classes, or outside of schools, living with them and visiting their homes. During this time, I did not conduct the official interviews but worked on building a relationship. Spending time with the teachers in different spaces allowed them to gain trust and willingness to share their stories. Interviews were very important because they were perceived as “formal” conversations which interviewees took seriously.

Once I began to formally interview the teachers, participants shared detailed stories and memories based on the trust and rapport we had built early on, in prior conversations. For the formal interviews, I relied on Atkinson’s (2011) approach to life story interviews and asked a series of interview questions beginning with demographic questions such as, where did you grow up, how would you describe your childhood, and, how would you describe your childhood neighborhood? Over time, I delved into questions about the participant’s career and educational training. I asked questions about their memories such as, how do you remember your best friends, coworkers, and neighbors? And, growing up, did you or your family members encounter Armenians, Azerbaijanis, Georgians, Kurds, Russians, or people from Turkey?

Artifacts

Participants were invited to bring artifacts to the day of the interview to help explain their stories and memories. Artifacts were analyzed based on the participants' descriptions and definitions – in other words, if a participant shared a photo, I relied on Saldaña's (2015) approach to understanding while leaving room for the participant to guide the story. I took pictures of these artifacts and included them in my findings and analyses. For all photos, I asked participants for their permission to reprint in my study. Aside from participants' artifacts, I also took pictures and notes of other institutional and cultural artifacts that helped answer my research questions. Throughout the findings, all photos shared by participants will be identified, while the remaining photos are from my fieldwork experiences and trips.

Fieldwork Observations

Prior to interviewing teachers, I observed classes and took notes about the school community and classroom space to contextualize the teachers' environment. Using Spradley's observation technique – the concept of the "Grand Tour Question" – I incorporated certain elements such as the space, actor, activity, and object, which I also incorporated (Spradley as cited in Frank, 1999, p. 32). Other aspects for observation include classroom maps, classroom note-taking to note-making, and journal reflection practices (Frank, 1999). Therefore, the 'grand tour question' approach became a form of ethnographic sampling of the different fieldwork sites for my dissertation. Applied to my research, I took notes of these elements in my class observations. In addition to the school environment, I also joined off-campus trips including historical sites, museums, and memorials to provide the local, historical, political, and cultural contexts of the broader

communities. The sites visited during field trips were places students learned about in the classroom and upon arrival at the site, teachers would explain the context and history. Of importance is to acknowledge the issue of the amount of time or duration of the study within the fieldwork site and how this impacts the ethnographers' ability to make claims about their findings. Although my approach to fieldwork sites was more of a rapid ethnography where I stayed for 3-4 weeks at a time at each site, I spent intensive periods of time focused on observation and interaction.

Classroom Observations

At each school site, I only visited and observed classes of teachers who I was shadowing. In some cases, the principal or teacher made announcements about my visit to their school community to introduce me. It was helpful for security purposes to know that as an outsider, I was a visitor or guest of the school community. Formal introductions enabled me to establish trust and relationships with teachers, staff, and students overall. While visiting classes, I took notes on a variety of factors including visual, sensual, and auditory elements. Visually, I noted the number of students and among them the number of males and females. At times, I found gender relations to be an interesting topic to explore in the future. Also in the classroom, I took note of the different types of announcements, pictures, maps, and posters that were hung on the bulletin boards and walls. I wanted to understand what texts and images students experienced on a daily basis and how they engaged with these messages. For example, teachers' day is celebrated on October 5th but the poster remained on the wall of one classroom throughout the year. Moreover, the teachers' day poster was written in the Russian language, not in Armenian. At some schools the conditions of the building and classrooms were important to consider, as these

communities were impacted by different crises including the Soviet to post-Soviet transition, the earthquake of 1988, and the Nagorno-Karabakh war. Examples of these remnants were visible where bullet holes remained punctured on the walls of the buildings, reconstruction of certain parts of the school, or the conditions of the classroom furniture and equipment. Other visual images I observed included book shelves, pictures, and posters to understand more about the school community, curriculum, or students' interests.

Aside from visual observations, the auditory experience also offered fascinating findings including teachers' lessons, students' interactions with their peers and classroom teachers, and the selection of videos or songs shown or sung in class. These auditory experiences allowed me to gain a better understanding of the school community more broadly.

Cultural and Historical Sites

I visited museums which were most frequently destinations for school field trips. At these museums, I took the "official" guided tours whenever possible to learn and hear what information would be presented to students. In addition to the museums, I visited cultural and historic sites (for a full list please see appendix). Altogether, each of these components of the fieldwork observations helped support the findings of my critical educational ethnographic study.

In the next section, I highlight examples of the data from these activities that took place across different regions and over different periods of time. By highlighting these ethnographic data, we are able to move towards understanding how educational policy is interpreted by teachers, how teachers negotiate their practices and beliefs with the

dominant narratives of educational policies, and finally, how teachers appropriate educational policy with their beliefs and their pedagogical practices.

CHAPTER 5

LEARNING BORDER THROUGH EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

From a school in a village along the border of Armenia-Turkey, the border is untouchable but visible with a watchtower standing nearby. The border is under surveillance at all times. No one is allowed to cross the (closed) border into Turkey due to the current state of Armenian-Turkish relations. Some farmers from the village have special permission to access their farm lands on, near, or across the (closed) border. At times, foreign tourists visiting this village attempt to cross over unaware of the politics and history of Armenian-Turkish relations. The military guarding the borders rely on one of the English language teachers from the village school to serve as the translator in such language barrier instances. Not only are individuals prohibited from approaching this border, but also, taking photos or identifying the areas near these spaces are considered security issues. In one incident, I came across the village mayor's assistant who immediately recognized that I was a foreigner and demanded from me identification documents with an explanation for my visit to their village. The interrogation included questions about my family history of origins to *validate* my Armenian identity and grant *credibility* for my visit to their village. It was in this village, on that sunny, warm morning in Shirak that I began to understand the power of borders. These daily interactions with the border proved that borders are very real – forbidding access to outsiders, while defining who and what does/not belong to these spaces.

Armenian borders have shifted over time and space due to conflicts and wars throughout history. Based on the histories of wars and invasions, the Armenian identity has resisted and evolved over time, proving to be "one of the world's most stable and

persistent identities" (Herzig & Kurkchiyan, 2005, p. i). The creation of the Armenian national identity relies on the past (Panossian, 2006). Yet, scholarly literature of Armenia's ethnogenesis remains a debated topic in mapping the origins of the ancient society and language which includes "a set of unanswered questions about the ancient origins of the society and culture, and continue all the way down to the present day" (Herzig & Kurkchiyan, 2005; p. 2). The legacy of the unresolved conflicts has impacted the Armenian identity in such a way that "it became custom to express Armenian identity in terms of conflict with foreign aggressors and struggle to preserve the nation's character despite alien, infidel domination" (Herzig & Kurkchiyan, 2005, p. 4). Today, these unresolved conflicts continue to haunt societies on all sides of the borders – from the second Armenia-Azerbaijan war (September - November 2020) to Turkey's continued suppression of non-Muslim populations (ie. taking over Haiga Sophia and Holy Trinity Church known as the largest Armenian Church in Turkey). Within these clashing interpretations and legacies of unresolved conflicts, the Armenian border remains central to (re)shaping and (re)defining the Armenian identity. These histories have been passed on either through written accounts or oral histories. While these wars are not resolved, Armenians have held onto the memories and stories of their ancestors in hopes of reclaiming their histories and restoring justice. This chapter aims to unfold how Armenian identity is predicated on learning the border across different (in)formal spaces in Armenia and the Istanbul Armenian Community.

Throughout my fieldwork experience, borders are defined through physical demarcated materials such as barbed wire with patrol officers or proof of entry with a visa stamp to the border customs and protection officials. But also, Armenian borders are

defined in relation to landscapes and nature. For Armenians, learning to be Armenian is through learning the border(s) – both real and imagined, as well as the ways in which Armenians define what lies in and outside of the borders. Beginning as early as learning the alphabet, children are socialized to learn what it means to be Armenian through letter associations with certain symbols, texts, and images (Palandjian, 2013). The *aybenaran* is considered to be the most important book on the book shelf, teaching children to read and write the Armenian language from Yerevan to Moscow to Los Angeles. While learning ա, բ, գ or the first three letters of the alphabet, the student also learns how "Ah" or «Ա» is the first letter of Mount Ararat, referring to the iconic Armenian national identity symbol located in Eastern Turkey. For Armenians, the pillars of the identity rely on historical traditions or traditions "laid in ancient times: religion, language, territorial basis, myths, and symbols" (Panossian, 2006, p. 23). Passed onto generations through myths, literature, symbols and narratives, these pillars are playfully represented in *aybenarans* (Silova et al., 2014; Palandjian, 2012). However, these texts and images are on display everywhere in Armenia – both formal and informal spaces, from museum entrances to pop culture songs – representing different times and spaces, including historical references to Greater Armenia and spaces located outside of official RoA borders. Greater Armenia refers to the territory in present-day Eastern Turkey or that space formerly known as the Armenian Highlands. Other spaces outside of the official RoA borders include Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan. How and why does language learning incite Armenian borders and identity? The journey through my findings begins with learning the Armenian borders where identity is inscribed in alphabet letters,

intertwined in landscapes, retold in stories and myths, reinforced in schools, and redefined through wars.

Planting Seeds: Learning Armenian through Ancestral Lands

> *Wherever the roads may take you, to foreign lands, Armenians remain Armenian, We and Our Mountains. -Inga Arshakyans and Anush Arshakyans*

We and Our Mountains captures the relationship of the Armenian identity and land. *We and Our Mountains* was originally the title of a film made in 1969 and has since then been popularized through pop culture, heard on the radio or as the accompaniment for a dance performance, but also on posters, signs, and even as graffiti. From Mount Ararat to Lake Sevan, to Nagorno-Karabakh, it is through the Armenian landscape that Armenians define their identity and more broadly, their way of living and relating with each other and the "other." Upon meeting a new acquaintance, introductions go beyond exchanging names for Armenians – it delves into background information about their ancestors and the lands. Often, the historical back-tracking of ancestral homelands extends beyond the current RoA borders. Altogether ancestral roots, lands, and Armenian identity are always interrelated over time and space. This conceptualization came to me after reviewing responses during the interviews, specifically the first few questions where I would solicit information about their background, hometown, family, where they grew up, etc. Most participants referred to their ancestors' hometown or where their grandparents or great grandparents lived, which included names of Ottoman Armenian provinces, villages and towns along the Georgian-Armenian border, throughout Nagorno-Karabakh, and in Baku or other parts of Azerbaijan. Tracing back to ancestral hometowns

is considered highly important – a simple answer such as “Yerevan” will receive the following push back reply, “but really, where are your ancestors from.” Many teachers reside in neighborhoods outside of their hometown or village. For example, one teacher from Tavush responded, “Our paternal roots come from Karabakh.” Several teachers from the border villages – especially the Tavush region – were able to trace their family history back to Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan. One exception in my study was a principal and history teacher who continues to live in his same childhood home and village that he grew up in (with some renovations). While he had the option to live outside of his hometown, he emphasized the importance of staying in his village.

There was a kind of introduction ritual that occurred at each fieldwork site and with every participant. Of no particular hierarchical order, participants noted my upbringing as an Armenian-American to be commendable or exemplary in so much that these aspects allowed me to gain their trust and access to their communities: being able to speak, read, and write in Armenian, to have interest in things related to Armenia and Armenian history, leading me to pursue a study to incorporate teachers’ voices from the villages along the borders of Armenia and the Istanbul Armenian Community. Within this interaction ritual, my ancestral history as surviving the Armenian Genocide of 1915 was perhaps the poignant factor that entitled me to claim my Armenian identity. Moreover, I explained why I felt the need to conduct this dissertation research in hopes that there would be opportunities to develop peace across the region rather than continued wars and violence. As a former classroom teacher, I also connected with their issues and concerns of teaching and pedagogical practices. By engaging in this interaction ritual, teachers felt more comfortable and safe to their opinions openly but also share their

personal stories and experiences. I believe the data collection would have been shaped very differently if my identity did not exhibit these features.

Tracing ancestral homelands to faraway places and across different times is how the Armenian identity is illustrated in *aybenarans*. The *hayrenik* or fatherland is known as the home of our ancestors dating back to historical and ancient times (Palandjian, 2012; Silova et al., 2014). The relationship with the land and intergenerational homeland is reflected in the following story below: the land (or field) presents the intergenerational connection with the homeland through every seed. The Armenian national identity is inculcated over generations as seen in the 2003 *aybenaran*, a short text entitled, "Artoom" (Gyulameerian, 2003, p. 35), which illustrates a conversation between a grandson, Hoosik, and his grandfather, Hoonan. Hoonan cares for and protects the wheat seeds and commands Hoosik to be the protector of the seeds. In this text and image, the lesson to protect the wheat correlates to the grandson's responsibility to protect the homeland. Moreover, the intergenerational responsibility of serving as the protector is an important element of this dialogue, which re-inscribes the commitment to protecting the homeland onto the next generation.

Image 1. Field. Gyulameerian, 2003, page 35

The image above includes the following text: “In the field, the ear of the corn is ripe. Hoosik is with Grandpa Hoonan in the field. Grandpa Hoonan is the guardian of the field. “Must protect every seed of the corn” said Grandpa Hoonan.” The seeds symbolize the future generations of Armenians and passing on this story from generation to generation. It also represents the legacy of our ancestors who planted and tended to their harvests just like grandparents tended to and gathered their grandchildren. Altogether, the Armenian identity, nation, and nature are always (re)connected and passed onto the next generation to ensure the continuation of their legacy.

Like the seed, the stories and memories of Armenian ancestral homes cross borders and are retold from generation to generation. Several teachers shared memories of their grandparents and great grandparents who lived in the Ottoman Empire and fled to Armenia as a result of the 1915 Genocide – such stories provide a road map of their family history and their roots to Armenianness. A retired language and literature teacher in a Shirak border village school says her father’s family came from the Alegulbum[3] village in Moush, while her mother’s family was from Khunoos, both from the Ottoman

[3] [3] The teacher explained that Alegulbum was in reference to the arageel poyn or stork’s nest.

Empire. Even though she had never visited these villages, she remembers her grandmother's stories about their garden, trees, and neighborhood.

> They would say they had the best melons that would grow in our village, watermelons when we would sit, that our legs would hang, those watermelons must have been so big that when they sat on them, their legs would hang. They said we had such delicious apples that the smell had remained until today in my memories in my mind. Like that Garine Jan. Like that they lived really well over there, also, we had friendships with the Turks there [I asked, in Moush?] Yes, in Moush, they said they would trade, they called us kirboy, we were good with each other [I asked, what is kirboy] *Kirboy*, friend, neighbor, with that meaning. We would help one another. (Interview, September 13, 2019)

As a result of the Genocide in 1915, most of this teacher's family were killed off, while few managed to escape to Armenia. From her father's family alone, there were 40 people who lived and worked together. Coming to this village in Shirak as a bride, the teacher shared stories of her husband who worked closely with Azerbaijanis in their village during Soviet times.

> Then during the genocide, it was already too late. Probably in ordinary society, they were not guilty, there the government leaders did it, they collected our intellectuals 200 people, took them to Der Zor, killed them, Siamanto, Taniel Varoujan, etc. What should the people do? The people were not guilty, ordinary people, not ordinary Turks, nor ordinary Armenians. [pause] Like that, and the same for us. It must have been the greater leaders; we were ordinary people…who lived side by side with each other. But hatred always existed, was there, amongst us, I felt that. (Interview, September 13, 2019)

Another Genocide survivor story unfolded from a chemistry teacher who remembers growing up in the Ararat region of Armenia. Today, this teacher lives in a Tavush border village. While visiting her mother's home in Ararat, she wanted to show me her childhood home and hometown. Like the previous teacher, her family also emigrated to Armenia from the Ottoman Empire during the 1915 Genocide, "My

mother's family came from Western Armenia, they emigrated from Van during the genocide."

> My maternal grandmother was born in Ararat. My grandfather's family migrated from Pirmadalan village or province Van. I do not remember well, but I have always heard what they said since I was a child. Moreover, my maternal grandma has lived for 100 years. They came during the Genocide, she had twin daughters. She lost one of her daughters on the way to exile, but she brought the other children here. She always told me about Van, she dreamed of going back to Western Armenia. She said her country was sweet and it was left in the mouth of the enemy and died of nostalgia. She told of how they crossed the river; some of them drowned in the river. She said that they buried their key in the bakery of the house, I don't know how many steps away. In other words, they hoped that they would return to their village, take out the key, open the door, and live in their house. (Interview, October 24, 2019)

Although the grandmother never returned, she managed to bring a red Armenian Bible with her when she fled the Ottoman Empire. The bible has stayed in their family over time and has a small room with a shrine where the book is on display today. Villagers and other visitors ask to pray and light a candle in this room. This bible and shrine serve as a space for memorializing practices and rituals where Armenians continue to (re)connect with the histories of family origins. Of interest is how this shrine and bible – and by default, the histories and stories of the past - extend beyond this chemistry teacher's family to others from the community that visit this shrine. I asked if they would consider giving their bible to the Madenataran or National Library, but the family plans to pass this book on from generation to generation within their family to serve as a reminder of their ancestral history, culture, and religion.

Another teacher recalled her childhood neighborhood and the history as passed down through oral traditions in her family:

> *Garine: And what can you tell me about the Armenians who stayed in your village, you said that many of them left?*

Lusine: Many moved, but many stayed. What keeps us there is that we know that it is a purely Armenian land, not a Georgian one. We have lived on those lands for centuries. There was a period when the Georgians were able to gain lands. But we do not feel like guests, they did not feel that we stayed in a stranger's home. As proof, we have the Khorakert Monastery in the area called Firma above the village. The story of that monastery was told by my mother, who died two months ago. I do not remember the names well, but my little brother told me in great detail. There was a large monastic complex, which had its secret exit, so that in case of an enemy attack they could get out, that secret underground road led to the river. We had a monument, which is connected with painful memories. It is about how the Georgians deceitfully took the villagers to the storehouse below the village. By deceiving that there is an issue related to the Azerbaijanis to be discussed, they took the villagers, filled them in the storehouse and burned them. They spread news, as if the Azeris burned them. But I remember that old men and women said that the Georgians did it.

The Khuchap Monastery in our neighboring village is famous as an Armenian monastery as well, but it is located in the Georgian territory. On the other hand, Chakhalaberd is located in the Armenian lands. Do you know about Torq Angegh?

Garine: No.

Lucine: Torq Angegh is known in "History of Armenians" written by Khorenatsi. It is one of our myths. Torq is considered a man on the earth and a god in the sky. It is such a mythical character. Chakhalabert near us is considered to be the fortress of Torq Angegh.

We have many historical monuments. After the border demarcation both Khorakert and Chakhalaberd have been moved to the territory of Armenia. The boys of our village say, when you want to go, you can tell us, we will talk to the border guards, so you will be able to cross. Fortunately, they [village boys] have been moved to the Armenian side, but unfortunately, they do not pay attention, those historical monuments can be destroyed.

Here, Lusine's family history is an example of how the ethnogenesis of Armenian history is implicated in rooting the family origins with the land and always within the same space – despite foreign or external conquest. In Armenian history, Georgians and Armenians also have histories of war and coexistence and as noted above, Lusine tells us that even though Georgians acquired the land of her hometown, she did not feel estranged to the

land. Of importance in Lusine's account is the story of betrayal to Armenians by Azerbaijanis. Based on the oral histories of the older generations, Lusine claims the blame was put on Azerbaijanis rather than the Georgians. Perhaps this blame was a tactic to reinforce the idea of the Azerbaijanis as the enemy rather than Georgians' claiming their responsibility for this tragic history. Like Lusine, many teachers I interviewed were forced to relocate due to security and safety reasons. Of my interview samples, Lusine was the only teacher whose family relocated from a Georgian village to Armenia. Relocating and redefining home is an important theme that resonates with the teachers either from their personal experience or their ancestors. Of importance is to note the way in which teachers remembered leaving, how they were treated by their neighbors and sent off to places unknown to them. After leaving their homeland, home was redefined for these teachers and the names of their villages were renamed. For many, life went on, but the absence of the 'other' can be felt in distinct ways to this day.

Protecting their Soil: Teachers Becoming Border Guards

Upon arrival in the Tavush region, I experienced limited access to public transportation outside of the city center. In order to travel across villages, I often relied on taxis and teachers to help me. On my way back to my homestay in a border village, I often looked out my window in awe of the mountainous landscapes and beauty of the region. I knew that the school and the general village I was visiting was situated only a few kilometers away from the Armenia-Azerbaijani border, but never saw any signs of what is typically associated with a border – barbed wire, border walls, etc. Too embarrassed to ask, I wondered, where exactly were the borders? Inspired by the interview with Asya, a

Chemistry teacher whose son Karen was taken as a prisoner of war for “illegally” crossing “the border,” I wanted to see the border from their village. The simultaneous omnipresence and invisibility of bordering practices is true of the natural landscape and particularly how the local Armenian (and Azerbaijani) communities interacted with this part of the border.

“I was wondering since we are close to the border with Azerbaijan, could you tell me where the line is?” I asked the driver from the local village who was taking me home as a personal favor to Asya. From his rear-view mirror, he looked at me and replied, “Since you are a foreigner to our village, you wouldn’t be able to see it. But us locals, we know where the border is – see over there across the mountain range there are some white lines? This is where the territory of Armenia ends and marks the beginning of Azerbaijan.” His description of the white lines across the ranges helped me imagine where the border was, yet I had assumed that there would be something more visible or obvious to mark the borders between countries. The conversation with the cab driver is significant to my research as it re-emphasizes how borders between Tavush region of Armenia and Tovuz region of Azerbaijan are real, while at the same time artificial or a human constructed concept. Borders of nation-states are not natural to the earth and yet, humans have created borders to redefine who belongs in and outside of nation-states. Simultaneously, this experience reminded me of my insider/outsider positionality, recognizing that the cab driver acknowledged me as a foreigner despite my claim to being Armenian.

The cab drivers’ response did not sit well with me – in fact, it began to raise more issues – especially concerns about Karen. How can either the Armenian or Azerbaijani authorities claim Karen crossed the border where no physical line exists? I had spent time observing Asya in her classroom and before officially interviewing her, had an informal

discussion about my project. On Wednesday, October 23, 2019, Asya invited me to her house for lunch and to share her stories in the privacy of her home. I respected her wishes as I wanted to make sure all participants felt comfortable throughout their interactions with me. I was fortunate to spend the afternoon with her. The more I learned about Asya, the more I understood how she came to be a very respected and admired professional. When introducing me, the principal proudly boasted about how Asya was often assigned to train preservice teachers. The teacher made clear that while participating in this study, Asya wanted to go on record for being identified by her name as she wanted to seek justice for her son who was sentenced to serve 20 years in an Azerbaijani prison. In order to honor her request and hope of raising awareness about her son, I am sharing the following excerpt from the interview.

Image 2. Kidnapped or ill? The story of Karen Ghazarian's imprisonment retold by his mother

To recall the story of Karen's imprisonment meant reclaiming the story. In an attempt to recover him from Azerbaijan, Armenian authorities tried to justify his border crossing by claiming Karen had an illness. According to Asya, with this justification, they could appeal to the Red Cross officials to mediate his return on the basis of illness. But the Chemistry teacher maintained that her son had been falsely imprisoned. She did not believe he crossed the border at all; rather, she claimed that Azerbaijanis kidnapped him from their home as their house was the last one in the village bordering Azerbaijan. Beyond her orchard she gazed at the Azerbaijani border with Armenia – without any physical border demarcation or watch towers.

Asya: He is innocent; they kidnapped him in order to exchange him later. They took him from the border, just for exchange. There was a false trial.

Garine: Where, in Azerbaijan?

Asya: Yes, in Azerbaijan… We initiated legal proceedings against that. They have no materials proving that he is a criminal, nothing… but since he is in their hands, and this country has no diplomatic relations with them, they have pinned him against the wall, and they want to exchange him. We give him to you, and you give our captive to us…That one is a criminal, has slaughtered a child. Naturally, this side does not want to return the criminal and this issue is not being solved; I don't know how long this will last. Many international organizations are aware of the case; everyone thinks that there should be an exchange, a humanitarian approach, as an innocent person is being tormented in vain/is suffering.

Garine: How did it happen that Karen appeared there?

Asya: They took him, no one knows how, only Karen knows. We don't know how he was taken. He was at home that day. It was around 2:00 AM, he went to drink water and we don't know what happened after that. In the morning we saw that he was not at home.

Garine: They say he was ill?

Asya: Yes, he had an illness. But he did not go there.

Garine: I see; so, he was at home.

Asya: Yes, he was at home.

Garine: It's interesting; how could they have taken him out of the house?

Garine: We also don't know how that was possible, but we don't know anything.

Garine: So, they took him and kept him there.

Asya: Yes, they took him and judged him guilty. They have tried thousands of times to take someone as a captive for exchanging him with that Askerov. Askerov's son is a rich man in Azerbaijan, he is close with Aliyev, and Aliyev wants to have Askerov back at any cost. And now we are one of the options.

Garine: And our side [the Armenian Government] says no? They don't agree to the conditions?

Asya: No, they say we won't exchange. I tell them, "in that case, request for extradition." They say Aliyev does not agree; we cannot do that… As if we are talking to a wall.

Garine: But why doesn't the government help?

Asya: The government says that there are institutions/organizations that are trying to help, but how do they help if he is still there? It's been a year and three months. That's the fact. Even if the government makes a statement and nothing changes, at this moment he is under the same conditions. Now you tell me, does the government help us? I don't see their help. I have met with the Prime Minister several times, his wife has visited us several times, we have met with various institutions, with Arman Tatoyan, everyone… We have raised this question everywhere.

Garine: What do they say?

Asya: They say that the relevant institutions/organizations are in charge of this, and they are doing everything to return our citizen… Maybe they are doing their job, I don't say they don't. But there is only one thing I am concerned about: I want my son back.

Being a teacher in this particular village along the borders of the Tavush region implies the responsibility of being a community face and leader. As Asya moves across her identities and roles - from school teacher to mother and citizen of RoA – the Tavush

region and local community respects and stands in support of their teacher. As an ethnographer collecting research, recounting this account with Asya had a profound impact on me. Even as I write this account, I am overtaken by emotion. A mother fighting to recover her child, evoked the help of over a thousand protestors, appealing to the Armenian government for assistance, and was met with excuses. Grappling with the frustration that she had no help, no way of saving her son has been difficult for me, as a researcher. I cannot begin to imagine the expanse of her strength.

Challenging Armenian Patriotism from the Borders

Teaching and staying busy kept her distracted from worrying about her son. The principal and school administration offered support and encouraged her to continue teaching. While reflecting on her pedagogical practices, Asya described how her classroom became an escape or haven: “When I open the classroom door and go in, I forget about all my personal problems.” This was evident to me as I sat and watched her conduct her classroom almost like a symphony in teaching the parts of the flower.

Image 3. Escaping Realities, Entering the Classroom in Tavush region

Outside of school, she organized protests and collected signatures to call on Armenian Government officials to help her free her son. The politics woven into the exchange of her son for the two criminals disturbed her – her son had not murdered

anyone. Caught between patriotism and her family, she redefined patriotism to help her maintain a peaceful mind.

> *Garine: Yes, I understand. If you would, let me ask you this: ... during these difficult times, when you feel that you are a puppet in the hands of both countries, what do you teach your students? Are you for peace? What are your thoughts?*
>
> *Asya: I am always for peace, and I teach the same to my students. I do not sow militant ideas in their minds… I have no such thoughts. Motherland is the key value. We teach our students to love their motherland.*
>
> *Garine: What is patriotism for you at this moment? You are teaching biology, you know everything about the roots of a flower... you say that motherland is the key value, but if your country does not have your back, how do you feel? That's strange for me…*
>
> *Asya: Those are my inner feelings, my beliefs… I still don't lose hope. I am always expecting something good to happen… When I face reality, of course there are moments of disappointment… but I never think that I will never see my son, or that my country… I think we need to teach our children to love their motherland, to speak their mother tongue... I always sow seeds of patriotism in them…and these children, no matter how many years will pass… I have also taught their parents... I will never teach anything against my motherland…*
>
> *Asya: But the fact that my country is not with my family during these times… well, they say that the relevant bodies are taking care of everything. This is the other side of the story… But what I see is that there is no change. I always expect something good to happen. Something should change... But these are not things to discuss with children, this is something that I have in my mind... subconsciously, day and night. But I never say anything about this to my students.*

Keepers of the Border

Many Armenians, like the Karapetyans who live in villages along the borders, understand the conflict from a very different perspective. While Government officials in Yerevan make decisions, they lack the foresight of ordinary people, particularly those living along the borders who have experience living alongside Azerbaijanis, Turks, and

other groups. Border clashes affect them since early childhood, as they grew up hearing the sounds of bullets and explosives.

Image 4. Orchard in the Backyard from the Tavush Region and View of the Border of Armenia and Azerbaijan

> *Asya: You know… many people ask me... many people think that I will not continue working. But there is probably something given from above... When I open the classroom door and go in, I forget about all my personal problems. I have always tried to develop the spirit of patriotism in my students. Our motherland is not the government; one person is not the face of the motherland... When during our protests, Zeynalyan came here, he was a minister already, he had named our village "Sixth Column," meaning that we were fueling Azerbaijan's aspirations… But I told them then, that our village, even when we still did not have an army… my husband was one of those who were on the border. Our house is situated in such a place, that those people on the border would come to our house for bread, for water.* ***We were keeping this border.*** *Who can say this to us, that we are doing anything pro-Azerbaijani, fueling their aspirations…? You were sitting in your offices. What do you know about anything we have been doing here? Just on the contrary, I still think that we are border guards. Our house is the last one on the border…*

* * *

Living closest to the border has made Asya, her husband, and their neighbors bear the responsibility of serving as border guards. In her account, Asya criticizes the Armenian Government officials who are out of touch with her village and unaware of how they protected themselves, similar to how, in many ways, teachers serve as border guards, which was noted by other participants as well. A year later, Iravaban.net (2020) news agency claimed that the Tavush Regional Governor confirmed Karen Ghazaryan was among the 44 prisoners of war who returned to Armenia on December 14, 2020. As noted in Asya's account, Askerov was included in this exchange and returned to Baku.

Tracing and Learning Ancestral Roots

Tracing *hayrenik* and ancestral homeland for Armenians provides a historical consistency over time and space(s). Regardless of whether one identifies their homeland with Ottoman provinces or other territories outside of the current RoA, Armenians associate with and identify these names and histories to honor their ancestors and historical legacies. From textbooks to pop culture, these lyrics appear in different songs and poems which are recited during daily class lessons or for school-wide ceremonies. Throughout my fieldwork, a new song, My Little Armenia or *Im Poqrik Hayastan*, was popular and I heard it several times in different places – on the radio in taxis or mini-buses, dance performances, etc. I was intrigued to learn more about the lyrics and found the official music video. *My Little Armenia* by Lidushik presents a consistent message emphasizing the importance of Armenians belonging to Armenia. Based on the lyrics and video, for Lidushik, this song is a reminder that even if Armenians must leave the borders

of Armenia, Armenia is their fatherland or homeland and that they can always return. While the song may have been aired on the radio or elsewhere, the lyrics did not catch my attention until September 21, 2019. Annually, Armenia celebrates independence and schools put on special concerts and assemblies for the school community. Prior to the event, children rehearsed their acts. At this border village school in Shirak, the teacher I was shadowing was responsible for coordinating their school Independence Day celebration on her own. In fact, she was responsible for coordinating all of the major school wide activities. On the day before their show, students took turns on the stage in the auditorium to practice their act and receive feedback from the teacher.

A group of third grade students took their places and sang *Im Poqrik Hayastan* along with a piano accompaniment by one of their peers. Four girls and four boys dressed in uniform – white shirts with navy or black pants, dresses and skirts – stood parallel next to each other. Behind the students was a large mural of Mount Ararat and the Armenian flag in the right corner. Their eyes were fixated on their teacher who was giving them cues and mouthing the words as they sang. In their hands, students displayed their picture of what independence means to them personally. The pictures included different messages and illustrations, including themselves, the Armenian flag, their homes, family and friends, to name a few. All of the students were instructed to prepare this picture for homework the night before. The stage was renovated with the support of an NGO that helped me connect with this teacher. Seated in front of the students were their peers, teachers, and parents.

As I listened to the words of the song, I was struck by the lyrics at first. Then, the age group of the children singing – did they understand what fatherland means? I stopped

myself and my thoughts from wandering: did I ever understand what fatherland means? I began to imagine the responsibility children (and adults) feel when we refer to the fatherland. For diasporan Armenians, the connection to the homeland is through the ancestors' stories and oral histories passed down by each generation as reminder that our families were from these lands. Although some diasporans Armenians have relocated to live in Armenia, most Armenians live outside of the homeland. Due to the tumultuous history of foreigners and invasions, many fled the homeland to survive. Those who stayed behind carry the responsibility to protect the homeland. My mind returned to the stage in time for the chorus of the song, "When you grow up, you must remember that your mother is calling for you, my little Armenia". What did growing up mean for these children? Did Lidushik mean that every Armenian was or holds a part of their homeland with them wherever they may go?

Several weeks passed and Lidushik or *Im Poqrik Hayasdan* followed me to the Tavush region where I would relocate for my second fieldwork site visit. The village community was close to the Armenian-Georgian border as well as the Armenia-Azerbaijan border. While in Tavush, I traveled to several different schools, and lived with the Principal and Chemistry teacher who became more than just participants, but my family. The teachers at this school were very close as their relationships extended beyond the daily 8-3pm school-day hours. Their phone calls after work hours were not always focused on school activities – they were truly very close friends. I joined the family on their daily routines traveling a little further out from their village into the neighboring major town where one of the teacher's family owned a store. We frequented their store for groceries, and I would purchase chocolate and candy for the kids. The principal

invited me along to all their activities, treating me like his sister. The Armenian literature and language teacher was eager to invite me to her home. Water was in limited supply in the area closest to the school, but the Armenian literature and language teacher had recently renovated her home and invited me to take hot showers in her home. After I interviewed her, she invited us over for dinner at her home. The Armenian literature and language teacher has two daughters who worked at the Armenia-Georgia border checkpoint. Originally from a village in Georgia, the Armenian language and literature teacher fondly remembers her home.

Image 5: Home Cooked Meal with Teachers and Their families

The family had prepared an exquisite dinner spread with different salads, cheeses, appetizers, and barbecued meats. On an Armenian table, vodka and wine is customarily offered for guests to raise their glass to give a toast or for the host to say their wishes. Everything was complete with fruit and desserts offered at the end of the meal with Armenian coffee and tea. As an Armenian custom, after dinner, the youngest family member or children must perform for their guests by singing, reciting, or playing an instrument. We were seated in the living room enjoying our desserts when the

granddaughter who was six years old began to sing, *Im Poqrik Hayasdan* without Lidushik or the musical accompaniment. Although I had heard the song several times, this performance brought tears to my eyes. Unlike the Shirak performance, this time rather than questions running through my head, emotions flooded my heart. Seated in the living room were her teachers, principal, and grandparents to whom this little girl sang, and for us, "This is your home, your little corner, the fruit from the tree your grandfather planted." The family watched proudly, and, for a brief moment, I knew I stole attention away from her when the audience realized I was crying. That moment was an explicit example of nationalism, yet it meant so much more. For Armenians, the homeland or land of their ancestors is a very real concept as much as it demonstrates nationalism.

Ever Expansive Roots: Learning to be Armenian Beyond Borders

Learning Armenian borders extends beyond the RoA territory. The historical and cultural symbols remain the same yet, for the Istanbul Armenian Community learning to be Armenian and knowing borders is more than understanding identity: it represents their daily struggle to coexist in the borders of present-day Turkey. Prior to my arrival in Istanbul, Turkey, a friend connected me over email correspondence with Vatche, one of the teachers from the Istanbul Community. Vatche agreed to help me, while conducting my fieldwork in Istanbul and introducing me to various other teachers and members of the community. Vatche is passionate about teaching Western Armenian – he encourages his students as well as his peers to speak and write even with mistakes. For Vatche, it was important for the Armenians of the Istanbul community to speak Armenian because assimilating within Turkey was a threat to their identity that they felt in various ways on a

daily basis. Within the community, Vatche was an active member of political life and supported the work of Garo Paylan, an Armenian member of parliament in Turkey. But also, Vatche's mother was a teacher and well-known in the community.

Growing up in Istanbul, Vatche's childhood was shaped by resilience to protect the Armenian language and more broadly, the Armenian community in Istanbul. In geography class, Vatche remembered receiving a beating for drawing the Armenian borders. Vatche was a teacher who remembers being a "mischievous" child, which he considered activism to defy oppression. In response to Vatche's activism, he recalled many instances where teachers often threw chalk at him; he experienced physical abuse. These "mischievous" behaviors were justified in Vatche's mind for he felt that it was his way of rebelling against the oppression Istanbul Armenians experienced.

> I remember again in school in geography class, there was an atlas, right? There I had drawn the borders of Armenia like this, I drew it, it was a Soviet Union map, in it I marked Armenia(n) (borders) [with dots] point, point, point, point, point, since it was not independent, and the teacher caught me again. (Interview, February 27, 2020).

Although Armenians established communities across the empire, the Armenians in the Eastern provinces fell victims of the Genocide in 1915 scattering the survivors across the globe. Today, Istanbul is home to many of the descendants of the Genocide survivors. Within Istanbul, Armenians are considered one of the ethnic minority groups with a population of approximately 70,000 people including 16 schools, 40 churches, and 1 hospital. For Armenians living in Turkey, they do not identify as diasporan Armenians, often referring to those who were forced to live outside of their homeland. But also, Istanbul Armenians do not consider themselves Turks either despite being born in Turkey. One teacher recalls when a Turkish classmate learned about her Armenian

ethnicity and asked with genuine curiosity, “Do you take a plane to attend classes?” Instead, the Armenians of the Istanbul community consider themselves living on their ancestral lands, where their great grandparents and ancestors had lived dating back to the Roman Empire.

Across the border in Armenia, the Armenian Genocide Memorial was built in 1967 and dedicated in memory of the Ottoman Armenians who perished. The museum was later built in 1995. On the evening of April 23rd, people gather in the Republic Square with flowers, torches, candles, and flags for a candlelight procession up to the monument. The procession begins when it is dark, and the image of candles can be seen from afar. While living in Armenia (2013-2017), I participated in the procession and vividly remember the silence of some people, the singing of nationalistic songs, some chanting swears about the Turkish Government or burning the Turkish flag (though I wasn’t sure where they bought the Turkish flag since I had never seen it sold in stores). April 24th, the following day, is a Memorial Day where schools and most employers close their businesses and offices allowing everyone time to visit the memorial. Streets are blocked off and crowds swarm around with their flowers. This ritual of visiting the Genocide Memorial is also seen in *aybenarans* (Sargsyan, 2010/2018). With a rainbow across the sky, two Armenian children carrying flowers are presumably visiting the memorial site. The lesson featured in Image 6 is the letter *tzuh* or ծ, and includes words that begin with or include ծ such as *tzitzernag* or swallow, *tzagheeg* or flower, and *tzeeatzan* for rainbow. None of the words or texts include reference to the Genocide Memorial specifically except for the image of the children carrying flowers.

Image 6. Children Carrying Flowers with Armenian Genocide Memorial in the Background. (Sargsyan, 2010/2018, p. 132)

Ծծ

ծիրան

այծ կայծ | ծառ ծառիկ | ծով ծովափ | պայծառ ծիածան | արծիվ ծիծեռնակ

ԾԱՌԱՏՈՒՆԿ

– Եկե՛ք ծիրանի ծառ տնկենք,– ասաց Արծվին։
– Ինչո՞ւ միայն ծիրանի, ուրիշ ծառեր էլ տնկենք,– ասաց Ծովինարը։
– Բայց տնկելը բավական չէ, պետք է խնամել, որ ծառ դառնան,– ասաց ուսուցչուհին։

Ամեն անգամ ծիրան ուտելիս հիշի՛ր ծիրանի ծառ տնկողին։

132

I returned to the Genocide Memorial and Museum on Tuesday, December 17, 2019. The museum displayed history in chronological order and progressed from early Ottoman times, through the *fedayee* movement, and eventually sharing stories of survival. While I was familiar with the history, I read the texts as if I had read about the Genocide for the first time. The most challenging part of this visit for me was reading the details about how people were killed: children's bodies tortured, "shortly after this photograph was taken, they were burnt alive," or after they fought in WWI for the Ottoman army, Armenians were all killed off. On display at the museum, I stopped to write the words of the fedayee oath – words that seem timeless.

The Fedayee Oath

> I swear with my honor and nationality to put all my strengths and if needed my blood, to serve for the just cause of liberation of Armenia against tyranny,

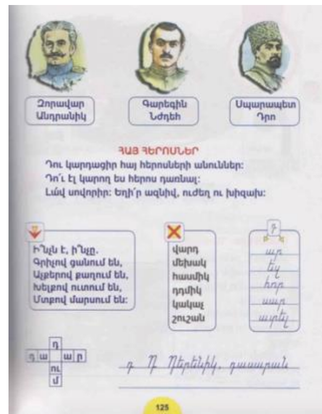
> therefore Armenian mountains will be my pillow and my innermost desire will be to die for the sake of the homeland. I'm glad and willing to bear the kiss of a sizzling bullet. (Anonymous, n.d.)

Fedayees or freedom fighters were Armenian revolutionaries and heroes that protected the Armenian people across time and space. Fedayees often resorted to radical ways to raise awareness among the international community in hopes that help will come from outside. In a history class discussion, I observed Vicken in Yerevan on November 19th during the 3rd period. A total of eighteen students were present with one new student to the school and three new to the class. That day, in class the topic was about the Ottoman Empire and Armenians' request for reforms. A student asked, "Why were these issues seen as acts of terror?" Vicken, the history teacher replied, "That time in history was the only way to get attention for reforms." I was unable to reflect on the students' reaction to the teacher's response but Vicken is a history teacher who is known in Armenia to be a progressive historian. According to Vicken, it is important to look at problems in the context of history. With this approach, Vicken would invite students to ask questions about the reading but also asked several questions as well. Overall, this was a review session before their national test and Vicken devoted the class session to review parts of history that students had questions or wanted further clarification. These types of moments in teaching history are generally challenging pedagogically; however, Vicken's approach of providing the background context of that time in history allowed students to better understand the acts of terror.

The history of fedayees presents a challenging depiction of heroic acts and martyrdom reclaimed justice for some Armenians. On the other hand, some fedayees'

actions of the past would be considered terrorist activity according to modern standards and laws. Yet, fedayees as noted in the oath, who become martyrs in the name of protecting the Armenian nation, are honored for eternity, often with memorial sites and through poetry and songs. *Aybenarans* reference to Armenian cultural symbols and legends as having history within the Armenian Highlands with various monuments, natural landscapes, and other features. Examples of stories and faces of Armenian Heroes, such as General Antranig, Karekin Njteh, and General Tro can be seen here on this textbook page in Image 6 with the accompanying text entitled, “Armenian Heroes.” The text encourages children to heroicize individuals who fought major wars and defended Armenian borders. “You read the names of Armenian heroes. You too can become a hero. Learn well. Be honest, strong and courageous” (2018 and 2010, p. 125).

Image 7. Our Heroes (Sargsyan, 2010/2018, p. 125)


Զորավար Անդրանիկ

Գարեգին Նժդեհ

Սպարապետ Դրո

ՀԱՅ ՀԵՐՈՍՆԵՐ

Դու կարդացիր հայ հերոսների անունները:
Դո՛ւ էլ կարող ես հերոս դառնալ:
Լավ սովորիր: Եղի՛ր ազնիվ, ուժեղ ու խիզախ:

Ի՞նչն է, ի՞նչը.
Գրիչով ցանում են,
Աչքերով քաղում են,
Խելքով ուտում են,
Մտքով մարսում են:

վարդ
մեխակ
հասմիկ
դդմիկ
կակաչ
շուշան

125

For Armenians, the concept of the enemy has always been a national issue, as it still is even in this present moment. Seeking peace, as many Armenians argue, cannot be done alone, referring to the Azerbaijani and Turkish alliance. Across my fieldwork, teachers did not teach hatred when discussing these historical conflicts. Instead, I felt their respect for all Armenians who died protecting the borders. These teachers understand that these

histories of conflict have only taken the lives of the young and innocent on all sides of the borders. Rather, they teach students to love the motherland and patriotism but also to be brave and strong knowing that the enemies were along the borders.

Preserving Roots: Learning Histories and Borders through Museums and Memorials

Throughout my fieldwork, I learned about various school field trip opportunities, which participating teachers either invited me to attend or shared information about during interviews. While I was not able to attend all of the field trips, I developed a list of places that I learned were considered places where students went on field trips. Some of these sites were museums and memorials, others included cemeteries and churches. All of these trips aimed to provide a pedagogical, recreational, and cultural purpose.

Armenian national museums focus on culture and history at the center of these spaces, yet these places are also built on the idea of remembering the trauma or attempts to heal from the events from the past. While visiting the museum, visitors are offered the option to purchase a guided tour – either pre-recorded audio recordings or an individual who walks the visitors through the exhibits. I am accustomed to curators repeating a narrated script – one that is agreed upon by the museum staff or financial supporters. However, I experienced a curator who went off script in an intentional sort of way. In the National History Museum, one of the displays towards the end includes pictures of the former presidents of the RoA in chronological order. The curator acknowledged that I may probably be familiar with these figures but her description and reaction that followed surprised me. From my fieldwork notes, I recall that moment:

We visited the model display of Ani, the city of 1001 churches and eventually found ourselves in the history of WWI and WWII and Soviet Armenian history. Prior to walking through the hallway of carpets, we were greeted by portraits of the first three presidents of the Republic of Armenia: Levon Ter Petrosyan, Robert Kocharyan, and Serzh Sargsyan. The Guide recognized the portraits and exclaimed that these men were not of importance to us or society but were leaders who robbed from their own people. I sensed the Guide identified herself as an Im Qayle supporter and activist during the Velvet Revolution based on how she beamed with pride while explaining the current political situation.

Here, it seemed the curator wished to disassociate Armenia and the Armenian people from the former leaders. To dismiss these individuals from history, label them as robbers, not important "to us" or to Armenian society reflects a deeper feeling of perhaps distrust and anger. Although the purpose of my visit to the museum was not to analyze the curator, the message that was being conveyed to me here made clear that curators can and tend to go off script. Perhaps there may never actually be a script. Considering the curators I met throughout my fieldwork experiences, I realized that most were trained to be historians – some on specific topics or certain time periods. These individuals took on the role of serving as curators in museums. Several also went on to publish books as seen in my visit to the National Museum of Armenian Ethnography and History of Liberal Struggle.

On November 15th, a cold Friday morning, I stood waiting at the steps of the Hovhannes Tumanyan Museum entrance at 8:30am. This location was one of the bus stops where members of the staff of the Ethnography Museum were picked up. At this stop, the former staff member had arranged for me to meet someone who was going to help me with my research. The museum was located approximately an hour away from Yerevan so we had some time to talk on our way. In our conversation, the staff asked me several personal questions and then inquired about my research topic. I sensed the staff member was not interested in my research topic based on her immediate dismissal of my study. I took note of the title [of a book where she published a chapter] but when I asked her questions about coexistence she dismissed my questions and claimed that Yerevan did not have a diverse community and did not include a significantly large Azerbaijani population. Within Yerevan, this was perhaps one of the most common reactions compared to my experiences in the villages along the borders. The conversation

escalated in what made me feel uncomfortable and ashamed of the topic and questions I had asked. Why is it treacherous to ask about other ethnic groups that lived in Yerevan? How do Armenians living in villages along the borders feel more comfortable to talk about a shared past of coexistence?

The museum staff's reaction and belief are rooted in an ethnonationalist approach to the Armenian identity, which is widespread across Armenia. Following Suny's (2001) explanation of national identity, he claims is often referenced in monoethnic terms: "almost always accepts the present identity as fixed, singular, bounded, internally harmonious, distinct from others at its boundaries, and marked by historical longevity, if not rooted in nature. (p. 866)" In the case of the Armenian national identity, Armenia's ethnogenesis emphasizes a history of a monoethnic and homogeneous society with an exclusively Christian population. These ideas are incorporated everywhere from textbooks to museum entrances, maps, and historical explanations of Armenia's formation and take great pride in being the first nation to declare Christianity and existence on the same lands or an immemorial history of borders. What is this Armenian-American thinking about asking such questions? If given the opportunity to ask the older generations both Soviet and pre-Soviet times, I wonder if this question would have been considered treacherous then? I assume it would seem bizarre to Soviet and pre-Soviet generations who would have looked at me and said, "yes, we lived as neighbors or in neighboring villages, so what?" Suny (2001) approached this similar topic before me in the following discussion:

> How can Armenians (or Georgians and Azerbaijanis for that matter) reconcile the idea of relatively homogeneous nation-states with the realities of Transcaucasian politics and demography, which were formed by centuries of multinational empire and migration? Among ethnonationalists in South Caucasia, the discourse of the nation—the notion that political legitimacy flowed upward from a culturally coherent community, "the people" constituted as a "nation"—had narrowed to the view that the people must be ethnically, perhaps racially, singular. The result has been ethnic cleansing and killing, deportations and forced migrations, and a series

> of enduring conflicts in Karabakh (between Armenians and Azerbaijanis), Abkhazia (between Georgians and Abkhazians), and South Ossetia (between Georgians and Osetians). (p. 863)

Suny's discussion suggests that, as in the Soviet past, there may be more room for fluidity in identities in relation to the nation-state. Not bound by borders or politics, but rather, regional spaces, rivers, and more broadly nature? Over time I began to realize that these types of discussions within Yerevan were far more complicated as compared to my experiences in the villages along the borders, which allowed me more space to explore the past. Certainly, there were folks who had reservations in the border villages, but I sensed that folks living along the border approached life from a different perspective. For them the border was near their community or perhaps along the garden or next to their backyard. Hearing and seeing cross border shootings was more real for them than it was for a person living far off in Yerevan.

Uprooting Seeds: Redefining Home/Land

When the war began in 1988, teachers recalled stories of either Armenians relocating from Baku to these villages or Azerbaijanis leaving villages in Armenia. Many Armenian teachers remembered how Azerbaijanis were "sent off well," which implied that there was no violence or mistreatment of these people. In fact, several recalled helping their Azerbaijani neighbors either to sell cattle or lands, or helped coordinate vehicles to assist with relocating belongings such as furniture. When transcribing or referring back to these interviews, I tried to locate some of the places that the interviewees would reference during the interview. Often, I could not find those places or wouldn't even know how to "Turkify" the word to try to locate them. Renaming of cities

is not limited to former Azerbaijani names but also some remaining Soviet street names, signs, or symbols. The names that are replaced later are important to reflect on as well, as they reflect a desired image or representation. For example, a vice principal in the Tavush region described *Ghalacha,* a village in Noyemberyan, where he was born in 1956, which by 1978, had been renamed *Berdavan*.

> We have the fortress of Berd, 1.5 km northeast of us is the fortress called Ghalinjakar, which is of 10-12 centuries. Our ancestors mentioned that it was one of the castles of Ashot the Iron. If we check the name Ghalacha, it is a Turkish word, which means fortress. Our former village was spread right around that Ghalinjakar fortress, 1.5 km north-east of our current village. And during the battles that fortress was very significant, even the villagers from the surrounding areas gathered inside it. It has serious defensive significance. The village was there until 1895. (Interview, October 23, 2019)

Later, the vice principal referred to another village name that was also changed from Turkish to Armenian. While explaining his teaching experiences he shared the following: "I started working in the village of Voskevan in the Noyemberyan region, which was formerly called Ghoshkhotan. It was the Turkish name, which was changed to a more beautiful one and sounded Armenian." (October 23, 2019) By renaming villages to Armenian names, the vice principal alluded to the notion of beauty exemplified in the Armenian sounding version as compared to the Turkish name.

> As I studied names, they tried to deform our geographical names. When our village was established here, they called it "Nor Gyugh", "Norashen". Of course, it is not written anywhere. And Lchkadzor comes from our small lake but at the beginning they called it Nor Gyugh. They kept calling it "Taza Qyand". I told them that our village had not been called like that. But they called it in their way. They also called the names of our mountains, canyons in their ways so much that our compatriots called them in the Turkish names. (Interview, October 15, 2019).

As noted in this example above, language ideologies play a role in the names of places, reinforcing the belief that the Armenian homeland is connected to the national identity. Here, the beauty of Armenian local places needed to be identified with an

Armenian name rather than Turkish "misnaming." Aside from village names, at times there are many foreign words – either Arabic, Persian, or Turkish - used so frequently within colloquial conversations that these words were culturally appropriated into people's practices. At the Dzitoghtsyan House-Museum of Social Life and National Architecture in Gyumri, I took a tour to understand the cultural history of this region. The museum is also a popular school field trip destination. Founded by the Dzitoghyants brothers from Dzitogh, a village in Western Armenia or present-day Eastern Turkey, this museum presented a wide collection of cultural artifacts including tools, lifestyles, and traditions. During the tour, the museum guide presented and explained some of the traditional garments that were worn and referred to the original names – a *yazma* (spelled as եազմա or յազմա) or white cloth for head, a *chikila* or an *apon*. I often stopped the tour guide to clarify these words as I was not familiar with them. "Are these words Armenian?" And the guide replied, "no." Using words from other languages into Armenian conversation is typical and not limited to this experience. Some of the popular words that I heard Armenians appropriate include, *taza* or fresh and *keleh* or come. These language experiences provide evidence that there were histories of coexistence and crossing borders – what surprised me the most is when people across borders try to relabel and ignore these unique attributes which could help create understanding and bring people together.

What's in a Name? Place Renaming and the Armenian National Identity

> The conscious use of place-names by a state can be seen as an instrument to preserve the unity and uniqueness of the nation; to enforce in the national consciousness its moral right to inhabit a particular territory; to protect its land from the territorial claims of its neighbors; or to justify its own territorial claims.

> A recreated or artificially created place-name landscape is a symbolic part of national identity. (Saparov, 2003, p. 180).

The practice or history of renaming and toponyms offers important insights and questions in terms of Armenia's political, historical, and social environments over time and space. Specifically, the renaming of geographic places from Turkic, Russian, or Kurdish to Armenian allows us to better understand and identify histories of invasions and coexistence across time and space. Within the literature on renaming in Armenia, Arsène Saparov (2003) and Husik Ghulyan (2020) explain the place re-naming practices in nation building – from Soviet to post-Soviet Armenia respectively. In Soviet Armenia, the place-name changes focused on the following categories in chronological order: Armenian, "socialist," "Turkic," and "other." Within society, Armenians' disassociation with Turkic names is rooted in the history of wars and conflicts. Yet, socialist, or Soviet names were not met with the same sense of disapproval. For example, Mashtots Street in Yerevan is not as commonly known to the broader society as is its former Soviet name, Prospect Street.

What is interesting about the name-changing history and analyses is how Armenians redefined places despite the former associations. As noted in Saparov's (2003) research, the influences on the borders of Armenia – from Ottoman to Soviet – contextualized the geopolitical nature of the name-changes. Moreover, Saparov (2003) argues that the "events of 1915 had the most profound and traumatic effect on the Armenian national identity" (p. 184). For Soviet Armenia, the focus of place re-naming targeted Turkic names and replaced them "with an Armenian one" (Saparov, 2003, p. 196). Applied to my field notes, these name changes appeared in different ways challenging what it means to be Armenia(n), to what being Armenia(n) is becoming. For example, across the villages

along the border of Shirak, several names and signs reflect these complex histories and changes.

> *A 30 minute, 200AMD ($0.42USD) gazelle ride from the Gyumri bus station can take you out to the villages along the Armenia and Turkish border. In the Shirak region, one retired teacher recalled her childhood memories growing up in this area. She described how there were once 28 villages of which 7 were Armenian while the rest were Azerbaijani. The teacher recalled how closely they worked together under the Soviet Union but as the USSR was beginning to fall apart, she says relations began to deteriorate quickly.*

In comparison to the Soviet Armenian place-name changes, Ghulyan (2020) argues the more current trends (2006-2018) indicate not only continuity, but also expansion to include non-Turkic place names as well (i.e., Russian, Kurd). According to Armenian law, there are three possible clauses in which renaming an object is permitted of which, Ghulyan (2020) found the place name changes during the 2006-2018 time period fell under the category of “eliminate ‘foreign’, ‘inharmonious’ or repetitive names” (p. 4). Within his analysis, Ghulyan (2020) says the meaning of “foreign” or “inharmonious” terms are not clear and, instead relies on “motivations of the entities” for analyzing the renamings (p. 5). Of the name-changes between 2006-2018, Ghulyan analyzed 27,897 geographical names and noted “8,910 geographical objects were changed” (p. 6). Across the changes Ghulyan found, “the vast majority of the 27,897 geographical names in their older form were of Armenian (22,169 names), Turkic (7742 names), Russian (526) or Kurdish (598 names) origin, signification and association” (p. 6). Altogether, the analyses of name-changes by government officials reflect the changing political landscapes, which at times does not reflect how these names are understood on the ground or at the site.

Although the villages or other spaces were renamed and new generations disassociate these spaces from the past, several individuals have carried their memories

and remember the former references. For example, most interviewees were able to reference Azerbaijanis of their villages (or neighboring villages) into their stories – some even included details such as names, buildings or homes, and streets where they lived as neighbors. Other generations may hear the former names from their family therefore, the names may never be forgotten. Clearly, by displacing or replacing people and places from maps, histories of coexistence and relations with their former neighbors will be hard to erase from memory or maps.

It is important to point out that the reference to Turkic people was particularly for Azerbaijanis (Ghulyan, 2020). This reference for me, at times, was confusing during the fieldwork, as participants would say "Turk" and I often followed up to ask specifically if they meant "Azerbaijani" or "Turk from Turkey." As these categories are used so interchangeably, I thought this was important to distinguish. However, the recent war and statements made by Turkey's President Erdogan at the parade on December 10, 2020, in Baku reiterate Armenians' justification for interchangeably using "Turk" to refer to both Turks from Turkey and Azerbaijanis when he claimed, "one nation, two states."

(Re)turning to Our Roots

For Armenians, identity and borders are both a physical and spiritual form. To be buried in their ancestral village or hometowns is how Armenians honor the spirit. Returning to the ground into the soil where their ancestors had once tilled and harvested crops and built their homes is the way to honor the dead. In my fieldwork, cemeteries were an important and central part of the community. Cemeteries serve as a resting place and memorial site to visit and honor the dead including national heroes and those who

have dedicated their lives for the nation. Cemeteries also provide a history about the people who lived at a certain point in time in or near that surrounding community. Certain heroic figures are honored annually, and their tombstones are sites for school field trips. Other national holidays, including *hokee hankeesd* or resting of the spirit, are commemorated on certain calendar Mondays where people have time off from work, schools are closed, and Armenians visit their loved ones at the cemetery.

While conducting fieldwork, the teachers I met became family members, especially my host family from the Tavush region. The father of Lucy – my host family's mother and chemistry teacher – passed away in December after struggling with illness. To pay my respect to the teacher and my host family, I asked if it was appropriate for me to attend the funeral service. I had planned to return to visit them in Tavush once more before my fieldwork ended. At the time, I did not realize that Sunday of the funeral was the last time I would see the teachers before my COVID-19 evacuation. Lucy, the chemistry teacher, was born and raised in the Ararat region. She is married to the principal of the school and lives in a small, mountainous village along the border of the Tavush region. On Sunday, we gathered in front of the teacher's family home and drove to the cemetery. The cars lined up, one after another, could be considered the procession in the set of rituals from a burial service. Upon arrival at the cemetery, I did not notice a priest or religious leader at the cemetery. Instead, the casket was sitting in the grave where his body was set for his eternal resting place.

Another family was visiting their loved one who was only recently buried. I stayed close to the Chemistry teacher and cried with her throughout the day. Based on Armenian rituals and traditions the burial service included several actions:

> Mourners taking a handful of dirt and making the sign of the cross; throwing the dirt into the grave, lowering the coffin into the grave; the actual burial (completely filling in the grave with dirt); a final set of prayers; a blessing; a dismissal of the people to go in peace. The final station of this sequence is back at the house, where the 'popular religious' practice of the funeral meal is preceded by the official house ritual of psalms and prayers, again led by the priest. (Larson-Miller, 2006, p. 116)

Throughout the ritual, I noticed some of the elements were not familiar with my experience of an Armenian burial in the United States. It is important to remember during Soviet Armenia, the only ideology that could be practiced freely and openly was socialism. However, many Armenians did in fact practice and maintain their Christian faith within churches tucked away in large apartment complex buildings or other gatherings in people's homes. I consulted Reverend Father Zacharia Saribekyan about the rituals and he shared memories from his Soviet Armenian childhood. Father Zacharia recalls his father practiced Christianity and due to his position in society (as a receptionist) he did not get into trouble with Soviet authorities. According to Father Zacharia, only individuals of higher social status in Soviet times were held accountable if caught practicing Christianity or any other ideology for that matter.

Mourners pray for their loved one to be relieved of any pain or suffering, for their souls to rest peacefully for eternity, and hope and trust that their loved one's soul has entered the house of God. First the men lined up and picked up a handful of sand/soil and sprinkled it over the casket. Once the men finished, the women followed. The lines began with the family or closest relatives followed by friends and neighbors. I waited towards the end of the line to make room for the other mourners. Father Zacharia suggests that the practice of men and women separating as they pay their respects was taken from Muslim traditions – as observed in the line to bid farewell or the luncheon that

took place later that day. Most of the funeral service is based on Christian beliefs but Armenians have added traditions and rituals over time and space. These shared or adopted rituals in Armenian funerals yet again refer to the histories of coexistence and crossing borders. Returning to the soil, in the area where their ancestors lived and fought for, is considered the highest honor for Armenians. For Armenians, not only is living with or near other Armenians important – as noted in the Little Armenia song earlier in the chapter - but also, returning to the homeland for eternal rest is considered honorable. Being laid to rest eternally in the homeland knowing their family and ancestors will watch over and protect them.

CHAPTER 6

CROSSING BORDERS THROUGH MEMORIES AND EXPERIENCES OF COEXISTENCE

As noted in the previous chapter, learning the history of borders and identities is based on dominant narratives that aim to support certain political and social agendas. As political leadership changes over time, these narratives may shift while memories remain. Unlike historical narratives, memories are based on unique experiences not inscribed by political agendas. Memories have the ability to travel across times and spaces and can cross (closed) borders. Memories may stay with us for long periods of time – some far more vividly than the others. Both learning and remembering are bodily experiences often enhanced through our senses and emotions. Memory scholars recognize that while certain details may fade over time, oral histories are powerful sources representing each individual's voice and experience (Smith, 2013), offered through their own words (Bornat, 2013). This chapter focuses on the oral histories of current and retired teachers who crossed borders – both physically and metaphorically – where they found themselves interacting with the "other." I would like to acknowledge that there were several teachers who shared stories of being stuck at the border or those who could not envision a future of peaceful relations. While such stories are important and circulate more widely, I chose to focus on the less frequently spotlighted stories of individuals who may be described as border thinkers (see chapter 2), i.e., those who experience obstacles and risks within their communities when attempting to cross borders. In this chapter, I highlight different ways of how border thinkers cross borders.

Weaving together current and retired teachers' memories, this chapter required blurring times and spaces, traveling back and forth – from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to the independent, post-Soviet Republics and from the Ottoman Empire to the present day Republic of Turkey. Time travel allowed us – the teachers and me – to return to our childhood neighborhoods, to moments from our lives either joyful and warm or distressful and tragic. I asked participants to revisit and reflect on their past and include stories they had heard from their grandparents that became shared family stories passed onto the future generations. For some participants, this project became the first time they were able to share their story. It is important to note that these memories are not from a distant historical past – for some, these are actual, eye witness accounts of the events. Such recent-past and lived experiences are reasons why the emotions are still very much alive and raw to this day. During the interview process, teachers' emotions resurfaced, some involving deep grief and pain. We stayed in those painful moments. Therefore, in order to honor their memories and stories, this chapter presents the opportunity for teachers (and readers) to reconnect across spaces and times and move across the borders toward more peaceful futures.

Crossing Borders through Soviet Memories

Artak grew up in a village very close to the Georgian and Azerbaijani border. As a child, Artak dreamt of becoming a journalist but also loved studying history. He left his dreams of pursuing journalism and applied to the international relations faculty with a focus on Turkology. Eventually, Artak switched from international relations to the Pedagogy faculty and has been teaching now for over 20 years. After his father retired, Artak replaced

his father as the principal of their village school – the same school Artak had attended as a child. Today, his children attend this school as well. Artak described his family like any other traditional Armenian family – while his father was a principal of their neighborhood school, his mother was a stay at home mom. Similar to Artak, his father loved geography and topography but never thought he would be a teacher. Artak's ancestors have lived in this area of Tavush for several generations. Many Azerbaijanis also lived in these areas. One day on our way to an excursion, Artak pointed to a river where there was a small land bridge. He explained to me that for a long time, local farmers – Armenians, Azerbaijanis, and Georgians – would gather there to sell and exchange their produce and goods. However, this exchange ended when the Nagorno-Karabakh war began. These relationships were not only based on business, but also friendly relations as well. After the war began, relations between Armenians and Azerbaijanis became almost taboo. In the following story, Artak shares his brother's experience of being friends with Azerbaijanis and attending their weddings:

> I remember an incident related to my brother. After serving in the army, my brother was going to Azeri territories crossing the borders. Once he went to the neighboring Azeri village to participate in a wedding ceremony. They previously said that there would not be any problem. It was based on mutual trust. And in the same way Azeris came to Armenia to visit their relatives' graves. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union, such events did not happen again. In contrast with Azeris, we did not teach our students at schools to hate them, we do not sow Azeriphobia as they do in Azerbaijan. But we are optimistic that one day we will rebuild our friendship. (Interview, October 15, 2019)

For Artak's family, the shift in neighborly relations was experienced in different ways. In the 1980s, Artak's father worked as an inspector and was sent by the People's Education Department (USSR) to a school – which was attended by both Armenians and Azerbaijanis – in a neighboring village at the height of the Armenia-Azerbaijani conflict to help resolve

tensions. Upon learning about the massacres of Armenians in Baku, Artak's father asked his Azerbaijani friend if ever the day would come for him to kill Artak's child, would he do it? The Azerbaijani replied, "I would not, however, I would tell someone else to do it." In spite of national loyalty, these relationships were friendly and close, as is evidenced by the Azerbaijani's response.

Returning to Artak's childhood, he said he spent a lot of time playing in the mountains. He often helped his father with their orchards and bees, which Artak still continues to manage to this day. When I asked him about his personal experiences with Azerbaijanis, Artak shared the following story which he remembered so fondly and vividly:

> My father was a beekeeper in the region – naturally, a lot of Azerbaijanis lived in the villages here. I remember when we would go to the mountains and there were Azerbaijanis there too and one of them was a very close friend of ours.... One interesting event happened once when I was young, I was probably 7 or 8 years old...one time we went to the bee yard and one of the beekeepers suggested to my father that they put this hive aside as the bees were enraged. It was a very strong bee...he banged the sheet in a strong manner when suddenly 100-200 bees came flying out and started stinging...I was sitting in the car...the bees got into the car and the bees started to sting me. And that Azerbaijani man, who was about 65 years old, came and covered me with his clothes and protected me. [smiling] I won't forget that... I remember the children asking who that guy was...one bee had stung my nose so I started crying, and he told me, 'I will eat your nose don't cry'... it was natural during that time, we were citizens of the Soviet Union, between us there wasn't, I don't know, nationalism or other demands…. (Interview, October 15, 2019)

As Artak shared the story, his voice lifted and he smiled when he remembered the old, Azerbaijani man telling him he would bite his nose, which was a "bite" of endearment or love. While staying with his family in Tavush, I was able to visit an area of the mountain where they harvest honey to this day. Artak and his wife showed me how they prepared the honey, which they later got tested by a lab for purification. Since their honey was found pure, Artak and his wife are able to sell their honey on the market. For someone like Artak,

who continues to live in his childhood home and work at his school, these memories are meaningful and carried with him in his day-to-day interactions. Although the neighborhoods stay almost intact, no Azerbaijanis remain – the Azerbaijanis cleared out of their village when the war began. Artak and his father both remembered helping their neighbors to pack up their belongings to send them on their way. The spaces and ways in which the village changed are remembered from time to time.

Image 8. Map of Region with Pinpoint in Gyumri

As a brief historical, political, and socioeconomic background, Gyumri is the second largest city in Armenia and is also known as Leningrad from Soviet times, which seems to be the more popular name. In 1988 there was an earthquake in the northern Shirak and Lori regions, which took the lives of many and destroyed communities. Many of these people still have not yet recovered from that past. The late 1980s was also a difficult time for the nation as the Soviet Union was on the verge of collapsing and many people left the country, while also the economic conditions were deteriorating. As a result, the socio-economic conditions made Armenia a very unstable area in which to

live. Added to these complicated layers was the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh war, where Armenians sent aid and soldiers to fight against Azerbaijan for the territory known as the Nagorno-Karabakh oblast. In the Shirak region there were many border villages where Armenians and Azerbaijanis coexisted. More importantly, the Shirak region is the closest to the Armenia-Turkey border, which remains closed due to the NKR war but also the Genocide issue.

Crossing Borders through Teaching and Learning

In the same village along the borders of Shirak, I met one retired and one current Armenian language and literature teachers. Their stories allow for a generational representation of experiences from the same village reflecting both a childhood and adulthood experience. Beginning with Gohar, she is a retired Armenian language and literature teacher who moved to this village along the Armenia-Turkey border in 1972 to marry her husband. A few years later, Gohar began teaching Armenian language, literature, and grammar at the village middle school. Her students included Azerbaijani students as this middle school was shared between Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Prior to the escalation of tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Gohar and her husband lived and worked side-by-side with their neighbors. Gohar's husband worked with an Azerbaijani who was a high-level authority figure while she worked with his daughter who was a teacher. Remembering her neighbors, Gohar shared the following:

> They lived close to our house. Every bairam (holiday), their bairam, their new year, every year, [I went] with my husband with nice gifts, with everything in its place, we went to their home to celebrate their new year and they were very, very grateful of us; they were very hospitable. We never saw anything bad; they were happy that we broke bread [ate meal together]. (Interview, September 13, 2019)

Back then, such relations were common in villages along the borders. Gohar lived in a small village close to the border. In Soviet times, there were more Azerbaijanis living here than there were Armenians (Interview September 19, 1999). Later (September 19, 2019), I learned from Marina that like her grandparents, many Armenians came to this village from Basen and other historical regions of present day Eastern Turkey. As this village is located in a far off, remote area, not many tourists or visitors travel there.

> Our relations were good, they weren't bad. [takes deep breath] And it continued this way [voice emphasis here] until the year 1988. 1988, until the earthquake. [takes deep breath, and paused] And, the Sumgait massacres or genocide took place on February 28. After the Sumgait massacres, it seems after that we split into two groups: Armenian teachers and Azerbaijani teachers. (Interview, September 13, 2019)

Prior to the Azerbaijani emigration, both Gohar and Marina described coexistence as harmonious. Unlike Gohar, Marina's childhood and upbringing was based in this village and she remembers growing up with Azerbaijanis. Although Soviet policy forbade Armenians from studying, writing, or discussing the Armenian Genocide of 1915, Marina asserted, "We heard the stories" (Interview September 19, 2019). As survivors of the genocide, the stories of the past did not allow Marina, her family, and many Armenians to ever truly trust their neighbors for fear that Azerbaijanis would do to them what Turks had done in 1915.

As Gohar was a young adult at the time, she shared stories of working alongside her Azerbaijani peers, where she claims, "We lived each other's happiness, lived each other's sadness" (September 13, 2019). Reminiscing about the school where she taught, Gohar recalled, "We worked together at school, side-by-side with Azerbaijanis, we sat on the same couches, we ate bread [meals] together, we drank tea together, we gossiped

together, we laughed together, we made merry together, and our relations were good" (Interview September 13, 2019). The curriculum they used at the time was excellent, Gohar claims, and she was able to teach Azerbaijani students Armenian very well. After Azerbaijanis emigrated, Gohar said some still tried to keep in touch with her through their acquaintances. Aside from Gohar's relations, her husband was also very close with Azerbaijanis:

> What did we do to each other? We are humans at the end, right? Clearly, the people on top messed things up and we are just ordinary members of society, ordinary members of society don't have issues to be split over...like that Garine jan, this entire area of (Village name) was rid of Azerbaijanis. All of them left. They exchanged homes, with people from Baku, Chowdree; Sumgait Armenians from there came here. (Interview September 13, 2019)

As an adult, Gohar expresses frustration that ordinary people were able to live together but it was government officials who manipulated the people. "In my childhood," Marina says, "I didn't remember any conflicts. Just the opposite, we played with each other, interacted with each other…" (Interview September 19, 2019). The experiences of Marina and Gohar resonated with many teachers – the tensions in 1988 became the turning point in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations where distrust, uncertainty, and fear led to relocation and displacement, and eventually to the first Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Crossing Borders through Traditional Cuisines

Maral never intended to become a teacher. She considered acting her first profession and journalism her second. For a few years, she went back and forth between teaching and reporting the news on television. Her teaching career allowed her to combine her passions for working with children, performance, and acting as head of the school theater program. As a classroom teacher, Maral claims she felt the impact of the

first Nagorno-Karabakh war when she had a decline in the number of students enrolled between 2011-2014. Many in the country experienced poverty as a result of the war, the 1988 earthquake in Gyumri, and the collapse of the USSR. Growing up, Maral remembers having Baku Armenian refugees as her classmates. She remembers being bothered by the way adults spoke about them – as less Armenian or not Armenian enough. As a child, Maral says she was sensitive and passionate for people who were discriminated against for whatever reason and took on the responsibility of protecting those individuals. Throughout her childhood, she felt like she always had to fight back and be a human rights defender. Altogether these childhood experiences led Maral to try to understand how and why Armenians treated Baku-Armenian refugees badly, but more broadly, she wanted to understand the Nagorno-Karabakh war.

Maral had more questions than answers after speaking with and learning from Baku-Armenian refugees and wanted to learn more about Azerbaijanis:

> For me it was so important to hear about the displaced people's lived situations and experiences, and from my doubts from my youth and childhood, I was convinced that those people [Azerbaijanis] – and yes, the Armenians here improperly treated, and yes, they don't accept those people – they didn't have problems with Azerbaijani people because they lived in one community and there is evidence on this topic. They even were affected when they tell their story about how Azerbaijanis lived in pain, how their Azerbaijani neighbor wanted to protect and use all possible sources to help relocate refugees safely…(Interview, December 5, 2019)

These questions remained with Maral overtime and she found ways through support from the principal of the school and a school program in a village in southeastern Armenia. While visiting this village, Maral met and heard stories from Baku-Armenian refugees and expressed interest in creating a project to document oral histories. The principal

supported her plans and she assigned her students to also conduct interviews with their families at home. Over time, Maral kept returning to this village to interview more people as word had spread widely and others expressed interest to share their stories with her. Inspired by these stories, Maral hopes that one day, she will manage to make connections with Azerbaijanis and document their stories as well.

> My research, my interests started from my childhood… my journalist background forced me to explore, and it was a major dream for me to be able to make any connections with Azerbaijanis from (village name) and listen to them, and how they lived. I heard this side, I wanted to also hear our Azerbaijanis (Azerbaijanis who lived in Armenia) and listen to how they lived. And like that, my research brought me to that place…we met with the first hero, Digin (Name) who lived in (Village name). We found out that she lived in Naxichevan, had beautiful words and explained beautifully, and like that, it began. And then I found out about her neighbor who heard about this opportunity and then my friends from (village name), their father's sister shared that she was a nurse, and like this it began. (Interview, December 5, 2019)

Maral began documenting oral histories, taking photos and videos. She referred to the participants of her research as "heroes" and their stories as beautiful words because she respected the oral histories and the displaced peoples.' For Maral, I think the participants' ability to overcome the challenges of transitioning from Azerbaijan to Armenia, including discrimination and often starting their lives over as heroic acts. Eventually, she created a series of shows where the person would also cook and share a traditional dish from their town. For these recordings, Maral helped prepare and cook the dish and taste the cuisines. To date, she still has yet to fulfill her dream of interacting with Azerbaijanis. Although she has attended regional gatherings mainly in Georgia, she had seen Azerbaijanis but did not feel that she had the opportunity to interact properly with them. Teachers like Maral inspire her students to create possibilities for imagining, thinking, and asking. Maral's passion for understanding others as well as her genuine

curiosity to learn led her to develop an oral history video documentary initiative. There are no limits to what Maral is capable of accomplishing.

> I cannot remember expressing hate or doubt. I always want to understand the inside. Where is the problem coming from? From where? I don't ever judge. Always, I am not the standard person, where if they say this, then this is how it has to be. I have to, as a person, understand the problem. And I am confident and hope to have that opportunity to take photographs/videos of our Azerbaijanis, to listen to them, and I am confident that through these kinds of projects, it's so important that these projects are from our school because over the generations, it's possible to really pass on history, not someone else's analysis, for them to have the opportunity to narrate and establish history. (Interview, December 5, 2019)

Maral is able to teach the importance of dialogue, compassion, and understanding as she describes the need to document and understand the perspectives of Azerbaijanis who had lived in Soviet Armenia. Through such oral history projects, Maral's project demonstrates how national histories are not inclusive of all sides. This initiative can be an example for other educators to help students understand the importance of oral history and by bringing these histories in parallel to each other we can begin to fill in the gaps and reclaim histories. Moreover, this type of project and her perspective could reshape history education in Armenian classrooms. If projects like Maral's could be applied across Armenian classrooms, they would create opportunities for students to learn how textbooks do not provide the full account of the histories. Rather, oral history projects such as Maral's can create a space to learn about what has been excluded and open opportunities to expand on learning alternative understandings through primary sources.

Crossing Borders and Building Bridges through Cultural School Trips

On Friday morning, November 22, 2019, I observed a tourism class. I was intrigued by the idea that the school offered such a course to students in secondary school. The class was taught by one of the Vice Principals. She invited me not only to attend her classes but also visit other teachers who could be helpful to my dissertation. As I sat in the waiting area of the office for the class bell to ring, I overheard a set of parents talking with Mrs. Sargsyan. The family had moved from Spitak, a major city in the Shirak region where the 1988 earthquake struck. The parents expressed interest in enrolling their son to this school as they had heard a lot of good things about their curriculum and teachers. “Our son will not go to college,” stated the parents in what appeared to be their decision for him. The parents had planned for their son to become a goldsmith. This school in Yerevan is considered a lab school, which was meant to be distinguished from ordinary public schools as it allowed for teachers to practice diverse pedagogical approaches – for example, less emphasis on textbooks, and utilizing primary sources and other technology sources to assist in the learning process. Mrs. Sargsyan replied, “I guess you should take your son to a regular public school. If your son starts with us in the fall for 10th grade, it’s much harder to admit or enroll students as they might get lost…our school is very different, where curriculum is taught without books and students keep blogs.” The parents listened attentively and followed up to ask if Mrs. Sargysan knew of a school where their son could receive goldsmith training. It was clear the parents were not from Yerevan, they do not know their way around, but are trying to find ways to secure a future career for their son. In my mind, Mrs. Sargsyan was very warm, welcoming, and helpful to the parents, understanding that not every child will have the opportunity to attend a school that costs close to $300 USD annually. But also,

educational environments such as their school's is unique within the Armenian educational landscape, where textbooks are secondary sources and students are encouraged to do research and use primary and other sources. In my interview with Mrs. Sargsyan, she emphasized that the educational learning environment of their school has a distinct pedagogy, and she explained the following:

> Here we don't teach them to learn by heart; we teach them to think. If you have realized, we don't put books on the tables. I try to make them talk, I ask questions, I don't let them answer, I don't push them to accept my opinion. We sometimes disagree. We talk about many different topics, and this allows students to express themselves, and think as individuals. (Interview, December 3, 2019).

Such an approach is consistent across all grade levels and classrooms. While observing an 11th grade history class (November 19, 1999), students were preparing for the state exam and reviewing certain topics or events that they thought would be covered on the exam. Other students tried to give answers based on what they had read in the textbooks. The history teacher posed questions to the students such as, "How do you know?" or "Based on what source?" and many other questions to encourage students to think more deeply which often led to new questions and discussions.

Returning to Mrs. Sargsyan's tourism class, we walked over to her classroom after the bell rang. It was a space with tables and chairs in the library. She started the class by leading a discussion on how to begin developing tourism, which would be the topic of their blog assignment that week. The discussion included the importance of feeling safe as well as visiting places with mountainous views. One of the students shared how traveling helps teach, make new friends, and that they preferred staying at someone's house rather than a resort or hotel in order to interact with and learn more from the local community. This remark sparked Mrs. Sargsyan to reflect on the school

trip to a village in the Tavush region where they met an older lady who had lived through the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. During the war, the older lady explained how there weren't any lights on the streets in the northern border villages of Tavush. The discussion then ended with, “What does traveling give to us?” which students were asked to reflect on and discuss during the following class.

Mrs. Sargysan had asked to be interviewed after the school-wide assembly they were preparing for, as it was taking up a lot of her time. Therefore, I finally managed to sit down one-on-one with her on Tuesday, December 3, 2019. Traveling and tourism has always been a part of Mrs. Sargsyan’s life beginning as early as her childhood. Her father’s family was born in Iran while her mother’s family in Armenia. Her father’s family emigrated to Armenia in 1946. However, Mrs. Sargsyan’s family and homelife was often filled with hearing about the rich culture in other parts of the world such as Iran and Turkey:

> When I first visited Turkey, I went to Izmir with the “Space Camp.” I took the students by bus from the Kurdish part to European Izmir. I was thinking about the Genocide and all the things that happened there, but they put everything aside and I looked at it as a touristic spot and looked at the places that we say belong to us (Armenians), how our Turk neighbors are making it a touristic place. We shall not look at it as our land and demand it, but we should look at it on the contrary as culture. (Interview, December 3, 2019)

Here, it is important to understand what Mrs. Sargsyan is referring to when she describes “belonging” to Armenians. In chapter 2, I had outlined the history of Armenian borders and identities changing over time and space, and specifically when Armenia was divided between present-day Eastern Turkey as Western Armenia and present-day RoA as Eastern Armenia. In Mrs. Sargysan’s reference, many Armenians visit these areas of Turkey to connect to the past and these lands, especially individuals who can trace back

their ancestral roots. For Mrs. Sargsyan and the school more broadly, school trips were as important as time spent in the class or students doing homework. Mrs. Sargsyan said, “I always take my students (on trips) and I learned a lot of things … I think it is more beneficial for them to see things in life rather than explaining the same thing for hours and hours” (Interview, December 3, 2019). This school also participated in and later initiated school exchanges with students from Turkey, including students from the Istanbul Armenian Community (See Image 10. Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul Turkey).

Image 9. Balyan Family Grave Site in Istanbul, Turkey

Image 10. A Furnace with Armenian Inscription on the Silver Plate Found in One of the Rooms of the Dolmabahçe Palace

Image 11. Dolmabahçe Palace, Istanbul Turkey

This was my first visit to Istanbul where I was looking at it from the angle of culture. I was looking at how Armenian architects built those buildings and Dolmabahçe, it is very impressive and interesting for me. I always liked the city, and I never felt any feelings of hostility towards them. And when I met the teachers there, we directly decided that we should form a relationship and it started with (Name of Teacher). Then I started to form this idea and my students saw that they should change the way they think towards Turkey, and they should know because it is our neighbor and it's a strong country. We have always been enemies with Turkey and the relation with Georgia is stable, but it is always possible to be changed, and this is because of our geographic location. I try to teach tolerance through tourism that we should look at each country as culture and

> not envy other countries; on the contrary, we should look at what they have and try to make similar things in our own country. (Interview, December 3, 2019)

From Mrs. Sargsyan's perspective, she encourages her students to try to learn more about the neighboring countries. While visiting Turkey, the opportunity for students to interact with and learn from the "other" allows students the ability to break down any barriers or previous associations of Turks. Through tourism, students are able to gain insights not only into the historical and cultural aspects of a country but also into the country as a whole. More importantly, such visits give individuals the opportunity to take their own steps of unlearning their impressions of the "enemy's" culture and people by experiencing and interacting with them first hand. In other words, these interactions may lead to the process of re-humanizing the other and opportunities to develop new understandings of the historical conflicts. On this trip, Mrs. Sargsyan describes how re-humanizing and decolonial experiences were built into the trip in direct ways.

> When we were at the central school, we went with them to a Turkish school and there was a debate there. Turks, Armenians from Istanbul, and Armenians from Armenia. In one room sitting around a table talking about Armenian-Turkish relations. One of the Turk girls, her teacher, says that we should not hate our neighboring country, we should not forget the history either. And after this debate we held each other's hands and we taught them Armenian dancing.
> I understood that their young people and our young people know that this happened because of the intolerance of the authorities of those countries. And we are connected with educational bridges, and these are very important. Children of Istanbul have never been to Armenia but because of this program they came and stayed with Armenian families for one week and the same from here … we collected 20 children and they went there and stayed with families of Armenians in Istanbul. (Interview, December 3, 2019)

Crossing Borders through Landscapes - Mount Ararat/Ağrı Dağı

As noted by many scholars, Mount Ararat is a national symbol of Armenian culture (Suny, 2017; Panossian, 2006; Kurkchiyan & Herzig, 2005). Mount Ararat – also

known as Massis – is included in the design of the RoA's National Coat of Arms, specifically in the center of this symbol. In the book of Genesis of the Bible, Mount Ararat is referenced as the resting location of Noah's Ark. More than a religious symbol for Armenians, Mount Ararat is a reminder of lands that no longer belong to Armenians. In chapter 2, I outlined how Armenians from the Western part of the Armenian homeland established their communities near the Mount Ararat plateau. Panossian (2006) refers to the Armenian myth of origin as told through the Haik and Bel story in which Mount Ararat is the location where Haik settled and all descendants referred to this area as Hayasdan (or Armenia) or homeland. Mount Ararat is also referenced in textbooks, literature, songs, poetry, and other forms of art. Clearly, the connection to Mount Ararat is not only important culturally for Armenians but also physically and symbolically as it crosses borders between Armenia and Turkey, offering a picturesque view and background in Yerevan. On a clear, sunny day, the peaks can be seen in Yerevan and especially while standing in the Ararat Region.

As pictured below, upon arrival, I was greeted by Mount Ararat after settling into my temporary residence in Yerevan in the early hours of Sunday, June 9, 2019. Yet the view and name of the mountain while standing on the Turkish side of the border is very different (See image 13 and 14). Mount Ararat in the Turkish language is called Ağrı Dağı, which is translated literally to mean the mountain of pain or sorrow. Ağrı Dağı does not receive the same attention and admiration from the Turkish side of the border as Mount Ararat receives from the Armenian side. It is a major tourist attraction – especially for diasporan Armenians – to visit or climb the mountain at times by hiring locals from the neighboring Kurdish villagers to guide the trek up.

Image 12. June 9, 2019, View of Mount Ararat

Image 13. July 24, 2015, View of Ağrı Dağı

Image 14. Children on Street in Yerevan with Ararat Landscape, Sargsyan, 2018, p. 28

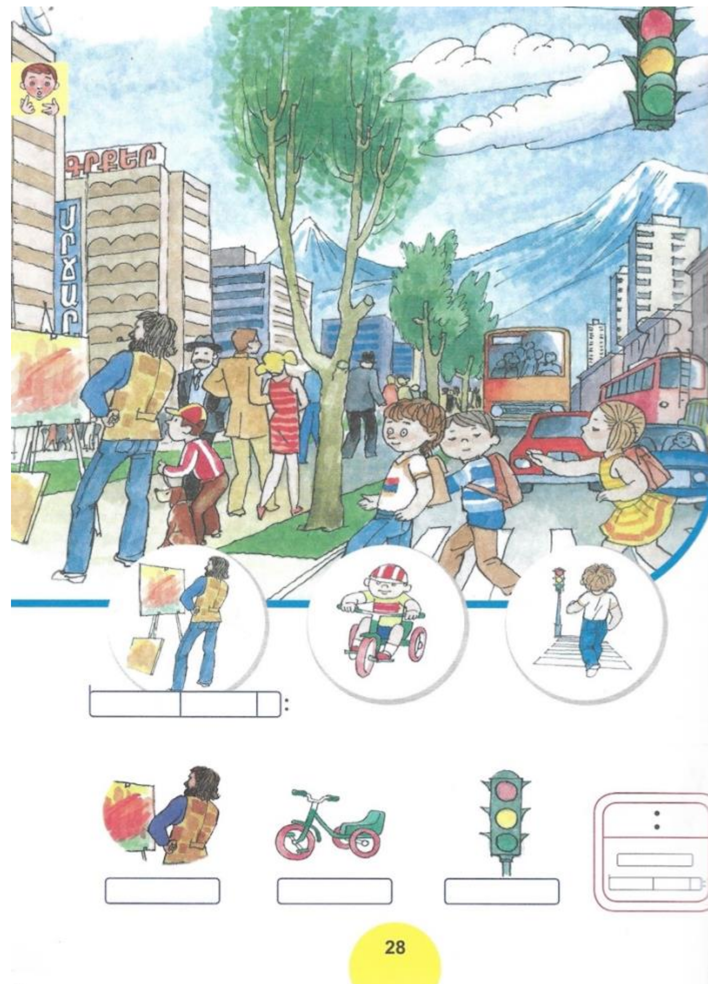


Image 15. Cover of Aybenaran Sargsyan, 2018

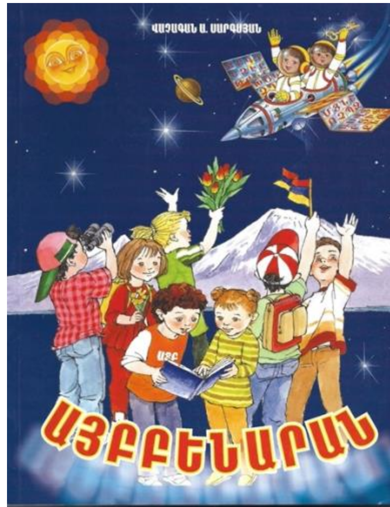


Image 16. Child Pointing to the Moon, Sargsyan, 2018, p. 84

The symbolism and importance of Mount Ararat is also illustrated in school textbooks as noted in the *aybenaran* below (see also Palandjian, 2014). While in Armenia, I overheard a discussion between a parent and child as the child insisted that the mountain was located in Armenian borders and referred to it as an Armenian mountain. The parent of this child attempted to explain that while the view is visible for them, the mountain was actually found in a different country. In this instance, I felt the child’s confusion was not necessarily problematic as the landscape appeared so close in proximity and visible daily that one can empathize with the child’s perspective. From this

conversation between the parent and the child, the socialization process begins in understanding what borders are and why they matter. Moreover, this parent's reaction was a clear example of border thinkers practice and pedagogy where they are able acknowledge that the mountain lies outside of the national borders of Armenia, while simultaneously appreciating the landscape and view from Armenia. Of importance is the way in which natural landscapes – as represented through Mount Ararat/Ağrı Dağı – instills the conception and politicization of borders and identity. Despite borders changing over time, Mount Ararat is visible in textbooks with background landscapes as children observe the moon (See image 16 above), display images and texts of Noah's Ark docked on top of the mountain (Sargsyan, 2018, p. 71; Kyourkjian & Der Krikorian, 2006, p. 63), offer paintings of Mount Ararat as birthday gifts (Kyourkjian & Der Krikorian, 2006, p. 63), and reference it at times when studying the word mountain (see Palandjian, 2014). The repeated imagery of Mount Ararat throughout *aybenarans* suggests that it is a part of the natural Armenian landscape. No textbook image or text locate Mount Ararat to be found outside of Armenia, suggesting that in fact Armenians consider Ararat as belonging to them symbolically – despite borders separating them.

Intersecting Borders: Nagorno-Karabakh

Nagorno-Karabakh or Arstakh is a geographic space that crosses or even intersects borders. As noted in Chapter 2, Karabakh was primarily inhabited by a majority of ethnic Armenians. The context of the history of the conflict is politicized – both sides claim ownership of the land. In order to understand the intersectionality of

these borders, we must look at the history of the conflicts over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenians and Azebaijanis.

Since 1994, Armenians of Karabakh have rebuilt their lives and established their own government located in the capital of Stepanakert. Today, Armenians of Karabakh live under instability or unresolved conflict or peace. Border clashes continued over the course of more than 20 years and led to the second major war in 2020. For Azerbaijan, the loss of territories and result of the first war "made the dream of revenge and retaking Nagorno-Karabakh" as Samadov (2021) claims, "the dominant idea of the Azerbaijani national community regardless of political affiliation" (Samadov, 2021, p. 2). The second war resulted in the displacement and killing of many. Azerbaijan claimed victory and led to reclaiming former territories. Today, President Aliyev of Azerbaijan claims the conflict is resolved and continues to pursue his plan of eliminating the remaining Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh. Unlike Azerbaijanis, the Armenians of Nagorno-Karabakh, as well as the OSCE Minsk Group claim the conflict has not reached a peaceful resolution yet.

Some of the participants identified themselves as being born in Karabakh and Azerbaijan, which allowed for a wider understanding of the displaced experiences as well as those who were willing to share their experience while living in Azerbaijan. Here, Askhen, a retired Armenian refugee teacher identifies herself as being born and raised in Shaqi, Azerbaijan.

> I had Armenian, Russian, Turk, and Lezgi friends. We were united. Many of our neighbors were Turks. And we were living peacefully. We helped each other. My mother made tea for us, and we gathered with our neighbors. My father planted grapes. It rose up to the 3rd floor. We reaped and ate them. My memories here are also kind. (Interview October 21, 2019)

Prior to 1988, Armenians who lived in Baku often described their lives and conditions as being comfortable, with employment opportunities and stability. Through their memories, I understood by their reaction what a stark difference it was for many of them to move from a modern city center to live in villages along the borders. The quality of life is one of the common themes many focused on during the interviews, which led to many eventually fleeing Armenia – especially to Russia. Of importance in these memories is the nature in which people were moved at the time of displacement – some teachers described how, in certain regions, Armenians were violently pushed out, while others remembered peaceful send-offs. While navigating those memories, Ashkhen reflects on the displacement experiences in the following:

> There was no alternative. There was only one Armenian village which was surrounded by 26 Turkish villages. There were some Turkish families in our village. We were always warned about potential threats. Near our home, there was a big Armenian bank. Our village was beautiful. They provided us with cars to take our stuff and leave. Each of 3 families were provided with a car. We took only the most important things with us. It is true that they scared us, but in our district, there were not any clashes. But in Kirovabad, Baku, and Sumgait there were beatings and massacres. Armenians in those cities stayed in the streets. Even some of them were gathered inside a club to be burned. The Soviet soldiers saved them, gave them buses, and sent them to Armenia. (Interview October 21, 2019)

In addition to the journey, what belongings they were able to take with them were also an important factor in these memories. There wasn't a teacher who claimed that they were able to bring with them all of the things they had wanted. The items ranged from furniture to clothing, but it heavily depended on if they had a positive or negative send-off, how they escaped, and the type of transportation means. The displacement experiences of Armenian-Azerbaijani refugees was also coordinated in terms of moving families into the homes of the others on the other side of the border. Some of the refugees

were able to sell their homes – based on the sample of teachers I spoke to, most were unable to sell their homes in Azerbaijan, yet they claimed they needed to provide a payment for the homes of the Azerbaijani refugees who had lived in the border villages of Armenia.

> Armenians and Azeris exchanged their houses. We left our home there without any exchange. We bought our house here from a Turk. We left cows, hogs...we could not take all that with us to Armenia. In 1988 we moved to Armenia, settled down here. We built our house, our families. We had nothing. Our children got educated, got married, and now we have grandchildren. (Interview October 21, 2019)

While in this border village of the Shirak region in Armenia, I spent more time learning from the Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan. I learned that not only was the journey traumatic, but they found themselves being discriminated against by Armenians in Armenia. While conducting my fieldwork, I sensed the discrimination and the silence and compliance of others for not speaking out or condemning these behaviors.

> *The first day I went to (Village), I accidentally got off the bus early and went to the (Name) school. The teachers were all staring at me wondering who I was and what I was doing there. None of them felt comfortable approaching me, even though I was hoping one would give a friendly smile for me to approach them. As I approached the entrance of the school, one teacher turned and asked, why are you here? Who are you here for? I explained that I came to visit Mariam and the teacher replied, "Oh the refugee, she is not at this school anymore – you are at the wrong school." I insisted that she lives in that village and I should see her here. Moments later Mariam called me asking where I was. There is only one bus that goes through the village so I should have been on the bus when Mariam got on. When Mariam realized I got off at a bus stop too soon, she told the bus driver to go back and pick me up. What bothered me most was not that I made the mistake of getting off at the wrong bus stop, but that the teachers associated Mariam with a refugee, not as another human being or colleague. And I was not sure if Mariam felt comfortable with everyone knowing about her refugee identity. I began to wonder what did local Armenians think of those who were born in Azerbaijan – do they treat them any differently?*

Mariam lives in a village, which was a former Azerbaijani village, in the home of a former Azerbaijani family. Mariam's home has been remodeled a few times since they

moved in. Many Armenian refugees from Azerbaijan went and inhabited the homes of the Azerbaijani refugees as they were empty. Mariam's family could not sell their home in Baku. She remembers when she was 10 years old, her parents sent her, her siblings, and cousins overnight to Russia where her uncle would host them. The trip took several hours by car and then a few days by train. For the first time in her life Mariam saw snow in Russia.

Mariam agreed to be interviewed and invited me to her house on Sunday, September 8, 2019. She felt comfortable talking in the warmth of her own home. Upon my arrival, we had coffee and sweets and talked about the previous day's inclusive education training and about her work environment and colleagues. Mariam had baked an apple cake and served fruit and coffee. She pointed and said some of her furniture is the same furniture from her family home in Baku. Mariam's family managed to bring their belongings. For example, one of the chairs in their living room was brand new when she was a child.

Image 17. Lunch with Mariam in Her Home

Mariam was born in Baku and her former husband was born in Sumgait. She explained that as a child, she did not know she was Armenian until after the war broke out.

> *Mariam: I was born in Baku, in the Republic of Azerbaijan, in the former Soviet Union countries. When I was ten years old, we had to leave the country. Should I explain why? Well, as you know, the chaos began, [sounds of potatoes being peeled and cut in the background] when the Karabakh movement began and when they gave us trouble. But until then, we lived really well there, really well. We lived harmoniously with diverse populations – Russian, Jewish, Ukrainian, Turkish people. It was a rich country – during Soviet times, we had everything. My father lived in an oil company – for months, he would not come home because he would work on pumping the oil. He was a chief engineer mechanic; he had 1,500 employees who he managed.*
>
> *My parents were born in Karabakh, but they moved to Baku where there were more employment opportunities. My mother worked in a cement factory. She made wallpapers. We had great relations with each other. But at some point, then Turks began throwing rocks on our windows, which made us feel uncomfortable. There were four of us girls; so, my parents were worried about living in this neighborhood.*

Garine: Did you feel Armenian when you grew up there?
Mariam: I thought I was Russian – I didn't speak Armenian, I didn't feel Armenian; but I felt equal with Azerbaijanis. After the insurgency, I knew there was a difference between us. On our door, we took our name plate off (Last name) so that they would avoid further damaging our house. I didn't see the war because we managed to escape before the fighting.

This village was filled with many Armenian refugees from Baku! When Azerbaijani refugees from here left, we filled their spaces. They made exchanges based on empty homes. My parents arrived in Armenia at the time of the 1988 earthquake. They would praise how great Leninagan was but it was a really awful situation. The NKR war started, no bread, no electricity, the worst years. I was a child 11-12 years old at that time, but I still remember. The fighting. There wasn't anyone left that didn't go to fight in the war – everyone was forced. Some escaped the mandatory serving by going to Russia. My older sisters were twins and 24-26 years old and couldn't find work so they left to go back and live with our uncle in Russia. One of our uncles was wounded during the war, so he didn't have to continue fighting. My twin sisters in Russia married other Baku Armenian refugees.

Until the war, everything was great there [Baku] and we lived really well there [Baku]. (Interview, September 8, 2019)

Prior to the conflict, Mariam's family did not experience difficulty while living in Baku; rather, they did when they moved to this border village in Shirak. When Mariam's family was displaced, the adjustment process was difficult on everyone, especially her father. Mariam explained, "He wasn't an alcoholic; he was a workaholic. My mother went and worked with cows. My father couldn't handle taking a village job because he was a former chief and used to higher level status work." In Armenia, Mariam's mother went from working in a cement factory to milking cows. As a result of the drastic change in their lives, she describes how her father grew impatient and angry over time, "because he didn't get a real job, he became very stressed and ill." At one point, her father went to stay with his uncle in Russia for a short time but since employment wasn't available, Mariam's father returned from Russia to Armenia. Like Mariam's family, many Baku Armenian refugees experienced difficulty adjusting to Armenia for various reasons. In Mariam's case, her

family lived well in Baku, their family had opportunities, and did not feel animosity or hatred – up until the beginning of the war.

> *Garine: Did you ever feel that Armenians here looked or treated you as a Baku refugee differently?*
>
> *Mariam: In the beginning, yes, I felt it very much. Sometimes they would call me a Turk (Azerbaijani) – Karabakhtsi Turk. Today they won't say this but they did in the beginning. They don't understand that we are not Turks. Anyone who has stayed in Baku, they complain – not Armenians, but Azerbaijanis complain about the conditions there. They cannot adjust to the conditions there – it's difficult. Armenians in Azerbaijan changed their last names, married, and were forced to accept the way of life there. My twin sisters are still in contact with them.*
> *That time (Soviet times) it was different, we were equal, it was so different, mentality it was different, we were all treated the same."* (Interview, September 8, 2019)

I asked Mariam about when and how teachers in Armenia speak hatred about Azerbaijanis, how do you feel? She replied with the following:

> You know, they are also a nation like us, they also don't want their children to be killed during war. They are also mothers, when our children are killed, it's the pain we have to carry. I don't have hate filled but here, I understand that I have to see them as enemies. My sisters in Russia don't see them as enemies because they are able to interact with them frequently. Here, I feel that I've accepted some of the culture from here. (Interview, September 8, 2019)

Image 18. Baku-Born Armenian Twin Sisters Dancing an Azerbaijani Dance with Their Azerbaijani Peers

Maryam shared this Image with me at her house during the interview. Her sisters are the two with the darker uniform jacket in the middle of this line. Holding hands, Maryam's sisters are dancing an Azerbaijani dance in their school in Baku.

Image 19. Cemetery in Former Azerbaijani Village of Armenia

Crossing Borders as Ghosts

During Soviet time, many Azerbaijanis lived in the villages along these borders. According to a retired math teacher and former vice principal, of the 28 villages along the borders of the Shirak region, 7 were exclusively Armenian while the majority were

Azerbaijani. The Armenian people of this village nearby remember this being an Azerbaijani cemetery. Within these border villages, there were cemeteries not fenced off or marked with any special signage but rather, a few tombstones that stood in what appeared scattered rows. A teacher who also served as the interpreter of one border village explained how some Azerbaijanis returned to visit their loved ones' graves. Often these visits were coordinated with their former Armenian neighbors, colleagues, or friends to disguised their "enemy" visitors. Azerbaijani returnees would take a flight from Moscow to Yerevan, present their Russian passports, and visit with their "Russian" identity. Many Armenian teachers empathized with the Azerbaijani returnees for making a trip to pay respect to their loved ones, while some were hesitant to help in fear of being caught by Armenian authorities. There are many such cemeteries in Armenia and, therefore, I felt it was important to visit.

Peering out of my *marshutka* or minibus window, on my way home from school, I would see these cemeteries. After establishing a friendship with the teachers and bus drivers on the bus ride, I asked them if it was possible for me to visit a cemetery. On a bus of a dozen or so teachers, three teachers were willing to assist me in visiting the cemetery at the village where they taught. An Azerbaijani cemetery was located across from one of these border village's bus stops. As the teachers did not know the history of the village, they decided it would be best to visit the Village Mayor and ask him to help me. At this bus stop, a few men were packing a truck and one of the teachers recognized the Village Mayor's son. We approached the Village Mayor's son and asked for his father's cell phone number and the teacher explained it was to help this Armenian-American girl. Upon hearing about my research, some of the men's faces shifted, leading to questions about who

sent me here and why? Or if I had any affiliations with the Azerbaijani Government? Maybe the Russian Government? For the teachers, this was the first time in which they experienced this type of interrogation that I had warned them about. Personally, I had become accustomed to these moments, knowing full well that I did not belong. One of the teachers grabbed my wrist and we moved away from what would have been a full interrogation by a dozen or so men. We walked to the Village Mayor's office where the Mayor had told us to wait for him. It seemed that the Mayor did not report to work in his office on a full-time basis.

Upon arrival, the teacher introduced me to the Mayor and we proceeded to climb the stairs of his office, which was situated in a small home on the side of the main road. After he unlocked one door, we walked a few steps where he unlocked another...I lost track of the number of doors and locks until we finally arrived in what appeared to be his office. He sat at a desk which had a computer and some papers scattered around. The sun provided light and therefore, we did not turn on the lights. The teacher sat closest to the window and I sat across from the Mayor. I formally introduced myself and offered my research documents. I explained the purpose of my research and interest in visiting the cemetery which was visible from the steps of his office building. Then, the conversation shifted in a way that I never could have imagined.

> I know the history of the graveyard and the Azerbaijanis who lived here – you can ask me any question you want! However, you cannot visit the cemetery. If you want to visit the cemetery, I will need to inform the KGB (Armenian National Security) ...I can call them to let them know you will meet with them [*pulls out his cell phone*]. Do you have your passport with you? - Assistant to the mayor of a border village

At that moment, I felt the room become cold and the weight of everyone's glares. The teacher who claimed how simple this visit would be now began to understand what I meant

by being a diasporan Armenian or foreigner. I did not carry my passport around in fear of losing it, so I always kept it somewhere safe. I told the Mayor that there would not be any need to call the KGB as I did not have my passport with me. The teacher tried to intervene without appearing to question the Mayor's authority. Satisfied by my reaction, the Mayor welcomed my questions.

After walking away from this incident, it became clear to me by the Mayor's actions that I was allowed to ask and learn certain information about the cemetery. While the cemetery was not maintained, clearly the dead were not disturbed, which can be attributed to religious or spiritual beliefs that the souls rest eternally. Perhaps Armenian authorities wrestled with the question, which Bahn (1984) examines as issues around the rights of the dead, asking, "What right do we have to disturb or remove them?" (p. 215). Perhaps Armenian authorities are influenced by Christian or even pagan beliefs and are motivated by the belief that excavation or disturbing the dead is unethical. For me, these spirits were not invisible – the spirits are able to cross borders even beyond the living world. Although the grave sites remain neglected and unattended, I believe these spaces provide insight into the histories of coexistence that once existed. It is important to document and understand who these individuals were and how they contributed to these villages and more broadly to Armenia. Moreover, the presence of the dead and these cemeteries serve as a constant, unignorable testimony to the historical fact of coexistence and the possibility of coexistence in the future. As noted above, the mayor's reaction in seeking the Armenian National Security to my request in visiting the cemetery is a reflection of how these sites are a reminder and remainder of the histories of coexistence within the present.

The Border Crossed the Istanbul Armenian Community

Unlike the border crossings described throughout this chapter, the Istanbul Armenian Community does not cross borders but rather, the border crossed them. The purpose of including the Istanbul Armenian community to this study is to highlight the fact that Armenians – alongside other non-Turks – made up the indigenous communities of these lands long before the establishment of the modern nation-state. Including the Istanbul Armenian community in this study allows for a deeper understanding of how borders changed over time and how space redefined what it means to be Armenian. Specifically, non-Muslim minorities living in the Ottoman Empire should have been considered legal citizens with a "guaranteed set of rights" (Kasbarian, 2016, p. 208). Instead, with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, non-Mulsim groups "became an instrument of forced assimilation to a Turkish national identity" (Kasbarian, 2016, p. 208). I wish to acknowledge that the Istanbul Armenian community is only one of many other groups that need to be studied to understand the history of coexistence and borders. There are approximately 70,000 Armenians living in Istanbul today. The actual number cannot be reported as there are some Armenians who do not wish to identify with their Armenian identity while also there are migrant workers from Armenia who do not have official documentation. In Ottoman history, there were close to 300,000 Armenians living in Istanbul.

For the purposes of my study, I believe the Istanbul Armenian Community is a significant and important group that needed to be included and provides a wider understanding of Armenian borders and identities. As noted by several teachers, including Lilit and Lara earlier, there is evidence of the everyday ways in which

Armenian contributions to the Turkish nation-state are erased in education, further complicating the question of belonging for Turkish Armenians. Of importance is to acknowledge Sossie Kasbarian's (2016) work on the Istanbul Armenian community, which includes a historical overview and analysis of how Armenians negotiate coexistence before and after the establishment of the Modern Turkish Republic.

Borrowing Kasbarian's (2016) conceptualization of Istanbul Armenians living in Turkey, she defines their experience as the following:

> "'coexistence' in the Turkish state for Armenians has necessitated the usurping of one's identity and an alienation of the self, leading to a chastened and insecure existence. The Istanbul Armenians are in the unique position of being the physical embodiment of a highly politicized wound in the nationalist narrative - physical reminders of the genocidal past but also the remnants of centuries of Ottoman Armenian lives and contributions to the nation, both of which the Turkish state denies, erases, or belittles." (p. 212)

Building on Kasbarian's (2016) conceptualization, here I will highlight the ways in which some teachers from the Istanbul Armenian Community negotiate the process of border crossing in their daily lives as being non-Turk or Armenian and living in the Republic of Turkey is always a bordering experience.

For the Istanbul Armenian community, the socialization process through education provides a glimpse into understanding who can and cannot identify as belonging to Turkey. Here, it is important to recognize that Armenian students in Istanbul Mostly attended "private" Armenian primary and secondary schools. Although the schools were not public or charter schools, they were granted semi-private status, which by default, removed the financial and other responsibilities of Turkish state officials. Despite the deliberate vagueness of status, all Istanbul Armenian schools were required to have non-Armenian or Turkish instructors and members of the administration, which

many of the participants described in their schooling and work experiences particularly around generations between the 1960-1980s. For example, the principal of the Istanbul school could be of Armenian ethnicity, but the vice principal would have to be Turkish and non-Armenian. From my understanding, Armenian teachers were aware that such a set-up was done deliberately for the state to be able to monitor the Istanbul Armenian community.

The curriculum taught in Istanbul Armenian schools followed the official Turkish National curriculum. Students would graduate and take state exams to enter higher education institutions across the country. Upon entering higher education institutions, for many Istanbul Armenians, this space was the first time many had classroom interactions and relationships with Turks and other non-Armenians but also vice-versa for Turks. Kevork, an Armenian literature teacher, remembers how he felt when he told his Turkish classmate that he was in fact from there/present day Turkey. "*We* were *here.* You, *you* came," he replied and laughed. Kevork went on and explained how Armenians, and other populations including the Greeks and Jews had been living on these lands long before the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. He described how Turks would be very surprised by this explanation and some inquired, "How can you be here for 2-3 thousand years?" Kevork says that he explained it simply as, "We have a different culture, but we're the same people."

Image 20. Billboard along the Walls of an Armenian Cemetery in Şişli

In addition to the official curriculum, the Istanbul Armenian community offered courses in Armenian literature and writing. Other elective courses were available depending on the school and resources such as foreign language classes. Armenian history is a forbidden subject in the Istanbul Armenian schools. Some literature lessons include historical references to contextualize the topic. In some cases, teachers used these moments to incorporate details that contribute to the campaign of erasure and assimilation of non-Turk groups in Turkish history. For example, on February 11, 2020, I observed a lesson about Krikor Odian and Mıgırdıç Beşiktaşlıyan and the years leading up to the establishment of the Turkish Republic. This lesson perhaps embodies the struggle of the Istanbul Armenian Community. When a few lines were quoted from, "We are Brothers" or «Եղբայր ենք մենք», her eyes filled with tears as Lilit went into what became a monologue:

> Doesn't it hurt you when they [Turks] ask what are you? I didn't start saying I am Armenian until after Hrant Dink's murder...You explain to them you are

> Armenian which they respond and claim, 'if you are Armenian you cannot be Turk'...but, I was born here. - Lilit, February 11, 2020

For Armenians living in Istanbul, as well as other ethnic minorities, daily discrimination is common and normalized amongst society. This teacher later described several instances from her childhood where she understood that having an Armenian name and being Armenian in Turkey meant accepting the inequalities and resisting assimilation. As noted by Lilit (Interview, February 19, 2020), Armenians must either assimilate or try to defend and protect themselves. As a literature teacher, Lilit tries to create a space for students to discuss their identity. Being born in Turkey, as Lilit explains, does not mean we are Turk. Because we lived here before the establishment of a Turkish Republic, we are the indigenous of these lands. In an interview with another Armenian language teacher, he also noted the experience of having to explain his identity and Armenian name amongst his Turkish peers in university. “Yes, I wouldn’t stand up and say that I am Armenian. I would say that my name is like this because I am Armenian. It is not a Turkish name” (Interview, February 24, 2020). Armenians and other ethnic minorities understand that by accepting an identity as Turk would imply accepting the longstanding history racial and colonial legacies of Attaturk and erasure of Armenian cultural heritage and history of existence. While these are not taught in the official curriculum, Lilit says that these details are small memories, which she claims they try to explain to students.

Members of the Istanbul Armenian community expressed pride and the importance of having an Armenian nation and indeed, visiting Armenia is an important trip. But most Istanbul Armenians identify the streets of Beyoğlu or Şişli to be home, neighborhoods where they grew up and their family histories are. Unlike childhood

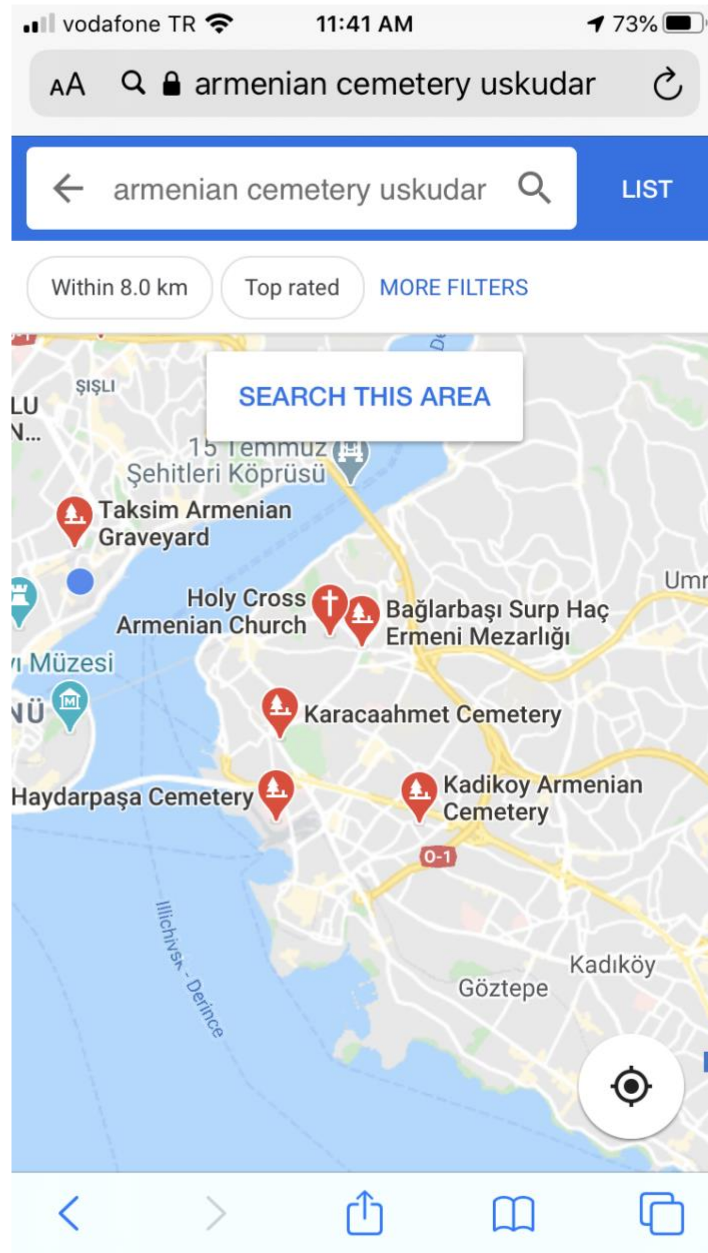
memories in Armenia, Istanbul Armenians were confined in terms of what or how they can learn Armenian culture and history. The school week begins on Monday morning and ends on Friday afternoons with a Turkish flag ceremony where all students, teachers, and staff sing İstiklâl Marşı or the Turkish national anthem. This practice is also kept in the Armenian schools as well. For some Istanbul Armenians, singing the Turkish national anthem is understood as a normal routine, while others felt disconnected due to the conditioning they had experienced of being "othered" by Turks – therefore, not singing became a form of expression or protest.

> Armenians didn't like to talk a lot because we were suppressed, we would get hit...we had a Vice Principal and a literature teacher who would hit us...for no reason...there was no reason...Yes, I was bad, well mischievous not bad, but I was also hit for no reason…we began to revolt and do protests, during history lessons when they didn't talk about the genocide but how Armenians stabbed our backs and [Armenians] were traitors...when you are Armenian in this school and they teach this, you begin to revolt, why do you talk like this, who are you...so I remember when we had to sing the national anthem on Monday mornings and Friday afternoons during the flag ceremony, we wouldn't sing it...I wouldn't sing the Turkish national anthem, a few of my friends decided we weren't going to sing because we didn't accept it...a teacher realized we weren't singing...a Turkish teacher...and of course, once they hit us, one time they asked us why aren't you singing and of course we couldn't explain why we weren't singing, and so we would reply our throats hurt, and they would reply, we know very well why you aren't singing... (Interview February 27, 2020)

Like other national anthems, lyrics of the Turkish national anthem emphasize the ideas of a Turkish homeland, ancestors, religion and freedom which most Istanbul Armenians felt did not apply to their lives. Instead of embracing and celebrating a history of diversity, the Turkish Government actively promotes discrimination towards anyone who is not a true Turk. As a student, Lara, a member of the Teachers Union, recalled a school field trip to the Dolmabahçe palace, which was the site where the founding father Attaturk and his family lived. She explained how her peers asked the museum curator about the

architects of the palace and heard the curator mention the Balyans. Out of excitement, Lara remembers her and her peers sharing this moment with their Turkish teachers. “Hoçam, did you hear? The Balyans and Armenians helped design this palace” said Lara (Interview February 13, 2020). Instead of recognizing and accepting the contributions of Armenians, Lara said she remembers the Turkish teachers silencing them. This silence weighed heavy on Lara and her peers who also wanted to find ways to feel proud of their ethnic heritage and identify with history.

Image 21. Navigating My Way to Üskudar



Similar to Lara, I understood the feeling of wanting to be proud of their ethnic heritage and identify with history. As I visited various parts of Istanbul, I learned more about famous Armenian individuals from the Ottoman Empire who influenced the schools, newspapers, theater, among many other aspects of life. Throughout my childhood, I had learned about several of these Armenian play writers including Hagop

Baronian who lived from 1842-1891, and was a famous playwright, journalist, and educator. As a child, I performed in a play for my Armenian school, which was a satire with the main characters being ill and mocking some people who visit the sick to cheer them up can actually make the person even worse off than they were before their visit. Hagop's gravesite had a beautiful statue of him seated upright with a long stone that had a quote inscribed on it. One part of the cemetery had what appeared to be an entrance marking a section that was designated for intellectuals and artists. Other famous individuals such as Taniel Varoujan, Armenian religious leaders, were also buried in the same cemetery. Their gravesites are historical and cultural artifacts that allow us to pay respect to their legacies and remember their contributions to society. Several of these grave sites are places where Armenian students of Istanbul visit for field trips as they learn and recite these poems or perform their plays.

Image 22 and 23. Entrance to Armenian Cemetery in Üskudar

Üskudar, formerly the hub of Anatolia, is another major area where many Armenians and Greeks lived dating back to the 1500s. In this cemetery, many Ottoman Armenians were buried including the famous poet and writer Bedros Turian. Armenian students in the Istanbul schools visit his grave to honor his legacy. Such sites are spaces that are currently protected and within the center of the city. Aside from Armenians, other

people from other ethnic minority groups, such as the Greeks, share space here. These souls represent that a history of coexistence dates beyond the modern Turkish Republic.

In a non-Armenian school, one of the Turkish history teachers was part of an extracurricular project that brought together high school students to study history from alternative perspectives and approaches. On Sunday, February 16, 2020, they organized an event at a Turkish public school in Nişantaşi where approximately 95 students came from around Istanbul. There were several different activities organized. One of the groups I observed had read four different women writers' works who focused on issues of gender, disabilities, and neighbors. While I observed that morning, the students' presentations focused on Hellen Keller and Zabel Yesayan. Yesayan was an Armenian novelist and literature teacher who lived in a neighborhood in Üskudar and her house had a garden, which was later the title of one of her books, *The Gardens of Silihdar.* Based on their readings, students discussed what resonated most with them about the main characters. For many of the students, the discriminatory experiences were the most upsetting to them. Students were concerned about how women were treated in comparison to men and how hard it was for women to be writers at their time. During the discussions, students reflected on how they appreciated the power of writing and, inspired by these four women, hope to become future authors.

Image 24. Image from What is Believed to be Yessayan's Neighborhood

The non-Armenian Turkish history teacher also planned to take a group of students to visit where Yesayan grew up. It was planned on a Sunday when it was very rainy and cold and therefore they needed to reschedule their trip. I was invited to join but unfortunately it was set for a date after my fieldwork in Turkey. In my attempt to find Yessayan’s neighborhood, I visited the street that was said to be where she grew up. It was planned on a Sunday when it was very rainy and cold and therefore they needed to reschedule their trip. I was invited to join but unfortunately it was set for a date after my fieldwork in Turkey. In my attempt to find Yessayan’s neighborhood, I visited the street that was said to be where she grew up. Posters of Zabel were hung in the Istanbul Armenian school hallways, classrooms, and often referenced in literature classes. Her influence was clearly important to the Istanbul Armenian community and therefore, it

seemed symbolic for her book to be chosen for Turks to read and connect with. While in Armenia, Zabel was also considered an important figure for students to learn about. I obtained a translated copy of her book, *My Soul in Exile.* In her writing, she describes a conversation with Siranoush Danielian who was her teacher Hrant Cherkezian's teacher where they reflect on what seems to be the same issues of the Istanbul Armenian community to this day.

> It's as if we were exiles in a remote foreign country. We're exiles in the land of our birth because we're deprived of the kind of environment that our people's collective existence would create around us. Only fragile, loose threads bind us to our native land. (Yessayan, 2014, p. 18).

In response to Mrs. Danielian, Zabel's character replied, "But we artists, at least, can become comrades in exile" (Yessayan, 2014, p. 18). The more I read and learned about Zabel and saw how she influenced both the non-Armenian and Armenian classrooms of Turkey, the more I realized how significant literature, poetry, and the arts generally capture what cannot be taught or understood while learning history. Moreover, the border crossings of the Istanbul Armenian community helped me understand what coexistence means between the borders of the indigenous lands and the era of the modern nation-state. The experiences of the Istanbul Armenian Community provides a glimpse of understanding how borders changed and what that meant for the indigenous people living on the lands. Finally, the Istanbul Armenian Community helped me pick up where many of the teachers from Armenia begin their stories and connections with the Armenian identity – their stories of exile as a result of the 1915 genocide.

In this chapter I highlighted several border crossings which were unique yet, at the core of all these crossings, there is a common thread: a feeling or need for individuals

to (re)connect with identity and home/land. At times borders were invisible, requiring teachers to navigate the trenches in different ways that allows us to understand more closely why and how borders are still powerful and real as seen in Maral’s example of trying to hear and learn stories of displaced Azerbaijanis from Armenia or the ghosts from the cemeteries in the Shirak region. Yet even when borders were visible, teachers' border crossings provided deeper understanding of their daily experiences which challenged their identity and beliefs as seen in the example of the Istanbul Armenian Community and the displaced Baku Armenian refugees.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

Can we break from the cycle,
that was started long before you and I were born,
which has been pushed along for so long,
no one knows any longer what for?

The first story was shared during a short taxi ride,
we had exchanged very few words,
yet felt like we had known each other for a lifetime.
This teacher explained that her husband and her agreed
its best not to tell their son
that these stories of enemies and hate are wrong
for it will only create a traumatic childhood.

It's easy for one to judge this teacher and her husband
and point out their wrongs.
You see, we all go through this cycle of trauma unwillingly.
This child will need to learn these hateful lessons in school
the way his parents once did.
If he is lucky, he will not carry too much of the hate,
and may become one of the leaders to end this cycle of hate.
The teacher recalled the day she personally met an "other,"
described it as traumatic.
Today, she teaches alternative lessons about Armenian history
and aims to develop critical thinking skills.

The second story is about an educator,
who, after hearing about my research,
recalled her days as a student abroad.
Her classmate was Azerbaijani
who became one of her best friends.
They kept in touch over the years,
showed each other compassion and sincerity.
During the educator's return visit many years later,
she spends time with her Azerbaijani best friend and their family.
It was clearly a joyous reunion with a barbecue, return to their school,
and other sites they visited together.

Will we ever break from this cycle,
that has lasted for so long,
More young bodies to bury, more dreams left unfulfilled.
One may ask, does justice truly exist,

Is peace found on earth?
I lost track while searching,
No longer know what we are looking for.
It is an endless cycle,
That we continue to spin through
Never knowing when it will end, why or how.

The above poem is based on my notes and reflections of how border thinkers must operate in a world where colonialism and imperialism are dominant powers that can influence the terms and conditions for justice and peace. One of the major issues humanity has not been able to reconcile is our collective approach to borders and identity. It is a timeless issue experienced across geographical coordinates drenched in blood and tears. Based on the way colonizers organized the world order after the Age of Enlightenment – dividing the world into civilized and barbaric, democracy and dictatorship, capitalism and socialism, among many other categorizations – humanity has been wrapped in this web, seemingly bound by borders and connected through identities. Decolonizing projects choose a third way of being, attempting to veer from the dominant cycle(s), but it is always in parallel to the imperial and colonial orders. Therefore, to break the cycle, there needs to be a radically different approach to dismantling colonial systems.

Perhaps, today it should not come as a surprise that in the post-Soviet space, border and identity conflicts have not been resolved. Russia's recent invasion of Ukraine is another prime example that rings true to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Unlike the government of Ukraine, Arayik Harutyunyan, the leader of Nagorno-Karabakh applied for assistance from the world – especially the OSCE Minsk Group, who are responsible for brokering the peace negotiation process – but received deafening volumes of silence from the international community as neighborly dictators brutally destroyed Nagorno-Karabakh and innocent

civilians, using similar illegal war weapons as those used by Russians in Ukraine at this time of writing. The trauma and destruction caused by these histories of conflicts and wars have become normalized and even televised for the world to sit back and watch, silently.

The legacy of the unresolved conflicts has impacted Armenian identity and haunts societies on all sides of the borders. Within these clashing interpretations of unresolved conflicts, the Armenian border remains central to (re)shaping and (re)defining the Armenian identity. These histories have been passed on either through written accounts or oral histories. While these conflicts are not resolved, Armenians have held onto the memories and stories of their ancestors in hopes of reclaiming their histories and restoring justice.

Throughout my dissertation, I outlined various ways in which border thinkers' pedagogy and practices reflect possibilities for reconceptualizing borders. For Armenians learning to be Armenian is deeply connected with borders and takes place everywhere, in both formal and informal learning environments. In the sample of textbooks I examined, Armenian national borders extend beyond what lies within the official border space as seen in the example of Mount Ararat crossing over through seemingly impenetrable borders. Mount Ararat, one of the greatest symbols of the Armenian national identity, is located in present-day eastern Turkey, yet the meaning and presence of the mountain is experienced in different ways on both sides of the border. Other examples from textbooks incite the concept of intergenerational homeland where the older generation is responsible for passing on and teaching the new generation how to tend to and protect the homeland and borders. This responsibility is passed on from generation to generation as with the planting of new harvests, and taught by the elders of the family to the younger generations. Further

research on textbooks needs to be done to explore possibilities of widening the scope of documenting histories of coexistence to incorporate cultural and sociological approaches. But also, examining other communities who have been excluded from history must be taken into consideration in order to provide a more inclusive approach for understanding the past and building a future. Some analyses are available (see Akpinar et al., 2019) to provide alternative pedagogical practices and serve as a starting point, offering examples to policymakers and curriculum authors. Outside of official textbooks and school classrooms, learning Armenian borders extends across landscapes, cemeteries, buildings, street names, graffiti, media, museums, among others. The informal learning environments provide opportunities for education researchers to contextualize how the external spaces influence, complement, or contradict the national curriculum.

Educators' memories of interacting with the 'other' – either from cross-border training and spaces or during the Soviet period – provide unique insights into the possibilities of coexistence. Recalling childhood memories and stories of the past, we traveled in time and returned to school yards, old neighborhoods, and to the mountainsides where the participants and I relived stories of coexistence. Through memory, teachers cross borders recalling the past within the present which offers important take-aways for reconceptualizing borders. While borders may be closed, memories are not stuck to border zones as we experienced when recalling oral histories from the Ottoman Empire to Soviet Azerbaijan. In chapter six, I examined memories which included moments from childhood such as being caught in a bee storm, to being displaced from your home only to live in the home of another displaced person. Some of these memories are actual witness accounts of the events, while others are a retelling of their family stories. All are lived-experiences

from the recent-past which helps understand why the emotions are still very much alive to this day. As noted in this research, crossing borders is possible through memories, in preparing traditional cuisines, in traveling, among many other ways. Teachers were asked during the interviews to also reflect on how these oral histories impact their pedagogy. For these teachers, it is important to teach patriotism and to love the homeland and all teachers agreed that there was no room to teach hate for any of their neighbors. In the process of re-membering , teachers reflected on the humanity of their "enemy" neighbors – that they are no different from them. These teachers believed that the division across these societies was the result of government officials and that ordinary people were victims of choices made from above.

Throughout the data collection and findings, histories of coexistence appeared in various ways, reminding us that coexistence was possible in the past and there is still a chance to build a future for it. While some individuals attempt to ignore these histories, intentionally dismissing these evidences and rewriting new historical narratives, it is impossible to eliminate the histories of coexistence. As noted in the findings, the remains of the cemeteries are a reminder that the bodies and souls of the deceased are resting, becoming one with the land despite borders. These sites are important historical and cultural artifacts that allow us to honor and preserve their memories. Within Istanbul, behind tall, iron gates and high cement walls are Armenians cemeteries. Here, I visited the graves of former architects, teachers, artists, actors and actresses, and poets who contributed to and lived on these lands since the early 1500s. Consider the example of the Balyans, an Armenian family in Istanbul and architects known for contributing to the design of the Dolmabaçhe palace – among other important cultural sites in Turkey. A

mausoleum was built recently to honor this family in the Üsküdar Armenian cemetery in Istanbul. When Armenians of the Istanbul community visit the Dolmabaçhe museum, they remember the Balyans and for a brief moment, feel a sense of pride for being Armenian. Recognizing and celebrating the diversity of societies and their contributions across history is something that should be embraced rather than erased. This could be a common thread from which groups of people can come together and build connections with each other and the future. I referred to the histories of coexistence throughout this study because they offer glimpses, moments, and details – that could be missed easily if one was not attentive – of how current enemies once lived as neighbors.

Other teachers are building bridges through education. In Yerevan, a school community produces their own oral history projects to document each "other." Such initiatives provide learning opportunities that go beyond official historical narratives and textbooks to empower students with critical thinking skills and allow for more inclusive understandings of the past. This school community also offers exchange programs where students from Turkey visit Armenia and also Armenian students visit Turkey. Through traveling, students gain opportunities to interact with the 'other,' to experience their culture first hand, and have the opportunity to critically engage rather than accept abstract concepts of enemies from textbooks. These trips may also teach other important life skills such as responsibility, respect, and compassion that may not be possible solely through textbooks or in classrooms and can help enhance the learning process.

Histories of coexistence are embedded in cultural aspects, including food, language, and clothes. In my fieldwork experience, I visited several museums where national and traditional foods and traditional dresses were on display. Rather than

dismissing others' histories, all neighboring countries could use the opportunity to learn about each other's culture and seek similarities and differences to understand each other more but also, how their ancestors once lived together. I also noticed the use of non-Armenian and non-Russian words within daily conversations, the curated museum tour, and on the museum displays artifacts. These words were likely Turkish, Arabic, or Persian. In my experience, these foreign words were used seamlessly or naturally in conversations by local community members as noted in my experience of a museum in Gyumri. Rather than dismissing these linguistic details, further research on these words and uses can offer insight on past coexistences. Indeed, coexistence was/is a natural way of life - war and ethnic discrimination is not. Other visible hints of coexistence are signs that display words or lettering of the "other." In the border villages of Armenia, several villages and towns were renamed from Azerbaijani or Turkish names to Armenian ones, but the older generations at times refer to the former names. Bringing into focus and building on the hints of histories of coexistence could be a foundation for expanding future research to other areas that I did not manage to include in this study, but also across borders and more widely in the region.

It is important to recognize that education alone cannot achieve peace. Schools and teachers play several different roles in their communities. Teachers described how they continued to teach during the war, at times they became the border but also when needed, protected the border. Schools provided space for learning but also for safety as members of the community took refuge in times of bombings and shootings. Schools are a mirror reflection of the community in which they serve. Learning takes places in both formal and

informal spaces and, therefore, developing sustainable peace is not the sole responsibility of teachers and schools but rather a bottom-up approach for change across borders.

This study aims to contribute to the current scholarship on border studies, memory research, post-Soviet transformations, and education in (post)conflict territories by expanding the scope of pedagogical practices necessary for developing sustainable peace. Here I would like to outline the following ways in which this dissertation contributes to the gaps in scholarship and offers further opportunities for research. First, this dissertation provides an opportunity for border studies scholars to re-examine methodology in spaces along the borders and closest to the conflict. Oftentimes, the risks, financial burden, and safety and well-being of the researcher are reasons for scholars to avoid fieldwork in the borders. More support is necessary and should be a priority for researchers to include communities along the borders as they are often excluded from decision making processes and likely an understudied and excluded population especially in regards to their experiences and histories with the conflict. This dissertation aims to contribute to the gap in the literature on ethnographies in the borders of (post)conflict spaces.

Second, the power of memory and oral stories throughout this dissertation make clear that memory research is an essential contribution to education and social science research – particularly when including decolonial approaches. By disrupting the official historical and dominant narratives, memories provide the opportunity to include different perspectives that have been excluded or marginalized yet are equally deserving and important to document. Future social science researchers should include memory research alongside other methods as these lived experiences – including eye-witness accounts – provide a deeper understanding of the past, but also project on the present and future.

Another important contribution of this study is in the understanding of post-Soviet transformations. The post-Cold war scholars expected the former Soviet republics would follow a clear, linear trajectory towards democratization as seen by scholars in comparative and international education through their assertion of globalization scholarship. Yet, the experiences of Armenians and Nagorno-Karabakh Armenians is an example of when democratization does not result in peaceful environments, nor does it define itself in different spaces with the same contexts as it does in the West. Rather, this study is an example of how former Soviet republics remain entangled in the pre-Soviet and Soviet legacies to this moment, and struggle to define exactly what post-Soviet independence means.

The fourth contribution is based on the border thinkers' pedagogical practices for delinking and unlearning in school settings. Throughout the analysis, there were several moments where border thinkers' teaching led to important pedagogical practices that can have implications for teachers outside of this study as well. For example, the way history was taught in the example of the Tavush principal/history teacher in taking a wider approach to understanding Armenia's history of ethnogenesis lent itself to understanding Armenia within the context of the region. Such a holistic approach to learning about Armenia's ethnogenesis provides a starting point to understanding who Armenia's neighbors were and remembering histories of coexistence with other groups of people more broadly. In another example, a school in Yerevan did not rely on using textbooks as the official source of knowledge, but rather encouraged students to start learning from primary sources. This approach provides students the opportunity to learn first-hand accounts rather than official national narratives. Similarly, the use of fieldtrips and physical crossing of

borders is a unique opportunity for students to meet and learn with each other. These organized fieldtrips allowed for humanization of the "other" where people living in Turkey could learn more about their neighbor by talking directly with them rather than accepting the ways in which textbooks and history writes about Armenians as "traitors" and enemies. Another important approach would be for public educators and historians to redefine ethnic minorities as members of the society. Rather than excluding and considering ethnic minorities such as Armenians as foreigners, teachers in Turkey could explain how Armenians lived in the Ottoman Empire and the present-day lands of Turkey before the establishment of the modern Republic of Turkey. Such a shift can provide students the opportunity to embrace and accept the Armenians rather than isolate and exclude them.

Finally, this study aims to contribute to the gap on education in (post)conflict studies where emphasis on peace education and human rights education alone cannot resolve the deeper issues associated with memory and personal experiences. From the examples in this study, I believe it is important to engage with the teachers in the process of redefining curriculum and school and working collaboratively across borders through an inclusive approach. Another important finding from this study is the ways in which delinking, and unlearning are important strategies that can contribute to pedagogical strategies to open space for studying the histories and conflicts.

REFERENCES

Abrahamian, L. (2006). *Armenian identity in a changing world.* Mazda.

Akpinar, A., Avetisyan, S., Balasanyan, H., Gullu, F., Kandolu, I., Karapetyan, M., Manasian, N., Mkrtchyan, L., Aköz Özkaya, E. Tahsin Özkaya, H., Palandjian, G., Şekeryan, A., & Turan, Ö. (2017). History education in schools in Turkey and Armenia: A critique and alternatives. In Bilmez, B., Çayır, K., Çaykent, Ö, Gamaghelyan, P., Karapetyan, M., & Sayan P. (Eds.), Retrieved from: http://caucasusedition.net/analysis/history-education-in-schools-in-turkey-and-armenia/

Aivazian, A. (2002). *The history of Armenia as presented in American historiography: A critical survey.* Louys.

Angus, L. B. (1986). Developments in ethnographic research in education: from interpretive to critical ethnography. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, (20)*1, 59-68.

Anzaldúa, G. (2012). *Borderlands la frontera the new mestiza (fourth edition)*. Aunt Lute Books.

Apple, M. & King, N. R. (1977). What do schools teach? *Curriculum Inquiry, 6*(4),341-357.

Apple, M. (1980). Analyzing determinations: Understanding and evaluating the production of social outcomes in schools. *In Curriculum Inquiry, (10)*1, pp. 55-76.

Apple, M. (2009). Controlling the work of teachers. In D. J. Flinders & S. J. Thronton (Eds.) *The Curriculum Studies Reader*. (pp. In 199-213). Routledge.

Arkun, A. (2005). Into the modern age, 1800-1913. In E. Herzig & M. Kurkchiyan, *The Armenians: past and present in the making of national identity*. (pp. 65-88) RoutledgeCurzon.

Arsu, S. (2006, January 23). Court drops charges against author for 'insulting' Turkey. The New York Times. Retrieved from: https://www.nytimes.com.

Atkinson, R. (2011). *The life story interview.* SAGE.

Barth, F. (1969). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of cultural difference.* Little, Brown and Company.

Barton, A. C. (2001). Science education in urban settings: seeking new ways of praxis

through critical ethnography. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching, (38)*9, 899-917.

Baxter, P. & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544-559. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2

Bournoutian, G. (2002). *A concise history of the Armenian people: from ancient times to the present.* Mazda.

Brambilla, C., Laine, J., Scott, J. W., & Bocchi, G. (2015). *Borderscaping: Imaginations and practices of border making*. Ashgate.

Brubaker, R. & Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond identity. *Theory and Society*, 29, 1-47.

Boym, S. (2001). *The future of nostalgia.* Basic books.

Canefe, N. (2007). Review Article: History and the nation: The legacy of Taner Akçam's work on Ottoman Armenians. *South European Society & Politics, (12)* 2, June 2007, 237–246.

Cannella, G. & Viruru, R. (2004). *Childhood and Postcolonization : Power, Education, and Contemporary Practice.* Taylor & Francis.

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (2010, October). Armenia and Turkey: Bridging the gap. (Issue Brief No. 87).

Christou, M. & Spyrou, S. (2014). *What is a border? Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot children's understanding of a contested territorial division.* In S. Spyrou & M. Christou (Eds.), *Children and borders*. (pp. 131-148), Palgrave MacMillan.

Clark, A. (2012). Visual ethics in a contemporary landscape. In S. Pink (Ed.), *Advances in visual methodology* (pp.17-35). Sage.

Council of Europe. (2011). European commission against racism and intolerance report on Azerbaijan (fourth monitoring cycle). Retrieved from: https://rm.coe.int/third-report-on-azerbaijan/16808b557e

Davies, L. Talbot, C. (2008) Learning in Conflict and Postconflict Contexts. *Comparative Education Review. 52* (4), Special Issue on Education in Conflict and Postconflict Societies. The University of Chicago: Illinois. (p. 509-518)

Dewey, J. (1915). *The school and society.* The University of Chicago Press.

DeWitt, N. (1955). *Soviet professional manpower: Its education, training, and supply.*

National Science Foundation.

Dink, H. (2005). Two distant peoples two distant neighbors. Agos Newspaper. Retrieved from: https://hrantdink.org/en/hrant-dink/hrant-dink-articles/742-two-close-peoples-two-distant-neighbours

Fittante, D. (2015). Beyond the analytical categories of the Armenian national identity. *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies, 24* (2015), 56-80.

Frank, C. (1999). *Ethnographic eyes: a teacher's guide to classroom observation.* Heinemann.

Ghulyan, H. (2020). Conceiving homogeneous state-space for the nation: the nationalist discourse on autochthony and the politics of place-naming in Armenia. *Central Asian Survey*.

Grinberg, O. (2014). Palestinian 'Children of the junction': Contested borders and representations. In S. Spyrou & M. Christou (Eds.), *Children and borders*. (pp. 149-163), Palgrave MacMillan.

Hakli, J. & Kallio, K. P. (2018). Theorizing children's political agency. In T. Skelton, S. Aitken (Eds.), *Establishing Geographies of Children and Young People. Geographies of Children and Young People*, vol 1., Springer.

Hammer, D. P. (1997). Russia Irredenta: Soviet nationality policy reappraised. U. S. Department of State under Title VIII. Retrieved online: https://www.ucis.pitt.edu/nceeer/1997-806-07-Hammer.pdf

Herzig, E. & Kurkchiyan, M. (2005). *The Armenians: past and present in the making of national identity*. RoutledgeCurzon.

Hewsen, R. H. (2001). *Armenia: A historical atlas.* The University of Chicago Press.

Hovannisian, R. G. (1971). *The Republic of Armenia Volume 1 The First Year, 1918-1919.* University of California Press.

Hovannisian, R. G. (2005). Genocide and independence, 1914-21. In E. Herzig & M. Kurkchiyan, *The Armenians: past and present in the making of national identity*. (pp. 89-112) RoutledgeCurzon.

(2020, December 15) Narek Amirjanyan and Karen Ghazaryan from Tavush were among the boys who returned to the homeland: Governor of Tavush. *Iravaban.net.* https://iravaban.net/en/308811.html

Kahin, G. M. (1956). *The Asian-African Conference: Bandung, Indonesia, April 1955*.

Cornell University Press.

Kallio, K. P. (2018). Exploring space and politics with children: A geosocial methodological approach to studying experiential worlds. In A. Cutter-Mackenzie, K. Malone, E. Barratt Hacking (Eds.), Research Handbook on Childhoodnature, Springer International Handbooks of Education, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-51949-4_125-2

Kasbarian, S. (2016). The Istanbul Armenians: negotiating coexistence. In: R. Bryant (Ed.) *Post-Ottoman Coexistence: Sharing Space in the Shadow of Conflict Space and Place.* Berghahn Press, pp. 207-23.

Kirschenbaum, L. (2001). *Small Comrades Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932*. RoutledgeFalmer.

Kivelson, V. A. & Suny, R. G. (2016). *Russia's Empires.* Oxford University Press.

Khachatryan, S., Petrosyan, S. & Terzyan, G. (2013). Assessment of teacher professional development and educational context in the content of genereal education reforms in Armenia. Armenia: Open Society Foundations.

Kramer, A. E. (January 29, 2021). Armenia and Azerbaijan: What sparked war and will peace prevail? *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/article/armenian-azerbaijan-conflict.html

Kucera, J. (January 18, 2019). Peace? Not so fast, many Armenians and Azerbaijanis say. *EurasiaNet*. https://eurasianet.org/Peace-not-so-fast-many-armenians-and-Azerbaijanis-say

Kutsyuruba, B. (2011). Education in the period of post-Soviet transition in Ukraine. *Demokratizatsiya: Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization, 19*(3), 287-309.

Larson-Miller, L. (2006). Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Eastern Orthodox approaches to death. In Kathleen Garces-Foley (Ed.) *Death and Religion in a Changing World*. (pp. 93-121). M.E. Sharpe

Levinson, B. A. U. & Sutton, M. (2001). Introduction: Policy as/in practice: A sociocultural approach to the study of educational policy. In M. Sutton & B. A. U. Levinson (Ed, *Policy as Practice: Toward a Comparative Sociocultural Analysis of Educational Policy.* (pp. 1-23). Ablex Publishing.

McKnight, M., Leonard, M. (2014). Bordering in Transition: Young People's Experiences in 'Post-Conflict' Belfast. In S. Spyrou, & M. Christou (Eds.) *Children and Borders.* (pp. 164-179) Palgrave Macmillan.

Madison, D. S. (2020). Critical Ethnography: Methods, Ethics, and Performance. (3rd Ed.) Sage Publications.

Mamedov, M. (2014). The stone dreams scandal: the Nagorny Karabakh conflict and Armenian-Azerbaijani relations in contemporary literature. *Caucasus Survey, (2)* 1-2, 42-59.

Mansfield, E. D. & Snyder, J. (2007). *Electing to fight: why emerging democracies go to war.*MIT Press.

Matossian, M. K. (1962). *The impact of Soviet policies in Armenia*. E. J. Brill.

Mead Yaqub, M. & Silova, I. (2013). *Literacies of (post)socialist childhood: Alternative readings of socialist upbringings and neoliberal futures, Globalisation, Societies and Education, 11*(2), 194-222.

Mejlumyan, A. (Jan. 29, 2019). Armenian TV airs unprecedented report on bygone Armenian-Azerbaijani friendships. *Eurasianet*. https://eurasianet.org/armenian-tv-airs-unprecedented-report-on-bygone-armenian-azerbaijani friendships?fbclid=IwAR3LRkNtg18nnR8MDOH-S

Mignolo, W. & Tlostanova, M. V. (2006). Theorizing from the borders shifting to geo- and body-politics of knowledge. *European Journal of Social Theory, 9*(2), 205-221

Mignolo, W. (2007). Introduction coloniality of power and de-colonial thinking. *Cultural Studies, (21)*2-3, 155-167.

Mignolo, W. (2013). Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: on (de)coloniality, border thinking, and epistemic disobedience. *Confero, (1)*1, 129-150.

Millei, Z., Silova, I., & Piattoeva, N. (2018). Towards decolonizing childhood and Knowledge production. In I. Silova, N. Piattoeva, and Z. Millei (Eds.), *Childhood and Schooling in (Post)Socialist Societies Memories of Everyday Life.* (pp. 231-255). Palgrave MacMillan.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia. (n.d.) International organisations: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. https://www.mfa.am/en/international-organisations/3

Mitchell, K. & Kallio, K. P. (2016). Spaces of the geosocial: Exploring Transnational Topologies. *Geopolitics, 22*(1), p. 1-14.

Newman, D. & Paasi, A. (1998). Fences and neighbours in the postmodern world:

Boundary narratives in political geography. *Progress in Human Geography. (22)*,2, 186- 207.

Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe. Turkey Criminal Code. https://www.legislationline.org/download/action/.../Turkey_CC_2004_am2016_en.pdf

Palandjian, G. (2012). *The ABCs of being Armenian: (re)turning to the national identity in post-soviet textbooks*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1021187128).

Panossian, R. (2006). *The Armenians: From kings and priests to merchants and commissars.* Hurst & Company.

Pavlenko, A. (2013). Language management in the Russian Empire, Soviet Union, and post-Soviet Countries. In R. Bayley, R. Cameron, & C. Lucas (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of sociolinguistics*. (pp. 651-679). Oxford University Press.

Petroska-Beshka, V. & Kenig, N. (2013). Ethnocentric history textbooks in a multiethnic society: The case of the Republic of Macedonia. In C. Lichnofsky, E. Pandelejmoni, & D. Stojanov (Eds.), *Myths and mythical spaces: Conditions and challenges for history textbooks in Albania and South-Eastern Europe.* (pp. 237-248). V & R unipress GmbH.

Palandjian, G. (2012). *The ABCs of being Armenian: (re)turning to the national identity in post-soviet textbooks*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1021187128).

Palandjian, G. (2014). The ABC's of being Armenian: (Re)turning to the national identity in post-Soviet textbooks. In J. H. Williams (Ed.), *(Re)Constructing memory: school textbooks and the imagination of the nation.* (pp. 247-268). Sense Publishers.

Palandjian, G., Silova, I., Mun, O. & Zholdoshalieva. (2018). Nation and gender in post-socialist education transformations: comparing early literacy textbooks in Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Latvia. In M. Chankseliani & I. Silova (Eds.), *Comparing post-socialist transformations: purposes and policies in education.* (pp. 167-192). Symposium Books.

Radio Free Europe (11, February 2013). Azerbaijani writer's books burned over his Controversial novel. RFE/RL Azerbaijani Service. *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty*. https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijani-writer-books-burned-akram-aylisli/24898784.html

Rappleye, J. & Paulson, J. (2007). Education and conflict: Essay review. *International Journal of Educational Development.* 27, 340–347.

Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: a guide to theory & practice*. Sage.

Russell, J. (2002). Early Armenian civilization. In E. Herzig & M. Kurkchiyan, *The Armenians: past and present in the making of national identity*. (pp. 23-41) RoutledgeCurzon.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *Thinking qualitatively: methods of mind*. SAGE.

Samadov, B. (2021). Politics in Azerbaijan after the Second Karabakh War: Actors and Shifting Internal Discourses. Policy Brief No. 36, Georgian Institute of Politics, December 2021.

Saparov, A. (2003). The Alteration of Place Names and Construction of National Identity in Soviet Armenia. *Cahiers du Monde russe, (44)*1, 179-198.

Sarafian, K. (1930). *History of education in Armenia.* La Verne College.

Sargysan, V. A. (2010). *Aybenaran*. Marmar.

Sargysan, V. A. (2018). *Aybenaran*. Marmar.

Shevel, O. (2009). The politics of citizenship policy in new states. *Comparative Politics, (41)*3, 273-291.

Sidorovitch, A. (2006). Moral education in contemporary Belarus: return to a Soviet past? *Journal of Moral Education, (34)*4, 479-489.

Silova, I. (2006). *From sites of occupation to symbols of multiculturalism: reconceptualizing minority education in post-Soviet Latvia.* Information Age Publishing.

Silova, I., Millei, Z., Chachkhiani, K., Palandjian, G. and Vitrukh, M. (2021). Revisiting Post-Socialist Education Transformations: Monuments, Movements, and Metamorphoses. In T. Jules, R. Shields, M. A. M. Thomas (Eds.*), Bloomsbury Handbook of Theory in Comparative and International Education.* (pp. 147-166). Bloomsbury.

Silova, I. & Palandjian, G. (2018). Soviet Empire, childhood, and education**.** *Revista Española de Educación Comparada*. (31), 147-171.

Silova, I., Mead, M., & Palandjian, G. (2014). Pedagogies of Space: (Re)mapping national territories, borders, and identities in post-Soviet textbooks. In J.H. Williams (Ed.), *(Re)constructing memory: School textbooks and the imagination of the nation.* (pp.103-130) Sense.

Simpson, L. B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society 3*, (3), 1-25.

Slezkine, Y. (1994). The USSR as communal apartment, or how a socialist state promoted ethnic particularism. *Slavic Review, 53*(2), 414-452.

Smith, L. T. (2012). *Decolonizing methodologies: research and indigenous peoples* (2nd edition). Zed Books.

Suny, R. G. (2017). *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else: A History of the Armenian Genocide.* Princeton University Press.

Suny, R. G. (1993). *Looking toward Ararat: Armenia in modern history*. Indiana University Press.

Suny, R. G. (2001). Constructing primordialism: Old histories for new nations. *The Journal of Modern History*, 73(4), pp. 862-896.

Suny, R. G. (2005). Soviet Armenia. In E. Herzig & M. Kurkchiyan, *The Armenians: past and present in the making of national identity*. (pp. 113-126). RoutledgeCurzon.

Suny, R. G. (2009). Truth in telling: Reconciling realities in the genocide of the Ottoman Armenians. *The American Historical Review, (114)*, 4, 930-946.

Suny, R. G. (2012). The contradictions of identity: being Soviet and national in the USSR and after. In M. Bassin & C. Kelly (Eds.), *Soviet and post-Soviet identities.* (Pp. 17-36). Cambridge University Press.

Surucu, C. (2002). Modernity, nationalism, resistance: identity politics in post-Soviet Kazakhstan. *Central Asian Survey, (21)*4, 385-402.

Tatoyan, A. (2022, February 28). I want to see a person, who can convince that #Azerbaijani Authorities want peace. Violations of #Armenian civilians rights every day. [Tweet; attached video]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/atatoyan/status/1498334677475774467?s=20&t=cxhLTfyn7Sav92HPTsvl_w

Tlostanova, M. V., & Mignolo, W. (2009). Global coloniality and the decolonial option. *Kult 6 Special Issue Epistemologies of Transformation: The Latin American Decolonial Option and its Ramifications.* Retrieved from: http://postkolonial.dk/artikler/kult_6/MIGNOLO-TLOSTANOVA.pdf

Tlostanova, M. (2018). *What does it mean to be post-Soviet? Decolonial art from the ruins of the Soviet Empire*. Duke University Press.

Tlostanova, M. & Mignolo, W. (2012). *Learning to unlearn: decolonial reflections from Eurasia and the Americas.* The Ohio University State Press.

Tlostanova, M. (2018). Decolonizing the postsocialist childhood memories. In I. Silova, N. Piattoeva, and Z. Millei (Eds.), *Childhood and Schooling in (Post)Socialist Societies Memories of Everyday Life.* (pp. 271-278). Palgrave MacMillan.

UNESCO. (2014). Education for all 2015. National Report Armenia. Armenia: UNESCO. Retrieved from: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0022/002299/229906E.pdf

UNICEF (2011). The role of education in peacebuilding: a literature review https://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/files/EEPCT_Peacebuilding_LiteratureReview.pdf

Weinstein, H. M., Warshauer Freedman, S., & Hughson, H. (2007). School voices: challenges facing education systems after identity-based conflicts. *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice, 2*(1), p. 41-71

Yessayan, Z. (2014). *My Soul in Exile and Other Writings.* (G. M. Goshgarian, Trans.). AIWA Press. (Original work published 1922).

Zekiyan, B. L. (2005). Christianity to modernity. In E. Herzig & M. Kurkchiyan, *The Armenians: past and present in the making of national identity*. (pp. 41-64) RoutledgeCurzon.

Zakaryan, T. & Zolyan, M. (2008) The images of 'self' and 'other' in textbooks on history of Armenia. In L. Vesely (Ed.), *Contemporary history textbooks in the South Caucasus.* Association for International Affairs. (pp. 11-32)

Zolyan, M. (2016). Preliminary analysis of grade 8 and 11 textbooks for 'Armenian history'. Notes from Preliminary Analysis, Yerevan.

APPENDIX A

DISSERTATION DATA COLLECTION INVENTORY

DISSERTATION DATA COLLECTION INVENTORY

	Shirak (September 2019)	Tavush (October 2019)
interviews	4 (2 retired)	13 (3 retired educators)
schools	2 different border village schools	3 different border village schools
museums	Dzitoghtsyan House-Museum of Social Life and National Architecture, The Gallery of Mariam and Eranuhi Aslamazyan Sister, and Graphic Style	n/a
historic sites (either through organized school fieldtrips or other)	Armenia/Turkey border, No mans land between Arm/Tur, City of Ani, Marmarashen Church, Holy Savior Church, Gyumri City Center, cemetaries in Shirak, church ruins , Watch Tower , WWII commemoration site in, Earthquake Memorial in Gyumri	(1) Akhtala Church, (2) Haghpat Church, (3) Gosh River, (4) Armenia/Georgia relations - bridge for trade, (5) Restricted castle, (6) two villages
songs	Lidushik, Im Poqrik Hayastan, traditional folk Armnenian songs	Lidushik, Im Poqrik Hayastan
other encounters	(1) Meghrashat Village Mayor Assistant, before anonymous village KGB questioning for cemetary, (2) interview in former Azerbaijani house, (3) Independence day celebration at Meghrashat School, (4) Women for Development NGO support meeting, (5) Former AUA students response to my research private FB messages, (6) bus rides from Gyumri to Border Villages, (7) Teachers Lounge in Meghrashat, (8) Student Council Elections at Meghrashat school, (9) NGO Little Prince Social Center for Children, (10) Poverty, (11) Violence, (12) my researcher identity	(1) Gayane Dallakyan teacher invited us to dinner at her house, (2) lived with principal and chemistry teacher, (3) Bdghavan school, (4) lunch and interview motherof POW/teacher at her house, (5) fieldtrips organized by Ljgadzor school, (6) trips organized by my host principal family, (7) Chemistry Teacher Father's funeral related gatherings, (8) Teachers Lounge talks, (9) poverty, (10) violence, (11) open border with Azerbaijan - fenced with Georgia, (12) my researcher identity, (13) assembly at Ljgadzor school introducing me, (14) Chess tournament

DISSERTATION DATA COLLECTION INVENTORY

	Yerevan (November/December 2019)	**Turkey (February 2020)**
interviews	4 (1 retired English teacher)	17 teachers (3 retired)
schools	Anonymous	4 schools
museums	(1) National History Museum, (2) Sergei Parajanov, (3) National Museum of Armenian Ethnography and History of Liberal Struggle, (4) Genocide Museum, (5) Gomidas Museum	(1) Dolmabahçe palace museum, (2) Yapı Kredi Kültür Sanat
historic sites (either through organized school fieldtrips or other)	(1) Pedagogical University, (2) National Archives, (3) National Library, (4) Noravank, (5) Khor Virab, (6) Areni, (7) Jermuk	(1) cemetery in Şişli and Üsükdar, (2) Armenian Churches, (3) Bank Ottoman, (4) Blue Mosque, (5) Spice market
songs	(1) Gomidas/folk songs, Christmas songs, (2) American songs (One Direction - What Makes You Beautiful, Bad guy - Billie Ellie, This time for Africa - Shakira), (3) Azerbaijani song	Onnik Dinkjian

other encounters	(1) presentation at AUA to poli sci class, (2) walk around Yerevan in former Azerbaijani neighborhood with Artsvi, (3) attended 7 day memory of Lusine chemistry teacher's father's passing and his 40th day, (4) US Congress Genocide Recognition, (5) Krikor Beledian Lecture, (6) Jirayr Libaridian Lecture, (7) Imagine Dialogue Event on Memory and Politics, (8) guest speaker for Peace Letter workshop, (9) Poverty, (10) Violence - ie schools and fences, (11) my researcher identity, (12) History Textbook talk in August 2019, (13) parent wanting to enroll their kid at MSKH, (14) Yura's English Class, (15) MoESCS Approval, (16) Inclusive education project experience.	(1) book launch event, (2) Parigentan holiday celebration, (3) Agos Newspaper, (4) Megerdic Beshiktashlian event, (5) Sunday, History School Event

APPENDIX B

AGOS NEWSPAPER STORY

AGOS NEWSPAPER STORY

AGOS

Լուսանկար՝ Պերճ Արապեան

Փոխ ընկալման որոնում մանկավարժութեան մէջ

05.02.2020

ԼՈՒՍԻԷՆ ՔՈՓԱՐ

lusyenkopar81@hotmail.com

Բարեւ ձեզ բարի եկաք: Ուրկէ եկած էք եւ ինչ նիւթի շուրջ կ'աշխատիք:

Իմ անունս Կարինէ Փալանճեան է: Ես առաջին սերունդի Ամերիկահայ եմ: Իմ ծնողքս Նորայր եւ Իսկուհին Հալէպէն են եւ մեր նախնիները Արեւմտահայաստանէն էին: Իմ մօրս կողմը Պիրէճիքէն է եւ հօրս ընտանիքը Բալուէն: Որպէս սփիւռքահայ գիտեմ որ ինքնութիւնս շատ կարեւոր եւ թանկարժէք է նամանաւանդ, երբ իմ մեծ մայրս 1915 Մեծ Եղեռնէն ազատուեր է եւ Հալէպ հասեր Տէր Զօրի անապատէն: Փոքր տարիքիս ես Ամերիկեան դպրոց կը յաճախէի, բայց ամենասիրած օրերս կ'անցնէի Շա-

Բ)Մանկութեան տարիներուն, արդեօք դուք կամ ձեր ընտանիքի անդամները հանդիպա՞ծ էք հայերու, ատրպէյճանցիներու, քիւրտերու, ռուսերու, թուրքիայէն կամ Խորհրդային Միութեան տարածքէն մարդկանց կամ ալ էթնիկ խումբերուն: Եթէ այո, կը նկարագրէ՞ք ձեր փորձառութիւնները: Ուրտեղ եւ ինչպէ՞ս են եղել այս շփումները:

Դ) Խնդրեմ նկարագրէք, թէ երբ եւ որտեղ մասնակցած էք այս վերապատրաստումներուն:

Ե) Ինչպէ՞ս կը նկարագրէք այդ հանդիպումները այլոց հետ (Հայաստանէն, Ատրպէյճանէն կամ Թուրքիայէն մարդկանց հետ):

Զ) Կրնա՞ք յիշել այդ հանդիպումներու ժամանակ ձեր միտքերը եւ թէ ինչպէս ընկալեցիք այդ հանդիպումները: Այս փորձառութիւնները ինչպէ՞ս ձեւափոխեցին ձեզ եւ ձեր ուսուցանելու մեթոդները/ Այդ փորձառութիւնները ինչ ազդեցութիւն ունեցան ձեր եւ ձեր ուսուցման մեթոդներու վրայ:

Հետազօտութեան ընթացքին ուսուցիչներ կրնան օգտագործել տարբեր միջոցներ (օր.՝ նկարներ, քարտէզներ, օրագրեր/գրառումներ եւ այլն) ձեր յիշողութիւնները պատմելու համար: Բոլոր հարցազրոյցները պէտք է ձայնագրուին եւ կ'անցկացուին հայերէն եւ անգլերէն լեզուներով, իսկ վերլուծական աշխատանքները կ'ըլլան գործընթացին զուգահեռ: Խնդրեմ նկատի ունենալ, որ ձեր տուած տեղեկութիւններու ու պատասխաններու գաղտնիութիւնը կ'ապահովուի:

Մինչեւ երբ հոս էք:

Ես մինչեւ Մարտ 1 Պոլիս պիտի մնամ:

APPENDIX C

QR CODE TO WATCH DISSERTATION DEFENSE

QR CODE TO WATCH DISSERTATION DEFENSE

APPENDIX D SUPPLEMENTARY FILES

SEE ATTACHMENT FILES