

**The Embodied Heritage of Armenian People: An Interpretative  
Phenomenological Analysis – A Sample of Armenians Living in London**

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## Abstract

This research project investigated the lived experience of Armenian people who had migrated to live in London. Eight participants were interviewed about their experiences and an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was employed as the research method. Four superordinate themes were identified from the findings; 1. 'The Armenian History and Heritage', 2. 'The Armenian Culture', 3. 'London Armenian Community', and 4. 'The Experiences of Adaptation'. For each superordinate theme, a few subthemes emerged which expanded on the knowledge gained during the analysis. The Findings revealed that all participants expressed the importance of sustaining Armenian history, heritage, core values and culture as it relates to their personal and ethnic identity. Furthermore, their experiences of trauma and transgenerational trauma were complex, uniquely experienced, and directly contributed to the challenges that they experienced when acculturating to life in London. Community connection and social engagement were identified as both meaningful and challenging for all participants. Implications are provided for Counselling Psychologists and other health and care practitioners who work with Armenian people, including the importance of practitioners having an awareness of the importance of history, heritage, and culture for many Armenian people and how this impacts their social, physical, psychological, and spiritual lives. Furthermore, practitioners require an awareness of the transgenerational trauma embedded in Armenian heritage following the Armenian Genocide of 1915. For Armenians who have migrated away from their home communities, it is recommended that mental health practitioners support their clients to actively engage with other communities and groups to reduce their sense of isolation. Further research into this underexplored population is strongly recommended.

*Keywords:* Armenians, belonging, diaspora, home, identity, immigration, existential, IPA, mental health, phenomenological, psychology, intergeneration trauma, transgenerational trauma.

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## Abbreviations

BACP	British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
BAME	Black, Asian, and minority ethnic
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BPS	The British Psychological Society
CAIA	Centre for Armenian Information and Advice
DPA	Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis
ER	Extrinsic Religious
ETP	Expatriate Trailing Partners
FWM	Four World Model
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
GP	General Practitioner
GT	Grounded Theory
HS	Holocaust Survivors
IPA	Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
IR	Intrinsic Religious
NHS	National Health Service
PTG	Post Traumatic Growth
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
SEA	Structural Existential Analysis
UK	United Kingdom
UKCP	The United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy
USA	United States of America
WEIRD	Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic

## Transcript Notations

...	Deducted materials
[ grandfather]	Additional material
*	Body language



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## **Statement of Authorship**

I, Scarlet Sarksan, authorise that this doctoral thesis has been accomplished and interpreted by me. The ethics have been approved by the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the New School of Psychotherapy and Counselling and the Psychology Department of Middlesex University for the Degree of Doctor of Existential Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy. As the author of this work, I am fully responsible for the content and writing of the thesis, and there are no conflicts of interest.

## **Introduction**

### **An overview**

The present study sets out to investigate how life is experienced by Armenians who are living in London. The need for this research grew from an in-depth exploration of current and historical literature which clearly identified a gap in knowledge about this lived experience and how practitioners can best support this population holistically with their mental, social, and emotional health. The Introduction Chapter provides a review of the existing literature detailing perspectives from both qualitative and quantitative research. The gaps in existing knowledge surrounding Armenian people who live in London and their wellbeing are clearly outlined, providing the framework for the project development.

The Methodology chapter introduces several research methods that were considered for this lived-experience research and provides a rationale for why Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was selected. In brief, extensive research using the IPA method of analysis demonstrates (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) the method's credibility for subjective in-depth live experience research. Therefore, IPA was selected and applied to data collected from a homogeneous sample of Armenians living in London. The practical details of how the research was carried out have been clearly outlined.

The Analysis and Finding Chapter reports the participant's data as understood through the application of IPA, providing the reader with the opportunity to have a real sense of the material, and enabling a clear explanation and interpretation of the journey from participant testimonials to emerging themes. Four main themes emerged from the analysis process which are presented in the Analysis and Finding Chapter.

The Discussion Chapter presents connections between existing academic theories and the findings of this study. In addition, it also discusses the strengths and limitations of this study.

The Conclusion Chapter outlines the implications for counselling psychology and psychotherapy as revealed by this research; provides recommendations for further research and offers final reflections and reflexivity.

### **A Brief Introduction to Armenians**

The Armenian population is currently estimated at 10 million, seven million of whom live in member states of the Council of Europe and three million living in the Republic of Armenia, a former state of the Soviet Union. In the last published statistics on Armenians living in the diaspora, it is estimated that 20,000 Armenians live in the UK (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017). According to George (2009), Armenians initially settled in Manchester over 100 years ago, established the first Armenian Church in England, and then moved further south to London.

As part of the migrant route into the UK, individuals experience many cultural and psychological challenges within the new host culture; psychological as well as social challenges can be associated with this process (Akhtar, 1995; Berry, 1997; 2008; 2019; Duncan et al., 2011; Madison, 2010; Nguyen et al., 2012; van Deurzen, 1998; Waters, 2013). According to van Deurzen (1998) travelling abroad or migration seems like the essence of human freedom, but the reality is often different. The process includes loneliness, exclusion, and culture shock. van Deurzen (1998) added that these experiences might be hard for some people to understand if they are happily ensconced in their secure homes, in their own country, speaking their mother language, and with their families (p. 53). These are relevant issues, not only as a life experience but also for practitioners working with Armenians.

Some Armenians who live in London originate from the Armenian diaspora, their ethnic identity differs from their nationality or place of birth. They are often identified with their birthplace or adopted nationality; therefore, they may be classified as Arabs, Iranians, Russians, or generalised as white (HEAR Network, 2019), something with which they may

not identify as. As their ethnic background may not be recognised, research has found that consequently their issues are often overlooked by the media, decision-makers, statutory services, voluntary organisations, and the general public (HEAR Network, 2019). Cornell and Hartmann (1998) similarly stated, for example, that someone with one Irish and one Italian parent who is inheriting both ethnic roots may choose to identify with both, either, or none. People may generally identify such individuals as white. Likewise, someone with one Irish and one Kenyan parent may be identified as black by society, which perhaps is not how they may feel. One does not have to have black skin in a white society to feel like an outsider (van Deurzen, 1998), one may feel an outcast if they are not recognised and identified by others for who they feel they are.

Armenian ethnic identity includes having a history of traumatic events. For example, the Armenian Diaspora came about as the result of the Armenian Genocide which occurred in 1915, when the Ottoman Empire massacred over a million and a half out of two million Armenians in a systemically planned attack by the Young Turks (Avedian, 2012; Beukian, 2016; Derderian, 2004; Hovannisian, 2007; Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Karenian et al., 2010; Khatcherian, 2018; Mangassarian, 2016). The Genocide has influenced the psyche of Armenians and the themes of identity and survival have since been a major aspect of their culture (Douglas, 1992; Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Mangassarian, 2016). This massacre led to the surviving Armenian people fleeing and dispersing across the world mainly to countries that accepted migrants, such as the United States, Russia, and several countries in Europe and the Middle East including Iran, Lebanon, Iraq, and Syria.

Available literature about Armenians is rich in information about the history of Armenians, some Armenian communities in diaspora, religion, and politics. However, there is very limited, if any, information available about the psychology of Armenian people who

live in London or even the UK. This indicates a significant knowledge gap which the current study will attempt to address.

The lack of understanding among psychologists, in addition to health, education, and social care practitioners about Armenians about their unique way of being may hinder the support they are given.

A meta-analysis by Henrich et al. (2010) shows how people outside western countries are in the world and see the world differently from people in other cultures. 80% of psychological studies take place with people from Western, Educated, Industrialised, Rich, and Democratic societies (WEIRD). This accounts for only 12% of the rest of the world's population. 68% of the participants for psychological studies were from the United States and 27% came from the UK, a total of 96% of the participants were from WEIRD societies (Henrich et al., 2010). These statistics indicate the need for studies on non-western societies and underrepresented groups of people, including Armenians.

### **A Brief Introduction to Existential Psychotherapy**

Based on the researcher's background on existential philosophy, the relevant insights that existential approaches offer the exploration of lived experiences, and the focus on therapeutic recommendations embedded in this research, it is important to briefly introduce the existential approach to philosophy and psychotherapy.

The existential-phenomenological approach is a therapeutic mode in the field of Counselling Psychology. Existential therapy offers a philosophical base that is historically connected with phenomenology (van Deurzen & Adams, 2011). Existential psychotherapy explores the challenges and paradoxes that individuals are facing in their life journey. These human dilemmas are usually overlooked by practitioners who their focus is on psychopathology and medicalisation of psychological challenges (van Deurzen, 2015). Existential psychotherapy does not follow the case formulation (van Deurzen, 1995a; 2014).

Existential psychotherapy is exploring the human existence, concerns, and dilemmas of individuals. The existential-phenomenological method allows experiences and situations to unfold themselves. This approach avoids pathologising and categorising people, looking into subjective experiences as a unique entity. This kind of therapy supports the client to find their own meaning and take responsibility for their choices. The existential therapist encourages and empowers the client to become ‘captain of their ship’ and take ownership to lead their lives.

van Deurzen (1984) provided an empirically supported framework for the existential-phenomenological approach in psychotherapy called the Four Dimensions of Existence/Four World Model (see Figure 1). The model allows gaining deeper knowledge about the lived experience of phenomena. Aligned with one of the over-arching umbrellas of existential thought. The model does not claim a one-size-fits-all format. It is a framework that supports uncovering the existential structures as they point to the character of the everyday aspects of one’s lifeworld. van Deurzen (2014) explains that the use of the four dimensions allows all bases to be covered in terms of one’s ontological place in the world. van Deurzen (2010) argued the validity of using this model has been evidenced in decades of clinical practice.

**Figure 1***Four Dimensions of Existence or Four World Model*

*Note.* From *Counselling Psychology Review*, volume 29, by van Deurzen, E. 2014.

**Physical dimension:** As presented in Figure 1, in the physical dimension, people are in relation to life and death, sensations, actions, environment, and survival. They move towards and away from physical objects in a particular way. In this dimension, human beings relate to aspects of the physical world such as climate, wealth, and physical health; this differs from individual to individual (van Deurzen, 1997/2009a).

**Social dimension:** The next dimension as presented in Figure 1 is the social dimension. Like Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world-with-others, van Deurzen stated, in the social dimension, human beings relate to others socially. They respond to culture, race, and social levels. We explore groups to whom we belong or those where we do not fit in. Furthermore, the perspective and feeling of prejudice, discrimination, love, hate, completion, and co-operation are part of the social dimension (van Deurzen, 1997/2009a).

**Personal dimension (psychological):** Human beings search for identity under the personal dimension of existence. The number of events in their life journey, their thoughts,



and memories impact their identity and create confusion, particularly the anxiety of facing loss (van Deurzen, 1997/2009a).

***Spiritual dimension:*** Human beings' philosophical or religious beliefs, connection to the unknown, and the creation of an ideal world are all being explored under the spiritual dimension. Human being is searching for meaning and they find or create these meanings differently. Meaning and purpose may be found through religion or in a secular way (van Deurzen, 1997/2009a). As presented in Figure 1, in addition to psychological or religious beliefs and values, views or ideas can be explored under one's spiritual dimension.

As explored in the literature review, it is fair to argue that Armenians presented complexities due to their past history sub-cultures, sense of belonging, transgenerational trauma, acculturation, and adaptation. Therefore, the existential-phenomenological approach may be of great value in understanding the multidimensional way of being of Armenian people, how to assess their needs, and provide psychological, health, care, and education supports.

### **Need for Further Research**

The following section will outline the relevance of the current research project to the field of Counselling Psychology, highlighting current gaps in the literature and drawing on existing concepts provided by leading voices in the field.

Historical investigations into the lived experiences of migration emphasise how significantly this experience can impact individuals. For example, van Deurzen (1998, p.55) stated, "One who has left home and lives in other people's spaces and smells and everything seems unsafe." Adding that this has important cross-generational implications. Akhtar (1995b) noted that migration is a complex phenomenon that challenges the stability of the individual's mental state, cognitive structure, and family organisation. The phenomenon of migration is understood to contribute to a complicated psychological process that

considerably affects personal identity (Akhtar, 1999). However, an overall understanding from existing research highlights that no two individuals who migrate are the same or have the same experience.

Likewise, in more to-date research, Papadopoulos (2019) spoke about the complex nature of migration. He emphasised that the phenomenon of migration is not only psychological but multidimensional. To understand this, one needs to understand all the dimensional and dynamical aspects at play such as the political, moral, economic, financial, educational, ethical, and more. Understanding the psychological dimension is not the only perspectival truth here. It cannot be put forward as the totality of this phenomenon. The phenomenon of migration is complex, it is neither black, nor white, but shades of grey. It is not a matter of “loss” or “gain” as polarities but a movement between both. It is not about “identity” or “integration” but a mixture of both. He added that seeing these as polarisation is only a defence mechanism (see Freud, 1894; 1937) and suggests that people who migrated are neither “dangerous” nor “vulnerable”, but rather that they may need support because of human rights issues and not simply because they are “damaged.”

In relation to connecting with others, Papadopoulos (2018) added that people retain more positive functions if they secure collaborative and reciprocal support. One of the important qualities of human resilience is not a result of individual strength, but often of a relational process. These understandings about the relational process are further supported by leading researchers in the field, for example, Guevrekian et al. (2020) added that social support provided by others is stress-buffering and can help individuals to cope with life issues and challenging times.

Madison (2010) believed migration has a double nature of “loss” and “gain” – and discusses the deprivation of original environment, native language, culturally shaped values

and ideals, familiar food, music, and people. He also highlights the potential for a new opportunity for psychic growth, change, and the reconstruction of one sense of self.

In Armenian-specific migration research, it is elaborated that Armenians have experienced collective trauma as a nation due to The Armenian Genocide (Avedian, 2012; Beukian, 2016; Derderian, 2004; Hovannisian, 2007; Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Karenian et al., 2010; Khatcherian, 2018; Mangassarian, 2016). Furthermore, they experienced relocation as a dislocation (Der Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021). Additionally, the experience of adaptation and acculturation stress had some impact on the mental health of Armenians in these studies (Der Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021; Guevrekian et al., 2020; Saroyan, 2019; Tahmassian, 2003; Vartan, 1996).

Mangassarian (2016) who reviewed psychological studies about Armenian people advocated that further research is needed for a better understanding of how to work with Armenians. Der Sarkissian and Sharkey (2021) in their study on Armenian American youth concluded that schools and communities have an increasing role in supporting the mental health of students and community members. Schools are changing from educational venues to taking more responsibility for assessing mental health and offering suitable psychological interventions to students and parents who need them. They identified the need for mental health professionals to have in-depth knowledge of multicultural psychology. Without this knowledge, practitioners will not be able to identify individuals' unique psychological and culturally sensitive needs. With such knowledge, mental health professionals can provide a more holistic expression of care through exploring the individual from the four existential dimensions, i.e., personal/psychological, social, physical, and spiritual (van Deurzen, 2014); specifically, for psychological related services.

The emphasis that existing research puts on the deep-rooted and complex impact that migration can have on individuals and future generations, and the limited body of research

into Armenian-specific migration experiences, clearly highlights the need for further investigation into the experience of Armenians who have migrated as first generation and further generations. As this research is being conducted by myself, an Armenian who has migrated to London. Also, through a London-based research institution, an Armenian population living in London has therefore been selected as a sample in the context of this research; this is to assist clinicians to understand their Armenian client group holistically by providing culturally appropriate services, in the Greater London Multicultural Metropole (Ridley, 1995).

## Literature Review

This chapter provides a systematic literature review that aims to recognise, assess, and summarise the findings of relevant studies about the Armenian people, their culture, and migration. This review will identify existing knowledge and highlight potential gaps in knowledge. This initial investigatory process is an important part of building the foundations for conducting research as, when appropriate, uniting the findings of different studies may give a more solid and reliable knowledge based to begin original research development from (University of York, 2008). As this thesis set out to explore the lived experience of Armenian people who have migrated to UK, this chapter outlines literature reviews in three main sections: '*The Armenians*', '*Trauma and Transgenerational Trauma*' and '*Acculturation and Adaptation*'. Each main sections includes sub-sections providing general backgrounds and concepts related to the experience of migration in general, and more specifically, related to Armenian lived experiences. Due to my extensive training and engagement with the existential approach, relevant philosophical literature has been included in relation to the phenomenon under investigation.

### Literature search strategy

The literature review started with a gathering of literature from historical and up-to-date understandings about this topic. Sources were included from a variety of books from my personal library, Hayashen library, and NSPC library. I have also had close discussions with academic supervisors, university colleagues, and clinical colleagues in the field of counselling psychology who have suggested resources that I have pursued, all of which has contributed to the current literature search. In addition to the above, a more formal literature search was carried out using search terms from Middlesex University Unihub, Brunel

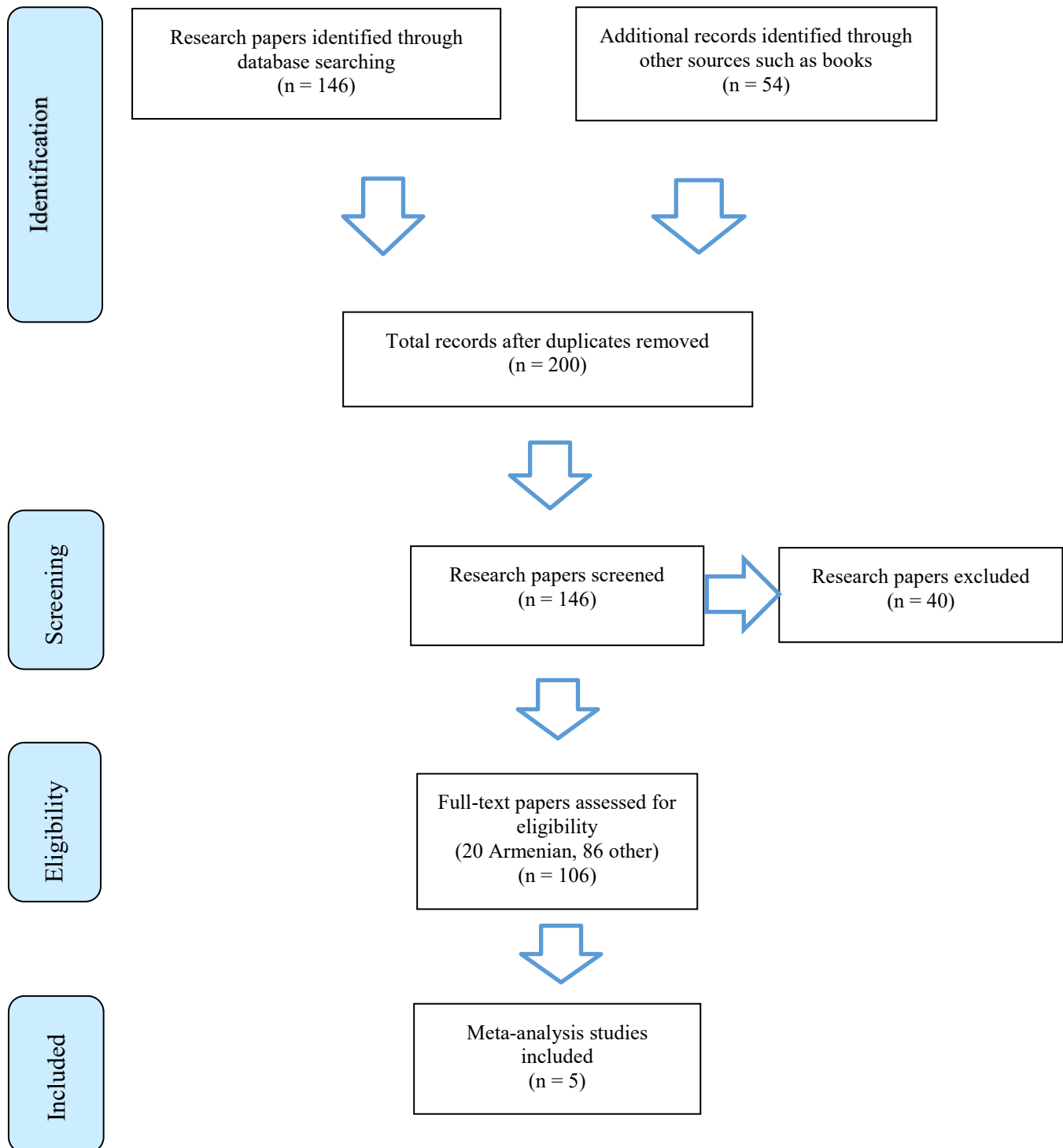
University, and Google Scholar. These were: ‘Armenians AND/OR UK ’(22,929 articles), ‘Armenians AND/OR identity ’(22,593), ‘Armenians AND/OR belonging ’(11,203), ‘Armenians AND/OR acculturation ’(1196), ‘Armenian genocide AND/OR mental health ’ (697), ‘Armenians AND/OR trauma ’(4204). The articles used in the research were retrieved from the following databases: Taylor and Francis Online, EBSCOhost, SAGE, PubMed, Science Direct, PsycInfo, Social Sciences Abstracts, PsycARTICLES to retrieve existing relevant literature. A further literature search carried out from the Armenian Diaspora Catalogue (Armenian Diaspora, 2018) introduces 366 studies related to Armenians (worldwide studies in different languages). Additionally, I sourced relevant references which were presented in the bibliography of these articles.

Due to the high volume of sources, articles primarily related to Armenian history, religion, anthropology, politics, conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh, and Armenian art were excluded as the main focus of this study is gaining a psychological perspective. Only articles and dissertations related to psychology, Armenian culture & acculturation, and Armenian identity reconstruction were included in the further readings. Only English texts were used. While historical literature was used to capture the development of knowledge in this field, a priority was given to articles between the years 2000-2021 to address current knowledge and findings.

I used a study selection process provided by The University of York (2009, p.26) which I have presented in **Figure 2. This included the following stages:**

- **Identification**
- **Screening**
- **Eligibility**
- **Included.**

Section one of the flowchart presents the **identification** stage. A total of 146 research papers were selected from different database searches after excluding duplications. Besides that, 54 books were deemed relevant and were added to the further reading list, making a total record of 200 books and research papers. During the **screening** stage, I reviewed 146 abstracts and conclusions of articles to ensure that they were relevant in line with the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Following this verification process, 40 papers were omitted (see Appendix P for the details of 40 excluded research papers). For example, articles relating to art, politics, history, etc were among the omitted papers. During the **eligibility** stage, a total of 106 articles were reviewed including some Doctoral theses, and some chapters of 54 books. Within those 106 research papers, five meta-analysis studies were deemed relevant to this research which is included in the Introduction and Literature Review Chapters of this study. Out of 106 review articles, 20 studies were Armenian related (see Appendix Q), the rest were relevant literature about psychology, sociology, methodology, philosophy (existential and phenomenology). In the last stage, I **included** which articles bring the most relevant knowledge to this study elaborating relevant points in more detail, synthesising some studies, and critically evaluated them. The identified 160 (106 papers + 54 books) resources were used for all chapters of this study and resulted including in five meta-analyses.

**Figure 2***Flow Chart of Study Selection Process*

*Note. By The University of York, 2009, p.26,*

[https://www.york.ac.uk/media/crd/Systematic\\_Reviews.pdf](https://www.york.ac.uk/media/crd/Systematic_Reviews.pdf).



## **The Armenians**

The next section provides an overview of the history of Armenians starting from 3,000 BCE, including a background about their unique language which consists of two different dialects, the Indo-European Armenian culture, and Armenian Apostolic Church affiliation. The routes of Armenians' migration to the UK are also introduced, which according to historical records were from the Armenian Diaspora and the Republic of Armenia.

### ***A Brief History of Armenians***

The Armenian people have made their home in the Caucasus region of Eurasia from the Bronze Age era (~3,000-1,200 BCE), making them one of the world's oldest civilizations. It is stated that Armenia is historically misfortunate, lying in the path of several empires: Persian, Greek, and Roman empires in ancient times, the Byzantine in the medieval era, the Ottoman and Russian in the modern period. Located at the crossroads of Eurasia in the region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, comprising parts of present-day Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Iran, Armenia had little chance of maintaining its territorial integrity (Kenny, 2013). Figure 3 presents a historical versus current map of Armenia to present the lost lands.

**Figure 3**

*Historical versus current map of the Republic of Armenia*



At present, the Republic of Armenia is a landlocked country on the crossroad between Europe and Asia. It is situated in south-eastern Europe/western Asia, east of Turkey, north of Iran, and it is also bordered by Azerbaijan and Georgia (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**

*Map of the Republic of Armenia bordered by neighbouring countries*



Armenians are the descendants of a branch of Indo-Europeans and have a unique culture (Aghanian, 2007). They are often misunderstood by the public as being members of the dominant Western European culture (Saroyan, 2019). Such misconception further misrepresents Armenians traditional beliefs, practices, and consequently prevents an accurate understanding of their distinct culture (Saroyan, 2019). According to Aghanian (2007), Armenians' main religion is Christianity as practised by the Armenian Apostolic Church; however, some are Roman Catholics, Protestants, or are atheists. Armenia is known as the first country that adopted Christianity as a state religion in 301 CE. Their language falls into the Indo-European group of languages (Aghanian, 2007). Today Armenia is the 143<sup>rd</sup> country by size in the global hierarchy. It is located on the belt that divides Asia from Europe (Marshall, 2015). According to Mihai (2014), Armenian culture consists of features from both European and Asian cultures, adding that it is considered to have a rich cultural inheritance.

Today, Armenians are recognised in the legal sense as a national or linguistically underrepresented group in several countries in Europe and America. Those who live in the Republic of Armenia are considered as a titular national, and those who have migrated are considered as the Armenian Diaspora (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017). Armenians physically have varying facial complexions, ranging from olive-skin dark hair, large dark colour eyes to a lighter complexion with paler eyes. Most Diaspora Armenians have 'ian' and *Hayastansis* (Armenians from Armenia) have 'yan' at the end of their surnames. In the diaspora, many Armenians have continued to identify themselves as Armenians, retained their identity, and were recognised by other people in the society. However, significant numbers have lost their ethnic identity along the way of assimilation (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017).

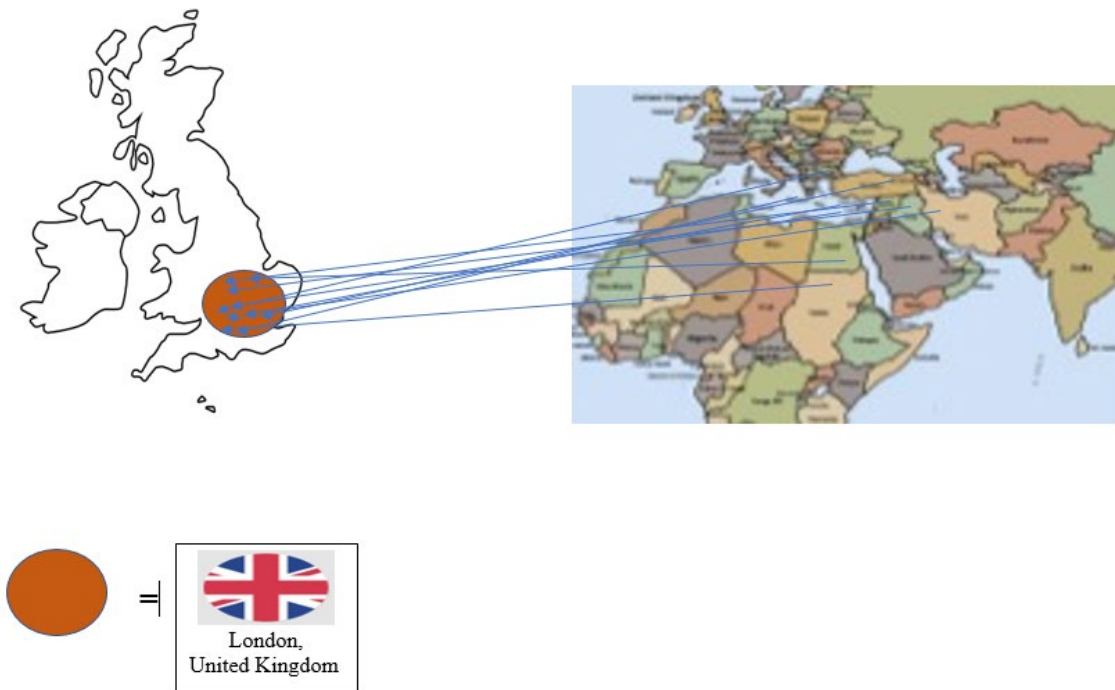
Armenians speak in two different dialects, Western and Eastern. Merging these different dialects, cultural attitudes, and previous host-lands can create disharmony in uniting Armenians as part of the same diaspora. There is a complex relationship between today's Republic of Armenia and Western Armenians because what was Western Armenia is now Eastern Turkey (Bolsajian, 2018). The next section explains the paths of migration to the UK during different eras.

### *A Brief History of Armenian Migration to the UK*

I should like to see any power of the world destroy this race, this small tribe of unimportant people, whose wars have all been fought and lost, whose structures have crumbled, whose literature is unread, whose music is unheard, whose prayers are no longer uttered. Go ahead, destroy this race. Let us say that it is again 1915. There is war in the world. Destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them from their homes into the desert. Let them have neither bread nor water. Burn their houses and churches. See if they will not live again. See if they will not laugh again. See if the race will not live again. For when two of them meet, anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia (Saroyan, 1936, p.438).

William Saroyan, a Californian-born author, presented the above quote to describe the Armenians in the diaspora. He proclaimed that wherever they immigrate they adapt to the new environment, keep their ethnic identity, and create a new community. Armenians mostly have settled in large cities, for example, Los Angeles (Der Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021; Guevrekian et al., 2020; Saroyan, 2019), London (Talai, 1989; Pattie, 1997), or New York (Bakalian, 1993/2017) where Saroyan (1936) stated that as creating a new 'home'.

Figure 5 presents the Armenian migration from Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Cyprus, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Syria, Sudan, Egypt, Armenia, and Bulgaria to the UK/London.

**Figure 5***Map of Armenian migration to the UK*

Armenians migrated in different eras, for example, the Iranian Revolution (1979), the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990), the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988), the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), the economic crash of the Republic of Armenia (1992 onwards), and several other events which will be elaborated below. Some Armenian Cypriots migrated to London between the 1930s to 1950s, and in 1974 due to the Turkish invasion of Cyprus. During these periods some Armenian Cypriots opened their shops or ran import-export businesses in London. In London, Armenian individuals from Iran started to arrive in the late 1970s. Armenian Iranians were regarded as a religious minority in Iran. Islamic laws introduced Ayatollah Khomeini dictated certain limitations for non-Muslims such as Armenians (Iskandaryan, 2019), the Bahai, the Jewish community, and more (Zabihi-Moghaddam,

2016). As a result, many non-Muslim groups such as the Armenians who had lived in Persia for hundreds of years left under duress seeking a new home. Some Armenians left Iran within the first few years after the 1978 Islamic Revolution, and then more during the eight-year Iran/Iraq war in the 1980s (Iskandaryan, 2019). Barry (2015) stated in one generation 250,000 Iranian Armenians migrated and currently only 35,000 are left in Iran. In 1988 and 1990, Armenians from both Armenia and Azerbaijan migrated, following the conflict with Soviet-Azerbaijan, during which there was a massacre of Armenians by the Azeri majority in Baku, and hundreds of thousands of refugees remain displaced as a result (Bakalian, 1993; Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017). In 2003 Armenians migrated from Iraq as a result of the Iraq war with the United States and in 2011 from Syria because of the civil war (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017). Since 2015, some Armenians have been under attack by the Isis in Eastern Syria. An atrocity occurred in 2019 when a Catholic priest from Syria's Armenian community was murdered by the Islamic State (Spencer, 2019).

Douglas (1992) who is an American historian stated that Armenians are seen as hardworking and resilient with passion, determination to survive, and profound respect for ancestral traditions. Despite Armenia having been forced to endure many catastrophes throughout history, astonishingly they have shown the ability to recover and improve, allowing them to convert tragedy into joy, and hopelessness into faith. Although some Armenians tend to suffer feelings of anger and sadness through many generations, some are still trying to strengthen their culture and continue the campaign to gain recognition for the Armenian Genocide in 1915 (Douglas, 1992).

Yepremyan and Tavitian (2017) added that because of the Armenian Genocide while Diaspora communities live in physically distant locations across the globe, they are still connected across borders by different bonds. Family and friendship connections are an important part of these bonds. Cultural, educational, charitable, and religious activities,

books, newspapers, musical productions, paintings, films, and dance performances are some of the practical ways continuing to keep the sense of common identity through the Armenian Diaspora today. Tadevosyan and Poghosyan (2012) said the Armenian organizations and activities of educational, religious, and other institutions' roles are to protect the Armenian ethnicity and culture. However, it is arguable that not all Armenian organisations are culturally related. For example, several volunteer organisations purely offer only humanitarian support.

Pattie (1997) stated that Armenians who migrated to London come mostly from middle-class positions in society, such as merchants, business owners, and office workers. She added that the majority of Armenians living in London are homeowners. Their occupations appear to be skilled work, and education levels are high in London-Armenians and Armenians in general. However, as highlighted in the Introduction Chapter, the community has changed due to the further relocation of Armenians from Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Armenia, Azerbaijan and more. Pattie's study was limited to Armenian Cypriots and the Armenians from Cyprus consisting of only 20–25% of the total Armenian population in London (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017). The Armenian population from Iran is by far the largest in London and represented between 50 and 60% of the total Armenian community in 2003 –2004. Migrants from India and Lebanon add another 10%, and 5% from Turkey, Armenia, Egypt, former Palestine, and Georgia (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017). Most Armenians located in London are concentrated in the districts of Ealing, Brent, Kensington, Chelsea, Haringey, and Hounslow (HEAR Network, 2019).

With the phenomenon of relocation, the experience of belonging or not belonging is interlinked (van Deurzen, 1998; Madison, 2010). The next section will investigate the phenomena of belonging from an existential perspective.

### *Armenians' Experience of 'Home'*

One of the two anthropological research studies available on London-Armenians was on the topic of sense of belonging and community building in the diaspora. According to Pattie (1999), the meaning and sense of 'Homeland' for Armenians has always been an evolving belief. Every individual's belief is moulded by their memories, experiences, hopes, and desires. For centuries due to the nature of the diaspora, there has not been one clear centre approved by all Armenians as a homeland. Likewise, the question of going back to Armenia is troubling for some Armenians because whilst adapting and rebuilding a home in a new environment in the diaspora, some Armenians are still haunted by their memories. In London, Armenians have created a new community to feel at home and belong in venues such as community centres and churches, food, and literature.

Bolsajian, (2018) added, having lost their ancestral homeland, Western Armenians only accept today's Armenia as a 'step-homeland'; one that is not actually where they come from, but it is representative of their roots. The reader needs to be mindful that Bolsajian's study was conducted only on Western Armenians who are living in the United States, which are not representative of all Armenians. Yeganyan (2013) stated, after the collapse of the Soviet Union some Diaspora Armenians have returned to Armenia to live regardless of limited career opportunities and low income. Furthermore, Mutch (2021) reported in the News Line Magazine that over 20,000 Western Armenians relocated to Armenia during the civil war in Syria in 2012 and received shelter and citizenship. Therefore, Armenia still feels like the 'homeland' to some diaspora Armenians, including the Western Armenians.

In the next chapter, I will look at how the concept of 'home' and a sense of belonging is understood through an existential lens.



### *'Home' from an Existential Lens*

Writing from the point of view of a voluntary migrant, the work of Madison (2010) gives an important existential understanding of the experience of relocation and belonging. Madison (2010) in his study of 20 volunteer migrants based in London, explored the existential themes that revealed what it is like to leave the familiar, belonging, and encountering change. He suggested that migration is not only an experience of relocation but also an 'existential migration'. He also examined paradoxical poles that most of the participants encountered. While they missed 'home', there was a sense that the participants felt that after all, they did not belong there and had to move abroad for self-discovery and freedom. As the name suggests, he proposes that migration is an experience of leaving home and self-discovery. His research on migration into a new country shows its consequences on the individual's sense of self. One of the strategies to protect against the attacks on the sense of self is to build different defensive barriers to separate the self from the environment. Sometimes this results in losing the sense of belonging, and without the sense of belonging, one may feel rootless and start to close even more doors on oneself.

Madison (2010) referred to the double nature of immigration; migration between cultures opens new ideas of what is possible and can create a more "fluid identity" (also see Akhtar, 1995b). The environment strongly influences one's ability to develop. Madison suggests it is also an experience of gain: space and freedom to develop themselves. There is the existential paradox to protect their uniqueness whilst adapting to their new environment but remaining faithful to their roots. Psychological distress can come when an individual identifies themselves by comparison to others. If they are consumed with trying to fit in, they can lose focus on their uniqueness and therefore never relax and feel at home. When migrants can find a connection with others who feel like outsiders, they can share their sense of identity and a feeling of belonging (p. 45).

Madison's research into migration experiences draws attention to how important a sense of belonging is to individuals. Lack of belonging can be experienced as not being understood or not feeling welcome. When people are focused on belonging, they tend to shape themselves to fit in with different environments.

Madison's work is important because it highlights that migration is an experience that will throw people into a position of choice about themselves in their new environment. They face new expectations from their environment that may be more or less welcoming than those of their native land. Their sense of self will be hidden if they focus solely on fitting in, yet their sense of safety can be lost if they feel isolated and do not fit in at all. Their attitude towards how authentically they want to belong is key in the experience of settling into a new culture and taking on the responsibility.

Based on my engagement with the literature and my own lived experience, I propose that the process of redefining and reconstructing oneself is not specific to migrants, but rather that this is a human tendency and may apply to any individual. Madison (2010) said migration is an experience of leaving home for self-discovery. A synthesis of current literature supports this concept and provides the understanding that not every individual is in the stage of self-reflecting. Furthermore, exploring the possibility of feeling 'home' and 'belonging' to multiple places in different ways does not essentially mean not belonging to other places, or as Madison (2010) argues, belonging to the 'non-belonging'.

This lived experience of duality or being 'pulled between' different states of identity and belonging is further understood in the work of Ortega (2016). She said that individuals may hold 'multiplicitous self' which means 'being-between-the-worlds'. This may create a split between cultures, races, languages, pulling the individual to one side or the other or pushing to choose one or the other. This is understood as 'ontological pluralism' (Ortega, 2016) and the experience of being different in different worlds which is

understood to be an embodied experience through which one may practise survival and resistance. According to ontological pluralism, people experience themselves as different persons in different worlds, they do not experience just themselves. However, this raises the possibility of finding alternative perspectives of oneself and different worlds.

‘Multiplicitous self’ is never completely at home, they experience different ways of being. Ortega (2016) views the home as a situation and a temporary lived experience “sense of belonging while being aware that such belonging is not possible” (p. 186). These understandings show the paradox of humans, being inevitably existentially homeless, yet feel confused when their sense of homelessness becomes overwhelming.

Synthesising the above literature, it can be understood through the ideas of Madison that while certain individuals’ may be relocating to be free and for self-discovery, they may not have a sense of belonging to the country of origin but the new country instead or an absolute sense of not belonging anywhere (Madison, 2022). Furthermore, the work of Ortega (2016) argued that due to ‘being-between-two-worlds’ belonging is not possible as one is holding a different self in different worlds, with a feeling of not belonging anywhere. To further explore these phenomena, it can be beneficial to draw on the work of Heidegger (1927; 2010) who described this phenomenon of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ as a universal human condition and not specific to relocated people. He added that the sense of home is a human ability to believe that they are secure and at home by creating a sense of familiarity with the world. This means if one somehow loses this sense of familiarity with their external world, their sense of home can be shaken and turn into uncanniness or not-feeling-at-home. Their existential anxiety may therefore become triggered anywhere and anytime.

As we apply this concept to the lives of Armenians in line with the focus of the current research, we can better understand the potential tension of Armenian people trying to experience a concept of home within a complex space that is created by the never-ending

cycle of constructing a new sense of home. According to theories provided by existing literature a true ‘home’ may be an illusion or untruth as understood from an existential perspective.

The literature review of Armenian people led to the phenomenon of transgenerational trauma which will be explored in the next section.

### **Trauma and Transgenerational-trauma**

The most historically and psychologically significant event in Armenian history was the Armenian Genocide (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Some Armenians continue to experience trauma and transgenerational trauma caused by the Armenian Genocide (Bakalian, 1993/2017; Der Sarkissian and Sharkey, 2021; Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Karenian et al., 2010; Mangassarian, 2016), and by more recent wars in the Middle East and Armenia (Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021) (see Section Armenian Migration to the UK). This section evaluates available literature and presents the experience of trauma by other nations. Additionally, it investigates the collective traumatic experience of Armenians and the understandings of trauma from an existential perspective and Post Traumatic Growth (PTG).

### ***Trauma and Epigenetics***

The concept of trauma has been a pillar of psychology since Freud’s early studies of the origins of hysteria (Karenian et al., 2010; Stolorow, 2011; van der Kolk, 2001; Wolynn, 2016). To have a deeper understanding of hereditary trauma in relation to this research it can be beneficial to understand the role that epigenetics plays. In brief, research into epigenetics and trauma has found that a traumatic experience can trigger hidden genes to become activated, for instance, addiction, depression, and physical illnesses such as cancer are among them (Mate, 2019).

Wolynn (2016) also made significant contributions to this knowledge base, and used clinical case studies, including his own experience which found that physical illnesses can be related not only to the direct experience of trauma but also transgenerational trauma. He proclaimed, “Traumas do not sleep, even with death, but rather, continue to look for the fertile ground of resolution in the children of the following generations” (p. 48). He added, “genes retain some memory of their past experiences” (p. 31). “Trauma has the power to reach out from the past and claim new victims” (p. 32).

While there is limited research into the epigenetic impact of trauma resulting from the Armenian Genocide, extensive research has been conducted in relation to the Holocaust. Lurie-Beck (2007) conducted a meta-analysis, examining the mental health of Holocaust survivors and their descendants. This in-depth research provides empirical understandings of cross-generational trauma which have relevance to the current study, including discovering the presence of higher levels of depression, anxiety, and paranoia within children and grandchildren of survivors as compared to various types of control groups. With epigenetic transmission being the key focus of this study, these results add to the body of research which recognise how unresolved trauma can be passed down through generations at a biological level through how genes are expressed, as well as through family conflicts and substance use (Blake & Watson, 2016; O’Neill et al., 2018; Wachter, 2018; Wolynn, 2016). Critically evaluating this study, it is important to note that contrasting studies such as the work of Vollhardt & Bilewicz (2013) found a lack of evidence to support the role of epigenetic transmission of trauma. It is therefore commonly advised that transgenerational epigenetic transmission requires future research (Youssef et al., 2018).

Barel et al. (2010) undertook a set of meta-analyses that illuminated the long-term psychiatric, psychosocial, and physical significances of the Holocaust for survivors. In 71 samples with 12,746 participants, Holocaust survivors were compared with their counterparts

(with no Holocaust background) on physical health, psychological wellbeing, posttraumatic stress symptoms, psychopathological symptomatology, cognitive functioning, and stress-related physiology. Holocaust survivors were found to be less well-adjusted than their counterparts. In particular, they showed substantially more posttraumatic stress symptoms. It is important to consider that despite the findings and evidence, some researchers posit that increased mental health needs among the Holocaust descendants stem from the stress of immigration and acculturation rather than from being passed down and inherited as trauma (Kellerman, 2001).

Many researchers and clinicians have offered treatment options which will be reviewed as follows. For example, the well-known psychiatrist Bessel van der Kolk (2014) extensively studied posttraumatic stress during and after a traumatic experience. The medial prefrontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for experiencing the present moment gets disturbed. When people relive their traumatic experiences, the frontal lobes become impaired, and as a result, one can be troubled when thinking or even speaking. Van der Kolk recommended the combination of prescribed medication, talking therapy, yoga, and EMDR as treatment options for clients who have experienced trauma. van der Kolk provided extensive knowledge about how a traumatic experience can have an impact on the structure of the brain. However, his globally popular book *The Body Keeps the Score* presented some limitations. He stated that the psychoanalytic approach and CBT were the only two approaches recommended treatments by academic researchers. “No one treatment stands as superior to any others” (Rothschild, 2000, p. 3). Moreover, van Deurzen (2009) in her book *Psychotherapy and a Quest for Happiness* widely elaborated on how to work with trauma using the existential model.

Rothschild (2000) studied the intercommunication between the brain and body. She added, “The most extreme stress is traumatic stress” (p. 18), which impacts the brain and

body. Traumatic stress causes hyper-arousal in the body's nervous system and prepares the body to fight, flee or freeze in response to threat. The brain and body have an intercommunication between nervous systems; therefore, the body remembers the traumatic events. Regardless of the used psychological interventions applied in the therapeutic work the client is at risk of becoming overwhelmed physically. She pointed at treating a traumatised body is as essential as treating the traumatised mind. Therefore, she encourages body-oriented techniques as well as psychotherapy. She mentioned the importance of the need to feel and identify bodily sensations, learning to use a language to name, describe and articulate their meaning. The client needs to see the relationship between their current somatic symptoms and their historical trauma. Rothschild's findings are highly valuable to understanding the connection of mind-body and the importance of bodywork for clients who experienced trauma. However, I would argue that in her book *The Body Remembers* her focused approaches were more relevant to PTSD. She also encouraged reliving traumatic memories, revising them, or extinguishing them, which may not necessarily be in the client's best interest. Some clients have no interest in reviewing their traumatic memories and others are simply unable to do so safely. This approach takes away the individual's freedom and autonomy for leading their sessions.

The science of epigenetic inheritance of the effects of trauma is young, is contentious, and is still generating heated debates within the field of psychology (Maamar et al., 2018).

### ***Trauma, Emotions and Behaviour***

Transgenerational-trauma has also been researched in relation to emotional and behavioural responses. Once again, research conducted using Holocaust survivors is provided here, as there is limited research using Armenian Genocide survivors.

Barber et al. (2006) studied emotional experiences such as anger, guilt, shame, anxiety, helplessness, and loneliness of Holocaust Survivors (HS) offspring. The findings

suggested an overprotective behaviour between the HS parents towards their children. They added, the feeling of anger originated due to the protection of parents and the self-defence of children, a natural response to survival. In this study, HS offspring expressed some difficulties in regulating the feeling of anger and aggressive behaviour. They added that HS parents were overprotective of their children and that these children had a special value for them. Consequently, these children had high sensitivity towards their parents' suffering, which led to them being overprotective of their parents. They added, HS may experience survivor guilt and they may transfer the feeling of guilt to their children, thus children may feel this guilt towards their parents. In their study, there was also a strong relation between perceiving the HS parent as being controlling. Parental control and overprotective attitude could be viewed in their daily life such as an extreme fear for their children's safety. For example, the parents' overprotection of their daughter going on a trip or insisting that the daughter be home early from a party. That may become a burden for a child, therefore developing the feeling of anger. Another example they used was the tension that trauma-related noise can create, for example, the noise of an electric drill and the child not knowing why the noise drives the parent crazy. Furthermore, for the child not anticipating the triggers may lead to feelings of guilt. While this study provides an in-depth understanding of emotional and behavioural patterns that may develop in the aftermath of trauma, however, it can be critiqued for several reasons. The research uses a self-report questionnaire – a method of analysis which may be prone to participant bias and may not provide an in-depth analysis of their emotional narratives. It was limited to Israeli-born children of survivors and a very small sample.

### ***Post-Traumatic Growth***

Psychological consequences for genocide survivors can be observed from both perspectives: a focus on dysfunctions which is often the case, or with a vision of post-trauma



psychological strength. Cassel & Suedfeld (2006) studied 45 HS and a comparison group of 21 Jewish people who had not experienced the Holocaust. Participants with a HS background showed outstanding resilience. Similar to this research, many studies are confirming the resilience of survivors of trauma and genocide (e.g., Beardslee & Podorefsky, 1988; Helmreich, 1992; Kalayjian & Shahinian, 1998; Lev-Wiesel & Amir, 2003; Powell et al., 2003; Rousseau et al., 2003). Some may argue that such researchers who have reported non-pathological findings among survivors of such traumatic experiences trivialize the suffering of the survivors, perhaps viewing the experience of making the individuals stronger (Der Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021). However, such findings support one's respect for the ability of human beings to meet even the most extreme challenges, the most intimidating complications, and gain strength and courage from the cruellest of sufferings (Bar-on et al., 1998).

Dekel et al. (2013) studied PTG and the effects of transgenerational transmission of trauma. The study investigated the HS offspring and their exposure to the experience of trauma. This studied middle-aged Israeli male combat veterans, using self-reported questionnaires. From the sample, 43 had parents of HS, and 156 did not. The study took place 30 and 35 years following the war (in 2003 and 2008). Its' results showed that second-generation survivors reported more PTG than the control group. However, the second-generation veterans reported less PTG than veterans who were not the second-generation. Their findings suggested that transmission of trauma from one generation to the next is perhaps associated with the offspring's tendency for growth following the traumatic experience. However, they proclaimed that with self-report measures perceptions of growth can be assessed but not growth itself. Dekel et al. (2013) added that some underrepresented groups who have experienced genocide did not have the same universal recognition and

compensations that Holocaust survivors have been aided with. Such factors may have negatively impacted resilience, growth, and healing for these groups.

Perry and Winfrey (2021) noted how connections such as community, culture (singing, dancing, and music), and meaning (beliefs or values) can have immense healing power. Their research brings valuable knowledge on understanding trauma, the impact on the brain, mind, and body, in addition to the healing power of social connections. Nonetheless, I would challenge their emphasis that true healing cannot take place in the absence of a community, sense of belonging, or in the absence of connection. A connection may very well be a vital aspect of healing, but it is not the only way to heal from one's trauma (Draeby, 2022).

### ***Armenian Transgenerational Trauma***

The genocide has changed everything. Entire genealogies have disappeared. For example, I have never met my father's father. And all I know of my mother's mother are the gruesome stories I have heard about what happened to her as a child. (Holslag, 2018, p. 95)

In previous sections, due to the limited psychological research into the Armenian Genocide, the experience of genocide-trauma has been explored using events in history whose longstanding nature is understood as sharing qualities with the Armenian Genocide, such as the Holocaust. In this section, the limited available body of research psychologically exploring the impact of the Armenian Genocide and the generational trauma on Armenians is discussed.

Armenian displacement in 1915 resulted in the deaths of some one and a half million people, out of a population of only two million. Armenians are regarded as the typical diaspora not simply because they scattered widely around the world but because they

experienced genocide in the twentieth century and the event took Armenian migration as a whole on a new dimension (Kenny, 2013).

After the devastating earthquake in Armenia in 1988, John Douglas, an American historian decided to study Armenians' history and wrote his book *The Armenians*. The father of Douglas was a scholar, and he could read the old Turkish language. With his father's assistance, Douglas managed to read documents from the Ottoman era to support his writing about Armenians. He added even to this day the Turkish government does not allow archaeologists to study the heritage which is buried in the area where Armenians lived (Douglas, 1992). He wrote:

On every page, in every book, there is tragedy and disaster that have become their unfortunate lot since the beginning of time. They are raised in violence and nurtured in fear. Rarely have they seen periods of tranquillity. They have been conquered, persecuted, oppressed, massacred, and exiled. They have seen their children slaughtered, their properties confiscated, and their churches burned. They have tried to worship their God but have been prevented to do so most of the time. They have tried to create a homeland but have been prevented to live there in peace. They have written books, but the books were burned before they were read. They have composed music, but rarely did they have the occasion to sing happily (Douglas, 1992, p. 3).

Kira (2001) proclaimed that trauma passes transgenerationally in two venues: through family and collectively and in two contexts: historical and social structural. They concluded that genocides such as the Armenian Genocide have a collective impact on identity. It affects psychological needs, self-identity, self-worth, cognitive schemas, brain development (also presented in the previous Section); Furthermore, impacts daily life such as the response to common stressors. Studies show that this experience continues to impact Armenians across

the world as transgenerational trauma even some who never experienced the trauma directly inherit it from their ancestors. However, it is vital to know that what is traumatic for one individual, may not be traumatic for another. Furthermore, the cutting-edge research has found that individuals have the capacity to heal their trauma and prevent passing it on to the next generation (Mate, 2021).

Kalayjian comprehensively researched the impact of the Armenian Genocide from a psychological perspective (see 1995; 1996; 1998; 1999; 2002). Kalayjian and Weisberg (2002) conducted a study in a therapeutic workshop at a university in New York where they studied the second and third-generation of genocide survivors. Participants were the offspring of the Armenian Genocide. They utilised pre- and post- questionnaires and researchers' observation as a method for data collection. They explored the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual impact of the Genocide on the offspring of survivors. They concluded that the Armenian Genocide created massive trauma for many of those who had survived. The study was conducted in a group setting. Researchers observed a lack of connectedness between group members, eye contact was not well-sustained. For example, male participants were avoiding eye contact by looking at objects around the facilitation space. They witnessed responses of anger or sorrow in most participants. It was observed that the participants were struggling to manage strong emotions such as anger. They expressed their difficulty by communicating calmly and regulating their emotions. Distrustfulness was another major theme expressed by those who were told not to trust anyone outside their own families.

Although this study added valuable knowledge about some Armenians who experienced transgenerational trauma, this information may be limited in generalisability since it was obtained in New York and was gathered from a small sample size of participants. It may also be a limitation that in a group setting, participants may not fully reveal their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Specifically, the researchers stated observing

distrustfulness within the participants. Another important critique of such research is the subjectivity of the research observations, and how this inevitably impacted the data.

Karenian et al. (2010) studied the transgenerational trauma of some Armenians. They involved 689 Armenians in Greece and Cyprus. The offspring of the Armenian Genocide survivors. The study showed that 35.7% of the participants presented with some sub-clinical presentations at some stage of their lives. Some participants reported survivor guilt, while others reported pain connected to injustices, such as discrimination, prejudice, and lack of recognition. Additionally, participants with more intense traumatic experiences reported closer ties to the community. They have concluded that collective trauma can have long-lasting psychological effects on generations. Furthermore, they have recommended clinicians working with individuals belonging to the Armenian ethnic group who experienced oppressions need to consider the possible effects caused by trauma. However, it can be argued that the sample of Armenians from Greece and Cyprus are not representatives of all Armenians. The study is quantitative, using self-reported questionnaire measures and not in-depth subjective experiences. The reported symptoms can be for several other reasons such as other traumatic experiences, rather than transgenerational trauma. Completing questionnaires participants can have different biases or agendas due to their political and ideological affiliations. Therefore, one may exaggerate the distressing feelings. On the other hand, one may minimise the presenting thoughts and feelings due to avoiding the cultural stigma, for instance, seeing one as 'weak', 'vulnerable' or 'psychologically disturbed' (Guevrekian et. al. 2020; Saroyan, 2019; Yesayan, 2014).

Given the strong values of both familism and collectivism, impacts may be influenced by both direct familial exposure and cultural identity. However, with such limited research on the descendants of the Armenian Genocide, the continued impact of the Armenian Genocide

on the community's mental health remains inadequately examined (Der Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021).

To conclude, these sections have critically evaluated studies related to epigenetic, biological, behavioural, emotional, and physical aspects of the experience of trauma and transgenerational trauma. Furthermore, I have critically assessed contemporary and historical literature relating to genocide, trauma, resilience, and post-traumatic growth. Moreover, several clinical treatment options have been addressed. The next chapter will look at some literature on the impact of trauma from an existential perspective.

### ***Trauma from an Existential Lens***

The experience of trauma is explored from existential perspectives by several writers. Heidegger (1927/2010) referred to different modes of engaging with surroundings. He used the example of a hammer and explained *ready-to-hand-mode*. We are unaware of the hammer's existence because we use it based on our skills and practice. We notice the hammer and its smaller parts when the hammer breaks and we face an issue; we move to the mode of *unready-to-hand*. In this mode, we become aware of ourselves and the tools in our hands. The third mode is the *present-at-hand* mode, in which everything is an object, context-free, and we detach ourselves from engagement, looking into the matters from outside and just reflecting. Heidegger's illustration of the hammer and different modes is relevant to this study as the experience of the Armenian Genocide or wars in the Middle East (collective trauma) is a similar concept, creating a collective uncanniness. After the Genocide, some Armenians were confronted with death and existential anxiety, children and family became even more important (Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002), like Heidegger's example of the hammer, identity became an important part of the culture as a matter of survival (Mangassarian, 2016).

The work of Frankl (1946/2004) is especially relevant to this research project, as his writing about trauma stems from one of the most commonly explored transgenerational trauma experiences in research - the experiences of Jewish Holocaust Survivors. Frankl wrote *Man's Search for Meaning* and introduced the Logotherapy. He has authored this book on his personal experience in the Nazi concentration camps. His contribution to existential literature and trauma is still very influential today. Frankl believed that life is inevitably full of suffering and that we should not deny but accept this. When we accept that suffering and trauma are part of life, we can overcome them. It is our attitude towards suffering which we can control, even if we do not have control over our situation. Frankl added, even for the most painful dehumanized experiences, psychological growth is possible. Resilience is a supporting character that allows individuals to grow out of trauma, in addition to creating meaning. Meaning can be created to view a traumatic experience in a context. Mikics and Geifman (2020) evaluated Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, including the Logotherapy. Frankl's observation of the prisoners including himself and what they went through in the camp was unlike what most people experience. Frankl also avoided the many painful HS cases who were unable to reconcile and come to terms with their past painful traumatic experience. He only focused on those individuals who adopted an optimistic approach, looking forward. The 'tragic optimism' as Frankl called it, turned away from the true pain of the Holocaust. Mikics and Geifman added, such a reality can never be a source of satisfying life lessons.

van Deurzen (2015) proclaimed that individuals who think nothing goes wrong in life are in denial of the reality of life. Sufferings in life can be valued so that individuals are more likely to adopt a strategy to endure complications and uncertainties. Individuals who come to terms with the inevitable painful separations, the tough reality of loss, and the finite nature of their lifespan become resilient. Adams (2019) added, whenever something random happens,

whether good or bad, we ask 'why me' to which the answer is usually 'why not you?' We can generally take reminders of chance in our stride; life is after all about coming to terms with our insignificance in the grand scheme of things and many of these events may be salutary and help us to develop our resilience. By uncovering the universe as random and unpredictable and where no continuity is guaranteed, and with this awareness, we start existentially dying and facing an existential crisis (Yalom, 1980). Adams (2019) stated the nature of trauma is bad but what is worse is when others do not acknowledge its effect. This is highly relevant to the experience of Armenians as The Armenian Genocide is not being recognized by the Turkish and some other Governments.

Another influential existential writer about trauma is Robert Stolorow (2007) who draws on psychoanalytic, existential, and phenomenological perspectives in his theories on emotional trauma. Stolorow describes trauma as a state of unendurable suffering and explains it as context-embedded because it is unbearable when the suffering cannot find the context in which to understand it. In other words, it is not experienced in a relational home. Only when a person can find a relational home or context to make sense of their trauma, can they start to find it tolerable. This trauma was unbearable suffering, which was experienced as alienation and loneliness. Stolorow noted:

Trauma shatters the illusions of everyday life that evade and cover up the finitude, contingency, and embeddedness of our existence and the indefiniteness of its certain extinction. Such a shattering expose what had been previously concealed, thereby plunging the traumatised person into a form of authentic Being-towards-death and into the anxiety - the loss of significance, the uncanniness - through which authentic Being-toward-death is disclosed. Trauma, like death, individualises us, in a manner that invariably manifests in an excruciating sense of singularity and solitude (Stolorow, 2015, p. 131).



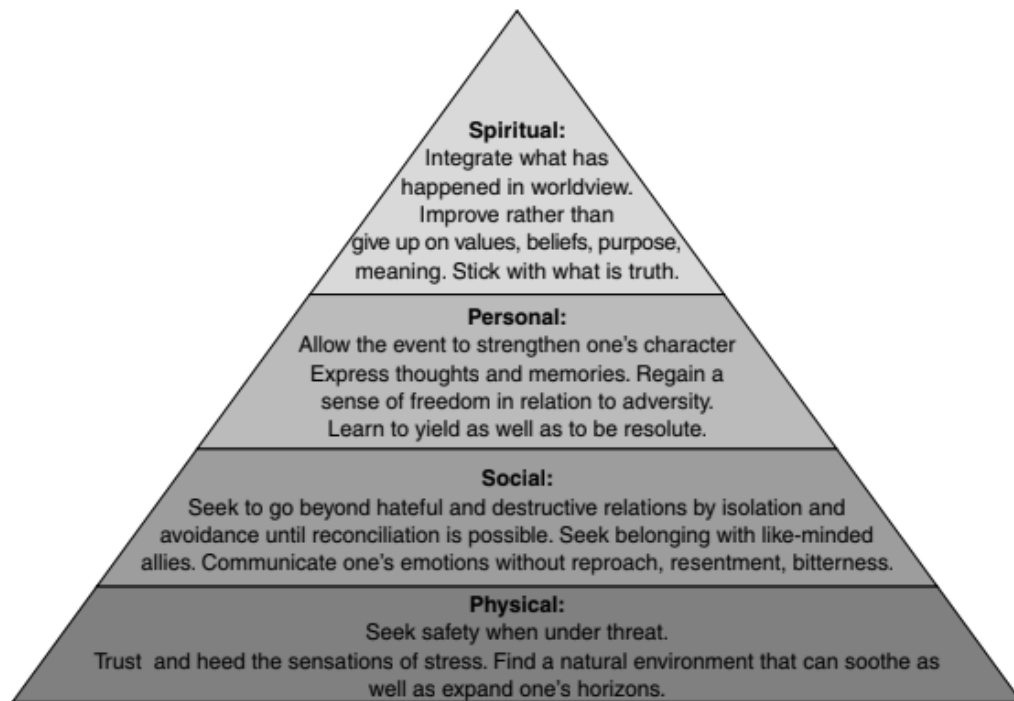
Simply put, the reason traumatic experiences have a long-lasting impact on human emotions is that their understanding of everyday life is shattered, disconnecting people from what they once know and causing them to feel isolated and aware of their finitude, mortality, and fragility. By claiming it and accepting that life exists with suffering, individuals can be empowered to realise that this experience is shared by all humans. This creates a sense of “kinship in the same darkness” (Stolorow, 2015, p. 135). Existentially, trauma is “a catastrophic loss of innocence that permanently alters one’s sense of being-in-the-world” (Stolorow, 2007, p. 16).

Yalom (1980) spoke about feeling meaningless and stressed this notion as an existential given. The human being is born without any given meaning and individuals become aware of this primary meaninglessness when they are confronted with life changes (Vos, 2018) such as war, mass murder, or displacement that Armenians experienced. Therefore, faced with life challenges one may feel meaninglessness according to the life events and create new meanings to heal from intense challenges (Frankl, 1946/2004; Vos, 2018). Sartre (1948) added we can observe our fundamental responsibility alongside our freedom. Following Sartre, Frankl (1946/2004) said, individuals are free to choose how they respond to the events which they encounter; only individuals are responsible for the task of giving their lives meaning. We can choose how we respond to what happens to us. One who has faced death may find the courage to live (Yalom, 1980).

Van Deurzen (2009b) presents a model of Overcoming Trauma and provides guidelines to achieve victory over a traumatic experience. Figure 6 summarises overcoming trauma from an existential perspective.

## Figure 6

### *Overcoming Trauma*



*Note. From Psychotherapy and a Quest for Happiness, by van Deurzen, E. (2009b).*

One needs to remember that:

- Individuals who are living with a traumatic experience need to come to an acceptance.
- They need to let the past go and construct a new truth.
- To make sense of why the perpetrator has done what they did.
- To create meaning out of trauma and make peace with mistakes.
- A human being needs to connect with the social world, so try to rebuild a new sense of community.
- Public acknowledgement and validation from others can be helpful.

- Committing to causes and working hard can be meaningful giving a sense of overcoming the pain.
- In this process, one becomes stronger, more realistic, and learns to value the scars left as the result of the trauma.
- Passing the trauma, one learns that everything passes so it can give a new sense of confidence.
- Being on the right path, staying hopeful, and not giving up will eventually turn one's fortune.
- Overcoming trauma is about transformation and transcendence, which means going beyond troubles.
- Trauma can be turned into something worthwhile, and it can make one a better person.

The above model suggests an aid to the in-depth existential exploration of the lived experience across the four dimensions of life and the inevitable tensions and paradoxes of human existence. However, Vos (2020) stated that in the heuristic models, such as 'Overcoming Trauma' creates pre-determined categories of focus which may contribute to being bias for the researcher or therapist. The risk of a model like this can present the practitioner with a conscious or sub-conscious pre-planned agenda to "fix", which is against the principle of the existential-phenomenological approach to therapy.

### **Acculturation and Adaptation**

This section of the literature review will provide some knowledge about acculturation strategies and acculturation stress experienced by migrants. "Acculturation is a complex

phenomenon” (Berry 2019, p. 13). Berry (1980; 1997) investigated the individual’s experience in a cultural context when they are rebuilding their lives in another culture. The process of acculturation starts when individuals from a variety of cultural backgrounds engage with each other within the society. This process leads to psychological and cultural changes for both non-dominant and dominant groups (Berry, 2008). He challenged the assumption that everyone eventually will assimilate into the dominant culture, so he introduced four different acculturation strategies adopted by non-dominant groups.

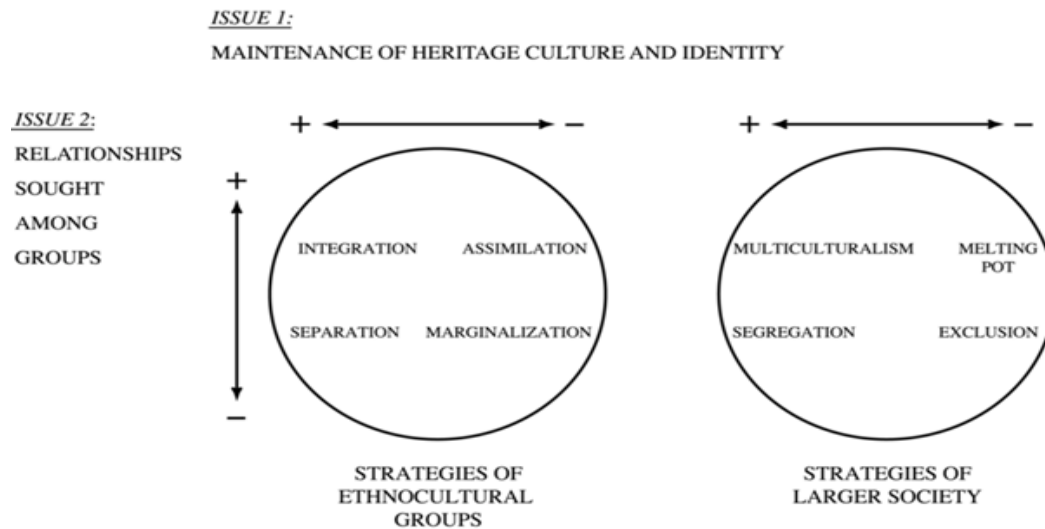
Berry (1980; 1997; 2019) defined four types of acculturation strategies: assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation. Under Berry’s definition (1980; 1997; 2019), individuals of ethnic heritage who tend to be absorbed into the dominant culture of a society, losing their original culture are adopting assimilation strategy. When there is an interest in both maintaining one’s original culture while in daily interactions with other groups, the individual is adopting the integration strategy. In contrast, when individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture and avoiding interaction with others, they are employing the separation strategy. Lastly, when non-dominant groups are having minimal interest in their cultural maintenance and relations with others then the marginalisation strategy is employed (Berry, 1980, 1997, 2019). In respect of the integration of ethnic groups such as Armenians; Vartan (1996) doubted that the means of keeping the culture of origin can be realistically maintained beyond the third generation. De Anda (1984) added that integration may exist within non-dominant groups, but the degree of integration would differ.

Figure 7 demonstrates that when ethnic groups or any other non-dominant groups maintain their heritage, culture, and identity, this encourages moving towards the positive side of the polarity and adopting the integration strategy, which creates harmony in groups. So, integration for non-dominant groups and multiculturalism for the dominant group is regarded as the best strategies for both minority groups and society respectively. However,

Arshadi (2014) stated that for migrants who rejected their own culture and got attached to their new lives without careful reflection and consideration, their lives often become shallow and meaningless as a result.

### Figure 7

*Intercultural strategies in ethnocultural groups and the larger society*



*Note.* From *Acculturation: A Personal Journey Across Cultures*, by Berry, 2019.

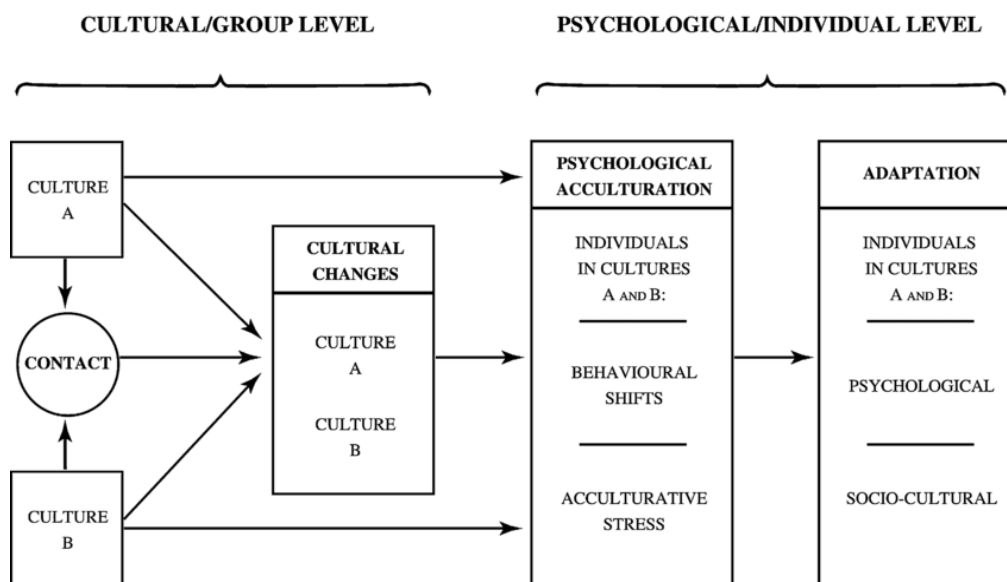
The idea of integration can be employed by both dominant and non-dominant groups, which means there is an acceptance of cultural differences and the rights of all groups. So non-dominant groups adapt to the dominant culture and respect basic values and core beliefs of the larger society. Meanwhile, the dominant society is prepared to adapt national establishments such as health, education, and labour to meet the needs of all groups (Berry, 2014).

Berry's (1976, 1984, 1990, 1997, 2001) model of acculturation is based on different attitudes between the ethnocultural group and the dominant group. In Figure 8, Berry presented that, acculturation and adapting to the new culture requires learning new behaviours which may have some cultural conflicts. This may cause stress, and Berry used

the term ‘acculturative stress’. He added acculturative stress is a stress reaction in response to life events that are rooted in the experience of acculturation. In the cases of separation or marginalisation when individuals cannot fit into the host society and experience cultural conflicts, it can lead to an increase of acculturative stress as shown in Figure 8 (and the double negatives in Figure 7).

### Figure 8

*General acculturation framework showing cultural-level and psychological-level components, and the flow among them*



*Note.* From *Acculturation: A Personal Journey Across Cultures*, by Berry, 2019.

Berry (1997, 2019) added, acculturation experience may involve language shifts, religious conversions, or ultimate changes in an individual's value systems. Sometimes when an acculturation experience becomes overwhelming and out of control, it may result in withdrawal. Acculturation stress as the manifestation of uncertainty and challenges of intercultural living can lead to anxiety or depression. Feelings of anxiety are due to not knowing how to feel and behave in two or more cultures. Depression may also be associated

with the sense of loss, sometimes loss of contact with support from an individual's cultural heritage. Acculturation stress may affect digestion and sleep (psychosomatic symptoms). Additional stressors can be work-related challenges, language difficulty, discrimination, and social isolation (Berry, 2019; van Deurzen, 2021). The level of stress varies within communities. The ones with the least stress are those with more initial cultural similarity (Berry, 2019).

Cohn (2009) reviewed Berry's models stating that they were missing the community of co-migrants and the migrants' home culture. The term community of co-migrants refers to migrants and their descendants who came from the same country of origin (Cohn, 2009). A migrant can have a positive or negative connection with these three referents: home culture, host culture, and culture of the co-migrant community. There might be some ethnic/cultural groups which perhaps segregation or separation is a more suitable strategy for them. They may feel safer with less stress and anxiety with their known community and environment (Heidegger, 1927).

Berry's models provide vital analytical tools to aid understanding of the effect of multiculturalism as a social phenomenon, but do not refer to the personal and experiential lived experience.

Madison (2010) and Benning (2013) explored the experiential experience of some relocated individuals. For example, Benning (2013) examined the experiential experience of expatriate trailing partners' adjustment with their new life accompanying their partners overseas; how they shaped their new identities and formulated a sense of meaning and purpose in the new culture. She found that an expatriate trailing partner is an absurd/uncanny person as they must constantly create their meaning. When they move to their new place, they do not have a ready-made role. Struggling with the lack of meaning and purpose, the

participants created a new identity, for example, a career that could support the construction of a new self.

Supporting Berry's argument of integration strategy being a suitable strategy. Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2012) undertook a meta-analysis across 83 studies and over 20,000 participants that integration is associated with better adaptation. Integration has a significantly positive relationship with both psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Psychological adaptation consists of components such as life satisfaction and high self-esteem, and sociocultural components such as academic achievements, career success, social skills, and a lack of behavioural issues. However, while integration in the host culture may help some people to find a sense of belonging in their new environment, others may sense deculturation, in which the displaced person feels a loss of cultural identity and alienation (Bhugra, 2004).

### *Acculturation from a Social Lens*

In Vedic science, being human from womb to tomb is an existential journey fraught with ideas of meanings based on cultural value systems (Knapp, 2010). According to Bakalian (1993/2017), culture is understood as people's material and nonmaterial way of life. It is language, art, architecture, literature, music, religion, traditions, political institutions, as well as cuisine, dietary style, and more, which some will be discussed in this section.

Bakalian (1993) surveyed 584 Armenian Americans in New York with a mail questionnaire and found that there is a shift from a traditional view of Armenianness to a more symbolic view of what makes a person an Armenian. She concluded that modern Armenianness is symbolic which means it is more emotional rather than behavioural and follows the traditions. She noted, that the Armenianness is changing from being Armenian with traditional attachments to 'feeling Armenian'. She added the new generation can easily drop Armenianness if they do not have a positive association with being Armenian. However,



this can be seen more in Western countries rather than the Middle East. Being Armenian means different things to different people. It can range from speaking the Armenian language, marrying an Armenian, belonging to the Armenian Church, involvement in volunteer associations, participating in events, networks, relatives, and friends, and a positive feeling of belonging. The extended family has a definite input on the decisions being made within the families. The hard-working and high achievement has a high value in Armenians, and they impose these onto their children.

Pattie (1997) added the Armenian language has importance for some Armenians as it is the language of intimacy. The Armenian language creates some social ties between family and Armenian friends. She stated when you hear an Armenian speak ‘pure Armenian’ (not mixing Armenian with the vocabularies from other languages) it specifies that the person made a mental effort to purify the speech without using words from other languages. She added that in the USA and England, speaking languages other than English requires effort and determination, particularly for the younger generation. The younger generation prefers to blend in with the host society.

In regard to the importance of language for Armenians, Phinney (2000) in a study of three different ethnic minority groups (Armenian, Vietnamese and Mexican) in the USA concluded that Armenians were the only group where parental cultural preservation, for example, language was highly valued and practiced. Armenian families expected their children to learn the Armenian language at schools or supplementary schools. Phinney (2000) added that language has an important function in passing on the culture to younger generations; further, it functions as a means of communication and establishing a relationship. Phinney added, it is unquestionable that language is an important element of a culture. It passes on many materials and spiritual elements that compose culture and provide continuity to other generations. For Heidegger (1927/2010), language is the nature of our

embodiment (connection) in the world. Heidegger believed that our being is within the language and connected to our thoughts, and one cannot look at them separately. Chomsky (2017) stated that we are born with the language intact and once, born, this gets activated, so language is not only learned but it unfolds a genetically determined program.

Keshishzadeh (2006) undertook a study regarding Armenian Americans' acculturation. They completed quantitative research on 42 Armenians in Southern California. The study showed that the majority of Armenians who participated retained their traditional norms and expressed resistance to acculturate into the host society. The result also suggested that there were no significant indications that age, gender, or level of education impacted the degree of their acculturation. The household income and the number of years living in the host country had significant effects. However, the sample was taken from a city in California where the majority of residents are Armenian. Therefore, they may be less inclined to abandon their traditional culture and assimilate or adapt to the American culture. Also in this study, the majority of participants were over the age of 35 and acculturation may be harder for older individuals.

Ghazarian et. al. (2007) studies the generational gap and the relationship between first-generation Armenian parents and their adolescents. They studied 97 Armenian adolescents at the University of North Carolina. They investigated the associations between familism (the strong interpersonal relationship between extended family) and parent-adolescent relationships. It resulted in strong conformity to parents' wishes, respect for parental authority, and disclosure to parents about their activities. Issues among family members are usually kept private and not shared with others. These Armenian adolescents presented that they put needs of the family's priority to their individual needs (also see Bakalian 1993; Bedikian, 2017; Vartan, 1996).

Jendian (2008) also highlighted the importance of family and language in the Armenian culture. He studied 294 Armenian descendants living in Central California. The sample was randomly drawn from a master list of nearly 6,000 residences in the four-county area that contained at least one person of Armenian descent to explore the process of assimilation and ethnic preservation across generations. He stated, “having an ethnic identity provides a person with a feeling of ‘specialness’ and a sense of belonging” (p. 17). He added assimilation and ethnicity can co-exist, for example, one can become American and retain elements of one’s ethnic culture of origin. However, Jendian found that with each passing generation, language suffers. The connections to Armenian friends and relatives continue across generations, as does the strong sense of family. The eating of Armenian food is retained even by the fourth generation, but less as a skill than enjoyed if prepared for them. Jendian concluded ethnic identity is constantly changing, from generation to generation due to intermarriages and changing commitments.

Tadevosyan et. al. (2012) undertook a study on Armenians in Switzerland. They found that in newly arrived Armenians, relations between children and parents are mostly based on Armenian traditions. Adult children are attached to their parents for a longer period; they are accustomed to discussing their personal lives with their parents, for example, their choice of a marriage partner to ensure parental approval. Relations between spouses, the stereotypes conditioning them, and gender role divisions are different from those of Swiss culture. Armenians who were longer residents in Switzerland adopted and practiced Swiss culture. They received a formal education within the academic and cultural institutions of Switzerland. They attended Swiss theatres, museums, and festivals which have crucially influenced their acculturation and enabled them to engage in both contexts. In the street, at work, in civil life, one can hardly differentiate between Armenians and the native Swiss people; however, at home, most of them turn to Armenianness. They start speaking in

Armenian, listening to Armenian music, and watching Armenian television channels. They continue the morning tradition of the collective drinking of eastern coffee with other Armenians over vigorous discussion. Some newcomers expressed a sense of guilt for leaving the homeland, seeking self-justification whilst home-sick for Armenia. They stated, there are people among the newcomers who have lived in Switzerland for years, but their lives are still orientated towards Armenia. They live and work in Switzerland, they are settled there, however, they attempt to save money to buy houses and go back to Armenia.

Among Armenians, this fear for the loss of culture has been named the “White Genocide” (Holslag, 2018). The term is referred to the loss of Armenian culture as the result of assimilation, specifically in Western societies. This situation may create paradoxes for diaspora Armenians. On one hand, they may face the expectation to assimilate and succeed in the host society; on the other hand, the Armenian community may expect resistance to acculturate so the ethnicity can sustain (Holslag, 2018). Given the history of genocide and multiple generations of displacement, Armenians have generally maintained a strong ethnic identity, assimilated slowly (Pawłowska, 2017; Vartan, 1996) but adapted to the host cultures quickly (Der Sarkissian & Sharkey, 2021).

Reviewing the above studies of Armenian acculturation from a social lens, it can be concluded that Armenianness is changing from just following the traditions to more ‘feeling an Armenian’. It was clear in all studies that family and language are important elements of the Armenian culture. With that said, seven out of eight studies were conducted in the USA, and as Bakalian (1993) said, the Armenian community of London differs from New York or Los Angeles due to its smaller size. Also, the majority of the adult population in London are first-generation immigrants who differ from the USA. Furthermore, all eight pieces of research discussed in this section were quantitative studies that measure the correlations and relations between variables and thus do not explore the experiences.

In addition to Armenians' acculturation from a social lens, some limited studies exist which are looking into the matter of Armenian migration and adaptation from a psychological perspective. These will be evaluated in the next section.

### *Acculturation from a Psychological Lens*

Vartan (1996) stated acculturation is not free of stress. He undertook a study on 220 first-generation Armenian immigrants in Southern California. He found that individuals who acculturated, with strong ethnic identity retention, keeping their native culture, presented less anxiety, less depression, and higher self-esteem. Individuals who assimilated and separated showed higher anxiety and depression and lower self-esteem. This study was conducted only by participants who volunteered to take part and complete a questionnaire. The use of a measuring instrument was specifically designed for Mexican Americans who culturally differ from Armenians. The sample size was limited to first-generation only and from a specific area. Therefore, the findings cannot be representative of the Armenian population (Isaac & Michael, 1981), neither in the USA nor other countries.

Tahmassian (2003) also studied the matter of self-esteem within Armenians. He found that there is a strong relationship between acculturation and self-esteem. The study took place in Southern California on first-generation Armenian immigrants between the ages of 21 and 45. The results indicated that the more acculturated a person is, the higher their self-esteem. There was also a link between the level of education, age of entry to the USA, acculturative stress, and self-worth. According to Tahmassian, psychologists in the USA considered higher self-esteem to be a strong indicator of mental health, lower levels of stress and depression, and higher coping skills. However, due to the age category, this study cannot be generalised for older Armenians nor is it representative of all diaspora Armenians. Additionally, the study excluded second and third generations which would have included a much larger percentage of the Armenian population in Southern California.

Saroyan (2019) examined the role of stigma on the mental health service-seeking among Armenian American men who self-identified as having lived through or are currently living with a diagnosed mental health issue. He used IPA to ensure that the lived experiences of six Armenian American men were represented through their perspectives. A total of six participants living in San Francisco engaged in this study. The revealed themes included stigma, mental health treatment, gender views, and moving forward to decrease stigma. He concluded, stigma stemming from the Armenian community was seen to be a preventive factor to seeking mental health services. Furthermore, the role of a felt stigma appeared to serve as a significant barrier. Negative views of self and cognitive distortions influenced participants' decisions to pursue mental health services. This study found various factors, such as cultural beliefs and values, socio-economic status, a lack of understanding of mental health issues, and resource availability as potential barriers for service-seeking behaviours amongst Armenian American men. He suggested that Armenian Americans do not accept psychotherapy until the problem is causing intense distress or there is pressure from external sources. For example, they tend to prefer to see their general practitioner when experiencing a mental health issue rather than go to mental health clinicians. He added, individuals who are less acculturated into the American culture are less likely to seek mental health services even for children who need this support. He also identified some acculturation gap distress in the lived experience of his participants. For example, children and adolescents who are fluent in the host language are expected to take on new roles within the household as translators, managers of complex transactions with the host culture, and facilitators of the family's integration. Although this study added valuable knowledge in respect of exploring subjective experiences it is not, however, generalisable. Furthermore, the study is gender based and it only examined the experience from men.

Guevrekian et. al. (2020) studied the role of acculturation and acculturative stress in predicting depression, anxiety, and alcohol misuse with 144 Armenian American adults. The results showed that some Armenians found adjusting to the culture of the USA stressful and it had a long-term impact on their psychological well-being. They added, the stress associated with the acculturation process may be partially due to the tension and concerns of sustaining Armenian ethnic identity and affiliation with their ethnic community whilst adjusting to different cultural norms and behavioural expectations. Considering the results, it may be inferred that those higher levels of acculturative stress could increase the probability that an individual will develop psychological distress. However, in this study, they found that the level of acculturation is not related to depression, anxiety, and alcohol misuse, but it was related to the country of origin and the number of years lived in the USA. The interesting finding was that participants who lived in the USA for the longest period assimilated less. Whereas participants who came later from the Middle East had the highest levels of acculturation, having the urge to fit in with the mainstream faster. Participants born in the USA presented the need to retain their Armenian identity and orientation to sustain their heritage and cultural values. They found that male participants stated higher stigma-related barriers including concerns about being seen as weak, crazy, or a bad parent as well as concerns about what their family and friends might think, say, or do. However, they added, this perspective is changing within second-generation Armenian Americans. Armenians usually acculturate quickly by learning the English language but have the persistence to attend Armenian schools, keep the churches, sustain the Armenian language, and marry within the community.

To conclude, in reviewing the above psychological studies about Armenians, four out of five studies were quantitative and only one research studied the experience of Armenian individuals. All five studies were conducted on Armenian Americans. Therefore, although

these studies identified and represented some cultural values and psychological representation of Armenians, none of these studies were subjective as they relate to the lived experiences of Armenians in London. This indicates a lack of knowledge in the field of psychology.

### *Acculturation from an Existential Lens*

Like Heidegger's example of the hammer, when *Dasein's* hammer or its parts were lost, they have noticed that the world is meaningless. Then they start seeking to find/create new meaning in that otherwise meaningless world. Like in Camus' (1942) story, Sisyphus offended the Gods and was condemned to roll a stone up a hill and see it rolling down hopelessly, repeatedly. They are living an absurd life. However, the absurd life can evoke passion and brings meaning into a meaningless life. *Dasein*, like Sisyphus can be both passionate and patient, joyful and tragic (van Deurzen, 1998). "It is the perception of meaning and fullness in one's situation and surroundings that constitute the art of living, no matter how tough or how pointless the circumstances may seem" (van Deurzen, 1997, p. 68).

van Deurzen (1998) said four strategies that displaced individuals may adopt: i) They may decide to return to their original country after living some time in the host country. ii) Decide to face the paradoxes and assimilate into the culture of the host country. iii) Stay in close connection with their own community and limit their integration with the wider society. iv) To embrace their new way of being in the world, come to an acceptance that they are foreigners, neither fully adjust to the new culture nor follow their original culture and create a new identity. Furthermore, not to belong anywhere and be comfortable with it.

### **Research Rationale**

Following the literature review, it is clearly demonstrated how limited the body of literature is when exploring the lived experience of Armenians from a psychological perspective, highlighting a need for further research in this area. One study on London-



Armenians in 1989 was provided by Talai. However, it was conducted more from an anthropological rather than a psychological perspective. Talai found that London introduced participants to the complexities of ethnic identity formation and depicts the variety of modes in which Armenians have organised themselves in London as a group, the divisions between them, their relationships to non-Armenians in London, as well as their perception of their ethnic identity and the meaning of 'Armenianness'. Talai's study presents major challenges to anthropological theories of ethnicity and concludes that Armenians in London demonstrate clearly that ethnicity is not a given - it is something that they had to consciously reconstruct at every level.

Another study on Armenians in London was conducted by Pattie in 1997. She focused on Armenians who settled in Cyprus and London during this century. She documented the creation and maintenance of a sense of community.

One rationale for this research project is that the information produced by these two studies provides a useful framework for future research but is predominantly out of date. For example, since these studies, the UK Armenian population has doubled (Yepremyan & Tavitian, 2017), waves of Armenian people came from the Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan (see Literature Review Chapter Section History of Armenian Migration to the UK), all of which has changed the dynamic of London-Armenian community.

Another research rationale is the importance of investigating the uniqueness of migratory experiences which the literature review highlights as an underexplored facet of Armenian's lived experience. To elaborate, Armenian people have migrated, some from Armenia and some from the diaspora. Although migration is a stress-inducing phenomenon and may have some psychological impact (Berry, 2019; Bhugra, 2004; van Deurzen, 1998), not all individuals go through the same process and respond to these challenges similarly (Akhtar, 1995; Madison, 2010; Papadopoulos, 2019). Furthermore, the literature review

investigated the phenomenon of migration from an existential perspective. This led to the concept of 'home' and a sense of belonging studied by some existential philosophers and practitioners such as Benning (2013), Heidegger (1927), Madison (2010; 2022), and Ortega (2016).

Another need for the current study is evidenced in relation to the impact of transgenerational trauma, and the clearly limited body of research that explored this specific Armenian population. The literature review indicated that some Armenians are still experiencing transgenerational trauma due to the historical event of the Armenian Genocide in 1915 (Bakalian, 1993; Douglas, 1992; Guevrekian et al., 2020; Holslag, 2019, Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Karenian et al., 2010; Kenny, 2013; Kira, 2001; Mangassarian, 2016; Miller & Miller, 1993). Therefore, the experience of trauma, transgenerational trauma, and the impacts were looked at from a psychological perspective (Amir and Lev-Wiesel, 2003; Barel et al., 2006, 2010; Brown-rice, 2013; Cassel & Suedfeld, 2006; Herman, 2015; Mate, 2021; Perry and Winfrey, 2021; Rothschild, 2000; Sagi et al., 2002; Scharf's, 2007; van der Kolk, 2014; Wolynn, 2016). Furthermore, it was reviewed how existential thinkers and practitioners view the phenomena of trauma (Adams; 2019, Aho, 2020; Frankl, 1946; Heidegger, 1927; Stolorow, 2007; van Deurzen, 2009b, 2015; Vos, 2018; Yalom, 1999).

Another gap in current literature is the psychological understanding of Armenian heritage and culture. Reviewing the literature revealed that Armenians have some sub-cultural values according to their place of birth (Tahmassian, 2003). Studies on cultural beliefs and values, moreover, the psychological impact of acculturation was reviewed, indicating the importance of family, language, and higher education in the culture.

Existential psychotherapy follows philosophical thinking as the foundation of therapeutic work and underlines the difficulties and challenges that are inherent in living and the human dilemmas, paradoxes and contradictions which are often neglected by practitioners

who focus on personal psychopathology (van Deurzen 2015). This literature review reveals that the existential approach may be useful in counselling psychology and psychotherapy when exploring the multidimensional phenomena that Armenian individuals were experiencing.

### **Research Aims & Objectives**

Previous sections have clearly outlined the need for future research into the lived experience of Armenians. The following section will outline the research aims and objectives. I am Armenian, migrated from Iran, and have worked with Armenians in London for twelve years (see Reflexivity Sections in Methodology and Discussion Chapter). My personal experience of volunteer migration and settlement, including witnessing the complexity of the life journeys of other Armenians, has led me to develop this research to facilitate a deeper understanding of Armenian people who live in London as I have been very aware of the limited Armenian-specific resources currently available.

In this study, I have attempted to understand the complexity of living cross-culturally and how they relate (or do not relate) to the history, religion, culture, community and language of Armenians living in London.

The aim of this study was:

- to explore how life is experienced by Armenians in the context of living in London.

With the following objectives:

- to broaden the understanding of the Armenian people's experience, and specifically to raise the awareness of clinicians who work with Armenians.
- to add an experiential perspective of this phenomenon to the literature of the psychology field.
- to identify common themes in Armenians' experience of life cross-culturally.

The above aim and objectives of the investigation were in accordance with the key research question: how life is experienced by Armenians who live in London?

What I hope to achieve at the end of this research is to raise awareness for counselling psychologists, psychotherapists, health and social practitioners, teachers, and all those who work with Armenian people. This will support their understanding of how they exist cross-culturally and support the enhancement of culturally sensitive care, for example, by providing effective psychological, health, care, welfare and educational assessments, treatments, and more.

## Methodology

“Methodology includes the general orientation to life, the view of knowledge, and the sense of what it means to be human...” (van Manen, 1990, p. 27). The term methodology comes from the Greek word logos (study) of the method (way), the philosophy behind the chosen method. It means searching for knowledge and the method is the practical way in which knowledge is followed. For instance, asking questions, methods of analysing and presenting the information (Smith et al., 2009).

The previous chapter has explored some background knowledge about Armenians. It aimed to investigate how life is experienced by Armenians in the context of living in London. Reviewing some literature presented the complexity of the multidimensional being of an Armenian in the world. What stood out from the literature review was that there was no study on lived experiences of Armenians in London.

This chapter details the epistemological position of the research and how this determined the selection of a research paradigm and allowed a focus on exploring the experiences of eight Armenians living in London. This research is positioned within the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, a stance most notably adopted by Heidegger (1927/2010). Hermeneutic phenomenology embraces the notion of our being always and inevitably subjectively engaged in an interpretive meaning-making process when anticipating the lived experience of ourselves and others. Hermeneutic phenomenology provides an opportunity to uncover knowledge and some truth; attempting to capture the experience of what it is like to live as an Armenian in London. This chapter provides the reader with an understanding of the methods considered and used within this research project. It will present the chosen research method, theories, and rationale to support that chosen approach. Other approaches will also be considered with the limitations of each approach and furthermore, the

ethical concerns. A researcher needs to cultivate a reflexive awareness of assumptions they might have about what there is to know (ontology) and how they can gain knowledge about that particular notion or phenomena (see Section of Epistemology). A researcher needs to be aware of their assumptions about human beings and the world they live in (Willig, 2018) (see Section of Ontology & Reflexivity).

## **Epistemology**

Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge and tries to answer the question - what is knowledge? Is it possible for a given subject to be known (Langdrige, 2007)? Researchers are thinking about how we know what we know. How is that knowledge produced? Willig (2018) explained that epistemology is concerned with the forms of knowledge and how knowledge can be shaped, constructed, and conversed. It defines how the research is conducted and how the data are produced. Another important aspect is the researcher's values, beliefs, and social context. This influences the character of the knowledge that we obtain, with contrasts of the insider/outsider, objective versus subjective, detachment, familiarity, individual versus social and cultural connections. Two broad categories of epistemological positions are positivist and constructionist/interpretivist paradigms.

Positivists' philosophy is that there is a relatively straightforward relationship between the world and our perceptions and understanding of it. Therefore, whatever exists can be verified through observation, experiments, and logical evidence. In this type of research, the researcher is an observer to produce objective knowledge (Finlay, 2011). The constructionist/interpretive position is interested in how meanings reveal and appear to exist, and this position is suitable to produce qualitative knowledge.

Different epistemological stances can be viewed as positions on a scale (Madill et al., 2000). Realist outlook is on one side of the scale, constructionist/interpretivist on the other. The realist argues that knowledge is pre-existing, and the researcher's role is to learn about it

objectively. The realist's theory was supported by Husserl (1901), for example, the colour perception is real. This means that looking discovers colours (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Willig (2018) added that a realist's stance believes there is a single, independent reality. This idea indicates that there is a direct relationship between our view of the world and the true reality of how things are. The other end of the scale is the fundamental constructionist/interpretivist perspective which argues that knowledge is constructed socially (Lavery, 2003).

Constructionism argues that things and meanings do not occur autonomously, rather human beings construct the meanings with others. The constructionist position also applies to some Armenians as they are constrained by cultural meanings as explained in the Literature Review Chapter.

As an Armenian Iranian, being born in an Armenian family, actively involved in Armenian communities, being brought up in Iranian society with repression of gender identity, the journey of migration and adjustment, being a mother, and spending most of my adult working life in multicultural London (Perry, 2018; Trust, 2016) constructed a certain reality for me. I do not believe that there is only one reality as a realist may believe. Experiencing life in different societies added several layers into my way of being and is shaping my interpretation of the world, and every other individual is interpreting the world subjectively according to their lived experience and viewing the world. Jaeger and Rosnow (1988) said that individuals take an active part in constructing their understanding; all knowledge is contextual, perspectival, and dependent on the point of view. From Heidegger's (1927/2010) point of view, a person is a person-in-context, being-with-the-other, in a place, in a particular time, in-the-world. The research will always be related to individuals in a particular context, in addition to the context the same phenomena can be understood differently according to different worldviews of individuals, therefore knowledge is comparative (Madill et al., 2000). Thus, research findings would vary depending on the

situation in which data was gathered and analysed. So, it can be argued that the researcher, being part of the context, is an active contributor to the research process (Smith et al., 2009). Essentially, the knowledge gathered from specific research is influenced by the participant's understanding, the researcher's understanding, and the interpretation of the researcher. Researchers are tools by which knowledge is produced. Following the above theories, my epistemological position as a researcher lies more towards constructionist/interpretivist, which I find more in tune with my beliefs. My lived experience as an Armenian having lived in four countries – such as Iran, Armenia, England, and the United States. All these experiences have shaped my worldview, my position in the world, and how I currently see the world.

### **Ontology**

Ontology is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of the world and with what exists (Willig, 2018). Ontology studies existence and being. Ontologically, researchers try to answer questions such as, “what is there to know?” and “what is the nature of reality?” (Willig, 2008, p. 13). Heidegger's (1927/2010) focus on ontology is the nature of Being-in-the-world (Lavery, 2003; Willig, 2018). Trying to explore the big existential question, why do we exist instead of not existing?

After thinking about what type of knowledge different methodologies produce and whether they were in line with my ontological and epistemological position, I decided to conduct a qualitative research study. Heidegger's (1927/2010) ontological concept of Being-in-the-world stays at the core of this study (see Methodology Chapter, Section Phenomenology & Hermeneutic). Furthermore, I explored the subjective experiences of eight Armenians and gave voice to them.



### **Qualitative vs Quantitative research paradigms**

Murray and Chamberlain (1998) stated qualitative research is designed to explore the 'why', 'what', and 'how' of human behaviour. Qualitative research is exposed to explore personal and social factors, such as social constructs. It is concerned with the qualities, textures, and meanings of phenomena and allows us to view the relationship between our perception of the world and the world itself as a complex, multi-layered interconnection phenomenon. Qualitative research permits the collection of text-based data from a small number of interviews, where gathered knowledge can be shaped by the interaction and collaboration between the researcher and the participants. Davies (2007) stated that the meaning and impact on the participant is subjective within a particular social and cultural context (Jaeger & Rosnow, 1988), rather than being perceived as objective. Qualitative methods investigate the subjective experience of participants, and the researcher is not viewing the data through a hypothesis. Most qualitative researchers aim to understand the meanings that individuals give to their experiences.

In contrast, quantitative methods emphasise measurements and seek statistically significant evidence to support a hypothesis. They would not be suitable for this research as it would bring the lived experience of Armenians down to a set of statistical variables to generalise the whole Armenian population, which is not the purpose of this research. The interest of this research is to understand subjective experiences, therefore qualitative research is a suitable method. In qualitative research, it is vital to understand epistemology, ontology, and methodology which demonstrates the position of the researcher relating to the study and the world.

Within this research paradigm, there are different methods: Phenomenology, IPA, Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis, Grounded Theory, and Structured Existential

Analysis, which are reviewed below, concluding with the chosen method for this research and a rationale of why the IPA method was chosen.

### **Phenomenology and Hermeneutic**

The concept of phenomenology has its origins in Plato's theory of Platonic Idealism. However, phenomenology, as it is known today, was introduced by Husserl (Hein & Austin, 2001). In Husserl's view, the phenomenological question emphasises the experience in the conscious level and perception of the individual. He rejected the idea that there is something more fundamental than experience. According to Husserl the experience is constituted by consciousness and could be "studied rigorously and systemically based on how it appeared to consciousness" (Hein & Austin, 2001, p.4). Husserl was primarily a philosopher and mathematician and not a psychologist, and his writing concerned the systematic process of conceptual phenomenology. For instance, he does not describe in detail the methodological steps involved in an eidetic reduction. He does not provide concrete examples of what the results of the phenomenological method might look like (Langdridge, 2007). Husserl believed that consciousness is always consciousness of something (an object), recollection of something, or belief in something. For Husserl phenomenology was a bridge between subject and object (Smith et al., 2009). Husserl emphasised 'bracketing' (putting aside) the taken-for-granted world in order to concentrate on our perception of the world. Heidegger (1927/2010) critiqued Husserl's perspective of phenomenology, stating, it was lacking the notion of being-in-the-world. Husserl's approach was limited to just the experience of the consciousness of the individual. For Husserl, the viewer is detached from the world, and Heidegger posited that "Husserl's phenomenology was too theoretical and abstract" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 16). Husserl was more concerned with the first-person process, rather than analysing other people's experiences. Husserl believed that man has 'nature' and 'essence' (Smith et al., 2009).

Heidegger (1927/2010) stated the observer is connected and merged with the world and cannot separate themselves from it. For Heidegger, the meaning was the core significance, and he was more concerned with the ontological question of existence itself than with the actual activities and relationships in which a human being is caught up and creates meaning. Heidegger (1927/2010) asserted that we are thrown into this pre-existing world of people, objects, language, and culture, and cannot meaningfully be detached from it. He stated that even when we are alone, we are still in the world (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Heidegger's point of view is that a person is a-person-in-context.

Sartre (1943/2003), like Heidegger, also critiqued Husserl's perspective. He did not believe that human being has a 'nature', but rather be believed that human beings were in a constant process of self-creation (Bakewell, 2017). To Sartre, "existence comes before essence" (1943, p. 26). This means one is becoming themselves, and that the self is not a pre-existing unity to be discovered (Smith et al., 2009). Adding to the concept of Heidegger's being-in-the-world., Sartre defined human as 'being in a situation'. He formed a whole synthesis with one's situation- biological, economic, political, cultural, etc. Man cannot be distinguished from their situation, for it decides his possibilities. Sartre believed people do not have an 'essence' as Husserl believed, but rather an existence preceding essence (van Deurzen, 1995a).

Merleau Ponty added the concept of the embodied nature of perception which was lacking in the work of Husserl and Heidegger. He believed that human senses are the primary source of knowledge and that only by experiencing phenomena through our embodied senses, acknowledging these senses, and becoming aware often, can humans acquire knowledge. This was Merleau Ponty's point of departure from other scholars' understanding of phenomenology and knowledge which was seen as a cognitive experience through consciousness rather than a sensory embodiment. Merleau Ponty drew attention to how these experiences are not separate

but entangled (Smith et al., 2009). Merleau Ponty as French Philosopher and public intellectual was the leading proponent of existentialism and phenomenology and duly remained committed to Husserl's phenomenological idea of reduction and bracketing off perceptions and descriptions on how things appear. However, he critiqued God's eye view and produced unquestionable truths about an individual's experience of phenomena. Unlike Sartre who argued the human is condemned to be free, with freedom as the basis of human action, but rather that freedom results from the way in which we act and take up positions in the world. Our actions become commitments and we create our freedom. He believed we are also condemned to meaning making.

Regardless of critiques raised by existentialists such as Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau Ponty and concerning Husserl's phenomenology, they all retained Husserl's idea that human existence is purposeful. The 'natural attitude' serves to hide the 'essence' of this experience. This is where we witness the initial differences between, Husserl who believed it is possible to totally bracket off the 'nature attitude', and the existentialists, who thought we were too engaged with the world through one's lifeworld, to be able to make such an abstraction.

In summary, Heidegger defined human 'being' and 'subjectivity' as "*Dasien*". These include that individuals exist temporarily as meaning-making creatures who seek out to understand themselves as intelligible *Dasien*. However, the human being is free to choose what they make of their life (Sartre, 1943). Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau Ponty criticised the transcendental aspect of Husserl's phenomenology. Instead pursued and progressed a practical philosophy concerned with the understanding of the nature of existence itself (Langdrige, 2007). van Deurzen (2014) stated that phenomenology is the study of different ways of engaging with the world and making sense of it. As described above there are many different phenomenological theories of how knowledge is understood. However, all phenomenological approaches to research have one fundamental concern and that is to understand and explore

human lived experiences. While Husserl's phenomenology can be descriptive, Heidegger is more focused on existential questions (Finlay, 2011). "If we accept the Heideggerian view, there is no such thing as un-interpreted phenomenon" (Finlay, 2011, p. 120). In Husserlian view, any given data can give rise to only one description as observing it for the first time, whereas Heidegger's phenomenology suggests that data can lead to multiple interpretations. Supporting Heidegger's perspective, van Manen (2016) stated that when a description is mediated by expressions, actions, or text, an element of interpretation is involved.

Based on this review of different phenomenological approaches to research, this study has chosen to take Heidegger's phenomenological perspective. Lavery (2003) stated that this phenomenology comes from the idea that we are always subjectively engaged in an interpretive process when exploring the lived experience of ourselves and others. My interpretation of participants' experiences is subjective and based on my own lived experiences and assumptions, values, and beliefs. However, I can acknowledge and identify my biases from my phenomenological lens and reflect on how these biases impact my interpretation, trying to minimise them (see Reflexivity sections).

### **Analytic Methods**

IPA is not the only phenomenological approach in psychology. Several other alternative approaches are discussed below.

#### ***Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis***

A method that initially was considered for this study was Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis (DPA). Finlay (2011) stated DPA aims to understand the overall meaning of the text which is created by transcribing interviews with a group of participants. Giorgi in 1970 introduced the DPA, which proposed four steps of the analysis process after data collection. In the first step similar to IPA, the text is read thoroughly several times from the phenomenological perspective, where assumptions are bracketed off. Researchers then

establish attitudinal boundaries while also maintaining an open attitude as they proceed to identify meaning-units. These meaning units are understood as constituents of a whole that exist meaningfully within a context, rather than as elements whose meaning is independent of their context and retain the language used by participants. Thirdly the researcher then assesses the psychological significance of the meaning units based on the set (or attitude) which is being investigated by applying psychological language. Fourthly, the assessed meaning-units are synthesised to produce ultimately a written structural summary describing the experience, capturing generalised meanings significant across all data. The descriptive analysis is following Husserl's idea of phenomenology and observes the text for the first time as they appear.

### ***Grounded Theory***

Grounded Theory (GT) is a method that intends to develop a theoretical explanation of a specific phenomenon (Glaser et al., 2004/2017). Willig (2018) in their review of GT stated that it was initially created for sociological studies to understand the different social processes; this was mainly to understand groups rather than individuals. As this research overlaps with sociological elements, GT was explored concerning the objectives of this study. Grounded Theory works from the belief that there is always something new to be discovered. It attempts not to find a "subjective truth" but to provide a general understanding of a specific phenomenon. It attempts to do this through sorting and then coding data, which are then used to generate a hypothesis. This hypothesis is then used to create a theory about the phenomenon being explored (Glaser et al., 2004/2017). In a phenomenological way, the researcher must be careful that the hypothesis is developed from data and not from their assumptions or biases of the phenomenon. Having been available for a relatively long time, over the years the method has developed into many different forms.

### ***Structural Existential Analysis (SEA)***

Another research method that was considered for this study is SEA. This method was developed by van Deurzen (2014) initially as a model for working with clients in therapy and was later introduced as a research method. The method was considered for this research project because it reflects the existential standpoint from which this research has been developed, and in which as a researcher and therapist, I am being trained. Structural Existential Analysis uses three levels of analysis to explore lived experiences existentially and phenomenologically. The three levels of analysis applied in SEA are The Four Worlds Model, The Timeline of the Lifeworlds, and The Existential Compass (van Deurze, 2014). The Four Worlds Model is probably the most used element of SEA. It is concerned with universal structures related to the phenomenon: feelings and thoughts such as time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, and relation to self and others (van Deurzen, 2014), and explores this through four dimensions of human experience: the physical, social, personal and spiritual. Garland (2019) in a published doctoral research highlighted some limitations in relation to the SEA. She suggested SEA development originated from Husserl's descriptive phenomenology which focuses on the phenomenon rather than the lived experience. Zhavi (2019) argued that "what is quite certain, however, is that van Deurzen's description has no basis in Husserl's writings, the use of Husserl in SEA are all claims that fundamentally fail to respect and acknowledge Husserl's correlationism, the fact that the aim of his phenomenological analysis is not to investigate neither the object nor the subject, neither the world nor the mind, but to investigate their very intersection, interrelation or correlation" (p. 10).

### ***Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)***

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was developed by Smith in 1996 and is currently a popular method of research in the field of psychology (Langdridge & Hagger-

Johnson, 2009). IPA was developed as a variation of thematic analysis and is an interpretative approach to analysing research informed by hermeneutics. The overlap between hermeneutic phenomenology and IPA is in the hermeneutic circle (Smith et al., 2009), which is the relationship between a whole and its parts. For example, a whole sentence is made up of the word parts, and the whole text is made up of sentence parts, etc. From this viewpoint, both the individual parts and the text are valued equally, and when applied to research analysis the relationship between the two is continually considered by the researcher. This involved continually returning closely to the text to see the detail of the parts and then from far away to see the whole context. It deals with what is present, not what is unconsciously implied through symbols as in psychoanalysis (van Deurzen & Kenward, 2011). Researchers who use IPA empathise with their participants but at the same time step out to ask questions and make sense of their statements. As a method, IPA is focused on looking at “a particular experiential phenomena, understood from the perspective of particular people, in a particular context” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29).

To explain this within the context of this research project, the experiential phenomena are the lived experiences of Armenians who are living in London. The perspective is from eight individuals who identified with Armenian ethnicity, in the context of having lived in London for over two years.

Finlay (2011) stated that IPA focuses on personal meaning and sense-making in a specific context and with individuals who have experienced the same phenomena. IPA employs double hermeneutic, which means the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of what is happening to them. This is a complex attempt, needing a high degree of connection and interpretation from the researcher. IPA allows the researcher to interpret the text, and at the same time to understand the thoughts of the participants (Smith et al., 2009). IPA framework can be a stimulating process, though



complex and time-consuming. In IPA, the researcher tries to step into the participants' shoes (Smith et al., 2014). During IPA, the meaning given to any part can be understood concerning the whole text and vice-versa: the meaning of the whole may only be understood in relation to the parts (Smith et al., 2009). This can be witnessed on different levels such as specific words against a sentence, a sentence against the whole text, and the whole text against the whole research; therefore, the process of interpretation in IPA involves a constant process of engagement with the text.

In the IPA approach, bracketing is a recurrent practice as some of our biases can be clear to us right from the beginning of our engagement with the text, whereas with others it may appear during the process. Therefore, engaging in reflective thinking is vital during the designing stage of the study and must be continued throughout the research (Finlay, 2011). There is a dynamic interchangeable relationship between six different actions during the analysis: the investigation of the lived experience, the reflection of the themes, the description of the phenomenon – writing and rewriting, keeping a strong connection with the research question, and finally striking the right balance between the parts and the whole (Hein & Austin, 2001). Smith et. Al. (2009) added, undertaking an IPA study demands creativity. The researcher needs to have a wide range of skills, starting from gathering valuable data and undertaking systematic active analysis. This requires patience and openness to see the world from the participant's perspective. Willig (2018) added, using IPA we can progressively build up the knowledge which may suggest some generalities through commonalities and the participant's unique subjective interpretation, this indicates the complexity of human psychology.

IPA is one of the methods which focuses on findings that may contribute to real and useful social change. The aim is to collect information from the research that can be used to

support those currently living that lifestyle, and those who may do so in the future, to better recognise how to cope with the challenges of living in another culture (Langdridge, 2007).

### ***Criticisms of IPA***

Giorgi (2009) is best known for criticising the IPA, the difference between these two approaches is that Giorgi is aiming to describe a general understanding and translate it as per Husserl's method, while IPA is interpretative following Heidegger (Finlay, 2011). Giorgi criticises IPA by saying that IPA bears no relation to the fundamental principles associated with philosophical phenomenology, which should be about describing things as they are. Finlay (2011) added, the outcome of a Giorgi study is most likely to take the form of a third-person description, whereas IPA analysis takes the form of a more idiographic interpretative commentary with extracts from the participants' accounts (Smith et al., 2009). Giorgi argued that a descriptive analysis does not go beyond what is given and would not explain the phenomena by non-given factors, whereas interpretative analysis would fill in the unclarified gaps by obtaining more data and not by theories. Giorgi (2009) argued, it is not clear how IPA is a phenomenological method, as it is more experiential rather than phenomenological and meaning making. Giorgi (2009) also critiqued the lack of replicability of IPA, which is a scientific requirement, however, replicability is possible with quantitative research methods and not qualitative. IPA does not claim replicability but a subjective, interpretive, and meaning-making stance. Most IPA conductors are psychology students who lack experience in qualitative methods such as IPA, and there might be a confidential, ethical concern in the reporting. With the word limits of journal publications, it is difficult to reduce and summarise the findings of IPA (Noon, 2018).

### ***Chosen Research Method***

Having considered four different research methods, IPA was selected as the most appropriate method for this study, and the rationale for this choice is explained below.

Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis (DPA) could have been appropriate as it approaches lived experiences from a phenomenological perspective and provides a clear outline of how to conduct research using four steps. However, the text becomes the main focus of the study and the participants' own identity is lost in the process (Langdrige & Hagger-Johnson, 2009). As the participant's identity is a key focus of this research project and their way of *being-in-the-world*, DPA disregards the Being, therefore it was not chosen for this study.

Grounded Theory (GT) could have been appropriate for this study as it is valued as being able to allow researchers the opportunity to find new understandings which emerge from a set of data collected by interviews. This research is aimed to find new understandings of the lived experiences of Armenians living in London and comparing them to existing understandings. However, GT does not correspond with my research aims of exploring the personal experiences within a small participants' sample. The objective of grounded theory is to make sense of the social world and to produce a new theory or concept of a phenomenon, which does not correspond with the objectives of this research. At the heart of this research is the participants' subjective lived experience and the meanings and interpretations made by the researcher, especially regarding the impact of the experience on the sense of self and sense of belonging. It cannot, therefore, limit itself to the expression of the narrated story, but rather needs a larger scope of exploration. For these reasons, GT was not considered the best approach to use for analysing the data in this research project.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen for this research for several reasons. Since IPA is bound to voice out the participants' experience, it may be a particularly useful methodology for researching individuals or groups of individuals whose voices may otherwise go unheard, such as Armenians in London. When conducting a piece of research, it is important to have a clear aim and a clear structure to work from, and IPA provides a very clear structure and steps to conduct the research. It has also been used many

times in existing research, and the clear and important scientific findings gained by these studies confirm how IPA can be successfully used as a research method. IPA also comes from a phenomenological standpoint which is in line with my position as a researcher, that the experience being explored is understood through both the participant's and researcher's understandings of the world. I will draw on my skills as an existential-phenomenological practitioner to identify my own biases towards both the experiences being presented and how the participants might be experiencing them.

In the post-data collection, I was unsure whether the participants would have the level of language competency needed. As English is not their first language, it may create barriers to fully understand the questions and process the information. This may have an impact on articulation and providing lighter data. I did experience some language challenges during the interview as participants tended to repeat and sometimes go off-topic. However, I managed to gather enough rich data. The narrative stage of IPA can be wordy which creates a challenge due to the word limit of the thesis. Therefore, the focus has been more on general themes and sub-themes across the texts, rather than on the ideographic themes. The search focused on similar themes across the transcripts did reduce some idiographic focus.

As mentioned earlier, existential training shaped my way of thinking, and I am viewing an individual's way of being with the perspective of their four dimensions of existence (van Deurzen, 1997/2009a). Thus, I have not used SEA because it mainly follows Husserl's descriptive philosophy and my interest is more prone to the Heideggerian interpretive method, for example seeking latent themes and making meanings out of them. Moreover, SEA has not been widely used across the researchers compared to IPA. While SEA was not selected as the search method, the structure and philosophical framework were used to formulate the interview questions. With an understanding of The Four Worlds Model, I formulated my interview questions as open-ended questions which allowed the participants

to consider their experience from across the spectrum of lived experience as captured by the physical, personal, social, and spiritual dimensions. Furthermore, I have identified faced passion/paradoxes within participants' four dimensions of existence (presented in the Discussion Chapter).

### **Ethical Considerations**

The ethical application was approved by the NSPC and Middlesex University Ethics Review Panel on 04<sup>th</sup> Oct 2018. Appendix C provides the details of the application, and Appendix D presents the confirmation of the ethical approval. The research was conducted according to the UKCP codes of conduct and BPS Code of Human Research Ethics 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (BPS, 2014), following their four primary ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity.

It laid out a set of ethical principles applicable to the research context such as:

- Minimising the risk of harm
- Providing a respectful and trustworthy approach
- Obtaining informed consent
- Protecting anonymity and confidentiality
- Avoiding deceptive practices
- Providing the right to withdraw

Before the interview, the participant was given sufficient time to read the information and reflect on it (see Appendix E). Additionally, I went through the information verbally before they agreed to proceed. They also had the opportunity to ask for any clarification. I collected a written and signed consent and contract between the participant and myself (see Appendix F). The contract highlighted confidentiality, anonymity, fair treatment, and the right to

withdraw. Ethical principles were verbally communicated to the participant to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the information gathered.

Participants' individuality and diversity were respected regardless of culture, age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, education, or socioeconomic status. This was explained to avoid any unfair, prejudiced, or discriminatory practice. They were made aware that the interview was being audio-recorded and the data will be kept according to the GDPR and NSPC's data retention policy (which is retaining it for 10 years).

I ensured that I avoided any possible physical or psychological harm or discomfort to the participant. A suitable interview room was booked in advance, and I created a safe space with good lighting, a conducive temperature and agreed with the interviewees in advance beforehand. The appointment was scheduled during the day. The research interview took place at the CAIA. As it is a small community and people know each other, I made sure the interviews took place on a day when the centre was not in use by community members socially and only staff were present in the office creating a safe space at all times.

The following ethical principles were applied to this particular research:

- To ensure my safety, CAIA colleagues were present in the office downstairs.  
Additionally, before and after the interview, I kept my supervisor informed about the interview schedule.
- Confidentiality was a vital aspect. Participants were not named, only initials were used to identify them, and other details were kept in a separate document and locked away.
- Any recorded contribution, such as voice records, written forms, notes, or transcripts, was kept separately and locked away to comply with the new GDPR in the UK.
- As the information will be published as a public resource, written consent/permission was obtained from the participants.

- Because of the sensitivity of the subject matter, emotionally painful memories, and recollections, I was adequately prepared to cope with any triggers on the part of the interviewee, including providing a list of available therapists and organisations.
- The procedures for interviews were provided in writing and communicated to the participants. If there was anything a participant did not understand, it was clarified.

### **Data collection**

The choice of a research method is largely based on finding one that fits and serves the research questions, aims, and objectives. Methods give insight to the human perspective of an experience including the participant's emotions and subjective meanings and are related to the relationships and social/familial environment of the participants (Langdridge, 2007).

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each participant, after which the digital recording was transcribed into verbatim. A list of questions was used (see Appendix B) as guidance to conduct the interviews. Each interview lasted between 55-80 minutes. Noon (2018) stated that one of the most commonly used methods of data collection for qualitative research is a semi-structured or in-depth interview. They added, the challenge of using this technique is the time taken in collecting and analysing the information. Another disadvantage is that the quality of the information is largely dependent on the rapport and trust established between the interviewer and interviewee. If there is an element of trust, then the interviewee will be able to describe their experience more openly. To build some trust and rapport before the formal interview started, I talked generally to the participant as an icebreaker; for example, how did they find their journey to the venue?

I seriously thought about a focus group as an alternative method for this study. Noon (2018) added, in the focus group, the number of participants is usually between 8-12 who are sharing a particular set of characteristics or experiences. This is employed under the facilitation of the researcher to discuss the topic of study. Similar to in-depth interviews, the

researcher sets some questions as a guideline to ask the participants. The content of the discussion emerges from the interaction of the group members. The discussion can be tape/audio recorded. In this method, a second researcher can be present to take notes on nonverbal communications, which can be incorporated with the analysis. Sim (2019) identified some limitations with the focus group data collection method. They stated harm in a focus group might be higher in comparison to one-to-one interviews. This may be amplified due to the public nature of the discussion. The researcher needs to keep a balance between avoiding or closing down potential distressing discussions or themes which may result in the loss of some important and beneficial data. However, there are recommended consent processes and briefings that may be employed to minimise the risk.

After transcribing, the analysis followed, data on different interpretational levels resulting in themes were progressively grouped to create a picture of the lived experiences of Armenians in London. IPA was the chosen method to analyse the data for this research. The strength of the IPA method as Smith et. al. (2009) stated is that participants are allowed to express themselves deeply and freely. I was conscious of my bias as an Armenian and decided to shape the dialogue with a set of semi-structured open-ended questions to limit influences with personal views.

### ***Sampling Methods***

When considering a piece of research looking at the lived experience of individuals, it is important to carefully consider which participants will be recruited. This can give the researcher the best opportunity to explore the phenomenon concerning the research question. Participants' recruitment in research is known as sampling and many sampling methods have been developed by researchers over the years. As this research has the purpose of exploring a specific population's lived experience, it was clear that a purposeful sampling method rather than a randomised sampling method was most suitable.



Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative research as it gives information-rich data from limited resources. Participants are selected because they are considered to be especially knowledgeable about a specific experience of the phenomenon. Within the arena of purposeful sampling, there are many different strategies. When developing this research project, a number of these different purposeful strategies were considered, most significantly stratified sampling and snowball sampling. These strategies will be briefly introduced and considered concerning this project before concluding with the method which was chosen and how this method was applied.

Stratified sampling methods are used to capture major variations in different populations of participants, rather than to identify a common core. While this research project aimed to explore whether there were variations between the experiences of participants, particularly among the younger and older participants, this was not the primary objective. The objective was to approach the research from an existential-phenomenological standpoint where the value of factors such as age, gender, and background are horizontalised (Moustakas, 1994). This gives equal value to the statements of all participants without any hierarchy.

Initially, I considered using a stratified sampling strategy. I would have divided the target group into sections, for example, each section representing a key group that presents in the final sample such as their age group, gender, sub-culture, etc. However, due to the small sample size and valuing the horizontalised phenomenological approach to research, stratified sampling was not considered to be the most appropriate strategy.

Snowball method is used to identify cases of similar interest from word of mouth; from people who know other people who have similar characteristics (Davies & Hughes 2014). An emphasis of this strategy is a similarity between participants. An advantage of this strategy is that once started, it provides a quick recruitment process. It is important to be

aware of the disadvantage of contamination of data if participants share their experiences with the people they are recruiting for the project. This can be overcome by being transparent about this potential disadvantage and communicating this to the participant, and more effectively by creating interview questions which invite in-depth exploration of the participant's unique experiences rather than generalised experiences. Concerning this study, snowball sampling felt like an appropriate sampling method to use, as it provides a beneficial balance of recruiting participants who share characteristics, whilst enabling the collection of data that contains their unique experience by the use of in-depth questions. For this reason, snowball sampling was chosen for this project. To 'start the snowball' and practically apply the snowball sampling method as part of this research project, I began by creating an advert and advertised this at the Centre for Armenian Information and Advice (see Appendix H for the leaflet).

On reflection, I believe that it was beneficial to have considered several different sampling strategies. For example, by considering stratified sampling concerning age ranges, I approached the sampling process with an open mind and a deeper understanding of variance between the experiences of different generations. I drew on my existential skills to bracket my assumptions about what participants from different generations may experience and took note of any assumptions which came up for me during the interview and analysis process (see sections of Reflexivity).

### ***Recruiting by snowball sampling***

As highlighted earlier a relatively small sample of eight participants was used in this study. As the IPA's nature is idiographic and analyses lived experiences in-depth; a small size sample was suitable. Langdridge (2007) stated that where samples are small, homogeneity may be achieved by shared characteristics between the participants. The sample is relatively homogeneous as participants have identified with Armenian ethnic identity and

culture, they all live in West London where most Armenian community organisations operate, they are all either born in London or have lived in London for over two years. If they are first-generation immigrants, they have migrated voluntarily.

The study required participants who had some insights and knowledge about how Armenian communities operate in London. Talai's (1989) and Pattie's (1997) studies showed that Armenian communities in London were one vital dimension of Armenian identity. Talai (1989) stated that Armenian Iranians out of all Armenian groups were the most involved in community organisations. However, I contacted the three main Armenian organisations operating in London (Armenian Apostolic Church, CAIA, and Armenian Institute) to find out which sub-cultural groups are the main clusters and most involved in their organisations. I received confirmation from all three that Armenian Iranians, Armenian Cypriots, and the Republic of Armenia (*Hayastansis*) were the top three in respect of involvement in these organisations. Therefore, I further narrowed down the sample size to only these three sub-cultural groups. If I decided to compare participants from different specific age ranges or different subcultures, stratified sampling would have been the most appropriate method, though the small sample of participants was not appropriate for compare and contrast strategies.

To sum up, considering these understandings, participants were recruited using a purposeful snowball sampling strategy based on the following inclusion criteria:

- Ethnic identity: Armenian
- Immigration type: Volunteer immigrants (first to third generation)
- Duration in the UK: Minimum of two years
- Age: 18 to 65
- Gender: Any
- Language: Fluent in English

- Reside: London

### ***Instrument – Proforma of Identification of Research Participants***

Along with the information sheet, the participants were provided with a demographic questionnaire that was developed by myself and reviewed by my primary supervisor to verify the homogeneity of the sample. I gathered demographic information such as ethnicity, age, place of birth, immigration type, duration in the UK, gender, and language (see Appendix I).

### ***Participants***

Smith et. al. (2009, p. 56) suggested that in IPA research, “there is no right answer to the question of...sample size”. Generally, smaller focused samples are employed. Clarke (2010) specified that 4-10 participants are advised for professional doctorate research. Smith and Pietkiewicz (2014) stated IPA studies have been published with one to fifteen participants. However, larger sample sizes are less common in IPA research. All references that identify participants have been removed according to the BPS Code of Ethics (2014). Each participant is given a pseudo name, to understand the participants’ lived experience. To view the summary of their biographies, view Table 3.1 below:

**Table 3.1**

*Demographic information of participants was taken into consideration during analysis*

<b>Participant's pseudonym</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Duration of living in the UK</b>	<b>Sub-Cultural Background</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Hrach	22	4 years	Armenian <i>(Hayastansi)</i>	Male	Student
Aram	22	Born in London	Armenian Cypriot	Male	Retail
Anahit	20	Born in London	Armenian <i>(Hayastansi)</i>	Female	Student
Ani	21	Born in London	Armenian Iranian	Female	Student
Minas	63	53 years	Armenian Cypriot	Male	Charity & Voluntary Work
Raffi	65	41 years	Armenian Iranian	Male	Healthcare
Armineh	45	26 years	Armenian Iranian	Female	Education
Nare	46	20 years	Armenian <i>(Hayastansi)</i>	Female	Charity & Voluntary Work

### ***Data Collection Procedure***

The following data collection procedure was employed:

- Before the first interview, I arranged an interview between myself and my therapist. Roleplaying as a participant allowed me to see if any of the interview questions were unclear to understand. It allowed reflection on challenges in conducting a phenomenological inquiry, and a chance to modify interview questions. It also helped me to reflect on some of my existing biases.
- Then I displayed the participants' recruitment advert on the CAIA walls (in the hall for social gatherings and the office). The result was poor with only two suitable participants expressing interest. Those two were individually booked according to their availability for dates and times and interviews took place in a room at CAIA.
- Having two participants allowed me to recruit the rest using snowballing recruitment (as explained under recruiting section).
- The participants were informed about their right to withdraw without giving any explanation.
- The interview was conducted with a relatively open framework, i.e., with a two-way conversation using some questions as guidance (see Appendix B). Additionally, exploratory questions were asked to encourage participants to open up and elaborate on the points.
- Interviews took place during normal business hours. My primary supervisor was informed by a text message that the interview was starting, followed by another text message at the end of the interview to reassure the safety of myself and the participant. It was agreed that I inform my supervisor if any unexpected matters arise.

After the interview, participants were offered refreshments and I made sure there had been no emotional stress caused.

- All interviews were audio-recorded using the voice memo function app on i-Phone which was password protected upon the transfer of the recorded audio file onto the personal laptop.
- The interviews were transcribed by myself. Participants were given the option of reviewing the transcript and identify any sections if they did not wish to be used in the main document.

### ***Stages of Data Analysis***

Smith et. al. (2009) introduced a framework to analyse data using IPA. However, they stated that “there is no clear right or wrong way of conducting this sort of analysis, and we encourage researchers to be innovative in the ways they approach it” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 80). I followed the framework that Smith et. al. (2009) suggested. The stages are explained below:

***Stage 1*** - In the first week of data collection, I listened to the audiotape of each interview a few times to fully grasp the story and absorb the lived experience, engaging with the changes in the tone of voice and pauses. I reflected on my thought process to identify any bias and possible blind spots. While listening to the records I took notes in my reflective diary, for example how I was thinking or feeling, starting from meeting the participants and throughout the interview process. I recorded if there were any strong emotions during the interview and analysis stage. The notetakings helped me to be aware of my biases and allowed me to bracket them. Any identified bias was explored in personal therapy and with the primary supervisor.

**Stage 2** - I transferred each transcript from Microsoft Word to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet denoted and organized by initial text, identified line numbers, phenomenological theme, and lastly my interpretations. The descriptive comments remained close to what the participant said. The second category was making linguistic and conceptual comments. I added any specific notice on language, tone, pause, or metaphors and how I observed them. The last category was my interpretation, which was a stage where I shifted away from the line-by-line text and focused on what was being said in a theoretical way and any latent themes, what was not being said clearly. However, these were interpretations and not facts. Copies of eight interview transcripts with details of emergent themes, including interpretations were sent to my primary research supervisor for review for further discussion.

**Stage 3** - I identified an average of 41 distinct themes and as some repeated more than once, an average number of 71 emergent themes per participant (see Appendix M & Appendix N for NVivo). Howitt (2010) states that themes simply emerge from the data. This statement can be challenged as it ignores the active role and skills of the researcher in IPA. It also neglects the complexity of the stages of analysis, and the subjective perspective of the researcher seems unnoticed, for instance, the extent to which the themes mirroring the data is determined by the researcher and requires some skill.

**Stage 4** - As thorough and inclusive annotations were made in the previous stages, I drew developed themes from the taken notes, rather than the initial transcripts. I printed out the emergent themes and tried to cluster them into groups, and progressively it was shaped (see Appendix L). Some emergent themes were stronger, and the weak ones subsumed under stronger themes. The emergent themes identified my interpretation of participants' thoughts. Having established an understanding of a participant, I would then move on to the next one, repeating the process.



**Stage 5** - To further organize 565 themes collected from all eight participants, I transferred the transcripts to NVivo-12 software and further expanded, elaborated, and organized them on a chronological basis, bringing all eight transcripts together (see Appendix N). NVivo-12 as a tool allowed me to identify themes across transcripts which were then compared against each other for commonalities, discrepancies, duplications. As a result, I classified some as subordinate themes.

**Stage 6** - The emergent themes were grouped into superordinate themes and associated subordinates. The emergent themes are part of one whole and intrinsically connected through subtle links but are individually identified and separated from each other for clarity. When woven back together I found that they created a textured and multi-dimensional picture of how life is experienced by an Armenian who lives in London.

**Stage 7** - After an advanced level of thought, the narrative was constructed at the last stage, in which I used the verbatim of all the participants to best illustrate the narratives. This indicates the importance of the writing process that van Manen (2016) stated about the hermeneutic circle and the movement between the whole and the particular, both being informative. After writing up it was clear that the phenomenon is complex, and participants' stories present the complexity of the phenomena. Regardless of the commonalities across the participants, every lived experience is unique to its own. Each participants' life story gave a sense of personal lived experience as evidence to support this research.

**Stage 8** - Identified passions and paradoxes of existence (van Deurzen, 1998; 2014), presented in the Discussion Chapter.

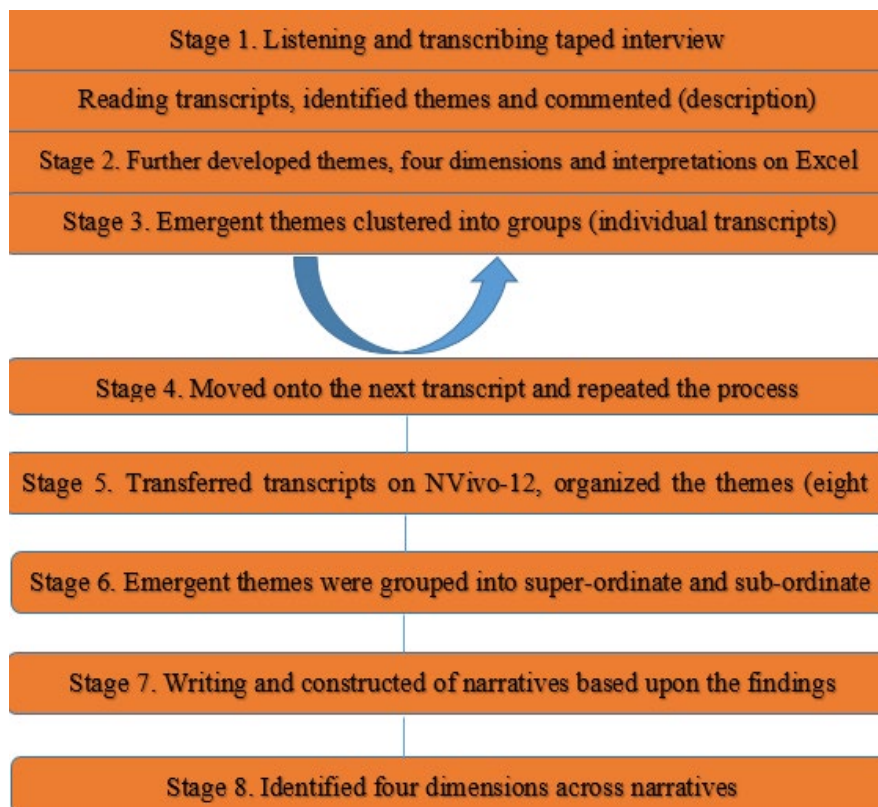
1. Reading transcripts, coding, and commenting (see Appendix K)
2. Further identifying themes (see Appendix M)
3. Clustering emergent themes into groups (see Appendix L)
4. Moving onto the next transcript and repeating the process

5. Transferring transcripts on NVivo-12, organising the themes (eight)
6. Grouping emergent themes (see Appendix N)
7. Writing and constructing narratives

Identified passions and paradoxes within the Four Dimensions of human existence (van Deurzen, 1998, 2014) (presented in Discussion Chapter incorporated with interpretations).

### Figure 9

*Summary of data analysis procedures*



### Pilot Study

Langdrige (2007) stated that the construction of an interview schedule is an important part of the process and needs considerable thought and discussions with fellow students and colleagues. The following section outlines the pilot study which took place as part of the evolution of the current research project, outlining some of the initial findings and

explorations, and how these influenced the development of the current study including the development of the research questions.

The pilot study was conducted to test out an early version of this research for feedback and to address any potential issues in the early stage. An advantage of undertaking a pilot study is that it might give a warning about where the research project could go wrong or whether the proposed methods are appropriate for this study. A limitation of the pilot study is the possibility of inaccurate assumptions based on the gathered data therein.

Prior to undertaking the first interview in April 2019, the questions were tested and practised with my therapist to identify any possible bias, as well as seven peers at NSPC. This also enabled an understanding of whether the interview questions were worded appropriately to collect the required data. The pilot process invited several amendments and for this reason, the interviews which were done as part of the final study (after the testing stage) were more insightful and questions which were identified to be too broad were changed to be more specific. This process is explained in more detail below.

I was interviewed using the questions and was recorded. The interview has been transcribed, coded, themes sought and analysed in depth. The analysed data was shared with my primary supervisor and further discussion took place. The biases were identified as the matter of 'survival', 'suffering' and 'meaning-making'. As someone who experienced multiple traumatic events, I had strong views about the experience of 'suffering' and 'survival' by all first generations who left their country of birth, specifically from troubled parts of the world. Further discussing the analysis of my personal data revealed more clarity on how I identified with three different cultures, Armenian, Iranian, and English as part of my lived experience. I strongly relate to being family-oriented, hospitable, and caring by nature of Armenian and Iranian culture. On the other hand, I rejected the strong preserved nature of these two cultures towards other nations and cultures. I have started learning self-

acceptance from the English culture, the fact of 'I am good in my way' and 'you are good in your way'. My supervisor and I explored my feelings of insecurity in relation to English not being my first language and my feelings of inferiority when I am around native English speakers. We identified how a feeling of being from an 'ethnic minority group' and being part of an underrepresented group of people is a familiar feeling to me. This was experienced not only in Iran but in England too (see Reflexivity Section under Methodology Chapter & Final Reflection & Reflexivity Section under Discussion Chapter).

Furthermore, my supervisor, Prof. Ho Law helped to identify that I used the word 'Western culture' in place of 'English culture' when participants are exposed to the context of living in England. Researching on Armenian people where one's ethnic/cultural identity is a part of their being; I had missed the unique use of 'English culture' and have generalised it under 'Western culture'. This led to the amendment of one interview question. After changing the word from 'Western culture' to 'English culture' in the interview questions, I conducted my first interview.

After analysing the first interview I also realised that a lived experience in London due to the multicultural nature of London might be very different from some other cities in the UK and as IPA requires a homogeneous sample, I have further narrowed the sample down from the 'UK to London.' I also amended the word 'UK' to 'London' in the interview questions.

After undertaking and analysing the first interview, some of the revealed themes did not reflect the literature reviewed thus far. After a review by the secondary supervisor Dr Simon Cassar, it was identified that the focus of the literature was more towards the historical background and community organisations and less on the psychological and cross-cultural aspects. Data analysis from the first interview supported my supervisor's feedback. What was revealed phenomenologically from my first round of data analysis was acculturation and

settlement. Therefore, a further literature review was conducted and the theories and literature on acculturation were added after the pilot study. The emerged themes from the pilot were discussed with both supervisors. They have read the full transcribed text including coding, identified themes, comments, and constructed narratives (see the transcript, analysis, constructed narratives on Appendix K). Presenting the pilot study to peers as well as DCPsych course leader and receiving their constructive feedback made me realise that my literature review needed further development on acculturation. I was advised to investigate the lived experiences of other groups/nations who had similar collective traumatic experiences. This led me to review more into studies on Jews and their experience with the Holocaust, additionally some studies on the acculturation process or sense of home within other ethnic backgrounds.

### **Validity**

Although IPA aims at a homogeneous small purposive sample and the analysis is mainly the researcher's interpretation, it is important to discuss the validity. Yardley (2000) introduced four principles which are applicable for qualitative methodologies such as IPA (Benning, 2013; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). By using his ideas, a researcher can assess the validity of their findings. These principles have been widely used by researchers in the field of psychology (Smith, Flower and Larkin, 2009; Langdridge, 2007). Yardley (2000) produced four levels of assessment:

1. The thoughtfulness to context - the research needs to be grounded in the methodology, choice of methods, psycho-socio-cultural context, in addition to the philosophy behind the analysis. As explained earlier in this chapter, this principle is followed by placing the research within a specific psycho-socio-cultural context, critically reflecting on my epistemological position and the philosophy behind it. Furthermore, critically evaluate the methods with continuous reflexivity.

2. The next level of assessment relates to the assurance and thoroughness of applying the research methods. It was helpful not only to apply but also to empirically influence the progress of the method utilised. For instance, in the way that I was able to conduct the interviews by facilitating the participants in sharing the depth of their lived experiences. According to Smith et al. (2009), “supervisors can conduct mini audits of their students’ work by looking at the first interview transcript annotated with the student’s initial codes, categories or themes. The supervisor can then check that the annotations have some validity about the text being examined and the approach being employed” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 184). Two supervisors had close involvement in the process of interview and data collection, transcripts, coding process, analysis, and they contributed to the independent audit of the validity of the research.
3. Transparency and consistency were the next levels to assess. Throughout the thesis, I have tried to demonstrate by providing continuous reflexivity and revealing my personal lived experience honestly. The consistency is supported by the demonstration of the findings in the following chapter, which attempts to answer the research question.
4. The last assessment concerns whether the findings reveal vital information and knowledge. I strongly believe that the findings of this research add valuable cross-cultural knowledge and understanding to the field. However, meaning is understood subjectively and will not be equally meaningful for every reader. As is revealed in the findings, taking part in the research proved to be meaningful for all the participants and they passionately shared their lived experiences. They all wanted to take part to voice out what is it like to live as an Armenian in London.

For reassurance on the quality of the research, additionally, I have used the AMSTAR checklist (Shea et al., 2017) with my supervisor as a guideline to ensure the key information about this study is reported (see Appendix A). AMSTAR checklist consists of some questions, for example, to check the appropriateness of the methods used in the study, ensuring inclusion-exclusion literature reviews are justified and adequately detailed and explained in the study. The checklist is to capture any possible bias as reflected and presented in the study and to ensure there is no unintended conflicts of interest.

### **Reflexivity**

Reflexivity is an essential component of phenomenological research, adding to the validity of the research analysis (Yardley, 2008). Throughout the process, I made detailed notes referring to any theoretical ideas that emerged from the data. Furthermore, I recorded all personal reflections of my experiences and any biases which came up during the process.

Reflexivity increases the creditability of the findings and provides a deeper understanding of what they mean (Dodgson, 2019). Presentation of the reflexive processes, the researcher evidently provides the reader some understanding of how their perspective has shaped the research (Wharne, 2019). Throughout this research, I have tried to provide an independent and honest version of my interpretation of the lived experiences of the participants. Experiencing Iran's Islamic revolution and oppressions on women, the traumatic experiences of eight years of the Iran/Iraq war, twelve years working with the Armenian community in London, six years in counselling and psychotherapy training, four years working in an ethnically diverse clinical setting, and as a mother; it is undoubted that I hold strong personal views, opinions, and assumptions. These values have been reflected throughout the training, personal therapy, clinical and research supervisions and during this research process. For example, when I felt any strong emotions during the research process, I

have consciously reflected on it, linked it to the root of the trigger, and ‘bracketed out’. Engaging in reflective modules of training as well as personal therapy I became aware of my assumptions, prejudices, and biases. By becoming aware, I could put aside, ‘in brackets’, during the interviews, analysis, and through writing the thesis. To do this I had to be honest with myself about my bias and honestly address it, partially in the research and partially in my journal. For example, during the research process, a group of six research students including myself created a research peer group. We created a safe space to share our biases and concerns and gave and received support from the group members.

By hearing different life stories through work and this research I understood that my worldview and reality are very different from others and there are no such things as true or false. I am curious about different lived experiences. I respect each participant's reality to be valid and true to them. Before starting the training and engaging in personal therapy, I did not understand why I was so quick to feel irritated. I could not make sense of my feeling of despair, as on a logical level I had to be grateful for what I had, which was safety and more freedom compared to when I was in Iran. Now, I have a better understanding in regard to the traumas that I have experienced. Constant reflection throughout the four years of research process allowed me to recognise how I am engaging in the world. Furthermore, how I am then contributing to the research through my own experiences. It became clear to me how these experiences brought me closer to understanding the fundamental meanings being explored in the research question (Gadamer, 2008).

Embarking on this research, I focused on working even further on such issues which came up while interviewing and reflecting upon the participants’ material. Given the acknowledged presence of the researcher in the IPA method in seeking meaning and creating themes, my therapy was essential to explore some of my resistance against specific areas, for example, resistance to integration due to my lack of confidence, specifically due to my



difficulties with the English language which impacted on my confidence leading to feeling inferior.

The research started with my curiosity and inevitable assumptions that I was holding based on my own experiences. I was curious to understand how my experiences differed or were close to the experience of other Armenians. Inevitably my personal experiences contributed to a bias that I brought to the research. According to Van Deurzen (2014), biases are inevitable and are not considered to be a hindrance in phenomenological research. In phenomenological research, the researcher explores the bias, brings them to awareness, and recognises them.

### **Chapter summary**

In this chapter, I have presented a qualitative method as a suitable method for this research. Descriptive Analysis, GT, SEA, and IPA were explored, and I concluded that IPA was the most appropriate method to use. Eight participants were selected using the purposeful snowball sampling strategy. Demographic information of participants such as their age, sub-cultural background, years of living in London, and career is presented in Table 3.1 for a better understanding of the position of the participants in the world. I shared ethical considerations and my reflexive awareness throughout the research with my supervisor to ensure intersubjectivity, transparency, and validity. The next chapter will demonstrate the analysis of the transcripts and findings gathered from the participants' semi-structured interviews.

## **Analysis and Findings**

In the Methodology Chapter, it has been shown that the qualitative method is a suitable method for this research, as it explores the in-depth lived experience of participants. It was concluded that IPA is the most appropriate method to explore the research question: how life is experienced by Armenians who live in London. Additionally, IPA enables a reflexive investigation of how I as the researcher made sense of participants' experience (double-hermeneutic approach).

IPA supported the capture of superordinate themes and their associated subordinate themes that brought to light numerous layers of meaning found within the participants' life stories. Each participant had their exclusive narrative to tell; I have attempted to identify what emerged as common themes across participants' experiences. This chapter also includes my understanding of every individual theme, including the direct quotes from transcripts. The identifiable data such as participants' names, names of the cities, gender, number of children, and occupations have been slightly changed to ensure safeguarding, confidentiality, and anonymity. However, the main important aspects remain original to ensure the accuracy of the participant's lived experience.

### **The Emergent Superordinate & Subordinate Themes**

The emergent themes from each participant's transcript explored consist of the superordinate themes and subordinate themes emerging across the participant's lived experiences providing a detailed and in-depth understanding of how is life experienced by Armenians in the context of living in London? These themes will be presented in this section, organised into four superordinate themes and fifteen subordinate themes. This will serve to present a coherent narrative of what the participants found valuable and meaningful from their lived experiences. The superordinate themes which emerged and subsequent subordinate

themes are presented in Figure 10, with the participant denoted by a number as they relate to a particular theme.

**Figure 10**

*Superordinate themes and their associated subordinate theme*

<b>The Armenian History and Heritage</b>	<b>The Armenian Culture</b>	<b>Armenian Community</b>	<b>The experience of Adaptation</b>
The Armenian Apostolic Church (7)	Family Closeness (8)	Feeling Connected to Armenian Friends & Community (7)	Gratitude (5)
The Armenian Genocide (6)	The Armenian Language (6)	Challenges Faced in the Armenian Community (6)	Sense of Belonging (6)
Loss of Armenian Heritage and Culture (6)	The Armenian Sub-cultures (6)		Emotional Connection with the Country of Origin (5)
	Higher Education (5)		Integration with English Society (8)
	The Armenian Art and Literature (5)		
	Prejudice & Snobbery (5)		

**Superordinate theme 1** - Figure 10 presents superordinate theme 1 **The Armenian History and Heritage** with associated subordinate themes of ‘The Armenian Apostolic Church’, ‘The Armenian Genocide’ and ‘Loss of Armenian Heritage and Culture’. Seven participants expressed the importance of the Armenian Apostolic Church as part of preserving

the Armenian heritage and culture. The Armenian Genocide was revealed as a vital part of Armenian history. Six participants shared their experiences about this event and how they each related to it. For six participants, high regard was placed in the value of the preservation of Armenian history and heritage, as well as expressing concerns about the loss of it.

**Superordinate theme 2 - The Armenian Culture** and its five associated subordinate themes revealed as ‘Family Closeness’, ‘The Armenian Language’, ‘The Armenian Sub-cultures’, ‘Higher Education’, ‘The Armenian Art & Literature’ and ‘Prejudice & Snobbery’. All participants expressed their close connection with their families seeing it as a vital part of the Armenian culture. Their experiences ranged from appreciating their closeness for bringing emotional stability and happiness to missing their presence and therefore support. The subordinate theme of the Armenian Language was revealed by six participants who indicated the importance of speaking and preserving the Armenian language. Six participants expressed experiencing Armenians holding different cultural values according to their place of birth. Participants expressed the importance of not simplifying Armenians way of being into their respective sub-cultures. Five participants related to the importance of higher education as expressed through their experience. Five participants expressed their passion for Armenian art in music, film, dance, architecture, and literature. The experience for some participants extended from a worry that Armenian art is dying outside of Armenia to holding pride in Armenian art as it is re-introduced into the diaspora.

**Superordinate theme 3 - Armenian Community** and its two associated subordinate themes were revealed in the experiences of six participants. Under the subordinate theme of ‘The Armenian Friends and Community’ six participants expressed their experiences towards their Armenian friends and the community in London. It ranged from feeling thankful for the community for providing an opportunity to find Armenian friends to expressing some challenges that they have faced. Under the subordinate theme of ‘Challenges Faced in the

Armenian Community’, six participants expressed a desire to experience fewer judgments within the community and hoped to see more collaborative approaches and perspectives.

**Superordinate theme 4 - The Experience of Adaptation** and its five associated subordinate themes revealed as ‘Gratitudes’, ‘Sense of Belonging’, ‘Emotional Connection with the Country of Origin’, and ‘Integration within English Society’. Five participants expressed their gratitude to England and the English people. Six participants expressed their sense of belonging to England as their adopted ‘new home’. Five participants felt an emotional connection to the country of origin. Finally, all participants expressed some experience in relation to integration within English society.

### **Superordinate Theme 1 – The Armenian History and Heritage**

The Armenian history and heritage were revealed to be an enormous part of the Armenian ethnic identity. Participants related to the Armenian history and heritage were subjective in experiences. Under this superordinate theme of **The Armenian History and Heritage** three subordinate themes were revealed: ‘The Armenian Apostolic Church’, ‘The Armenian Genocide’ and ‘Loss of Armenian history, heritage, and culture’. These will now be explored further.

#### ***The Armenian Apostolic Church***

The Armenian Apostolic Church is a notable part of Armenian history, heritage, and culture. Participants had very different experiences and perspectives towards the Armenian Apostolic Church. Yet, in all the interviews when the experience with the church was either positive or negative, there was still a sense of belonging to the Armenian Church. Six participants viewed the Armenian Church as a heritage that contains part of the cultural identity and a desire for this to be sustained. None of them felt any affiliation to the Armenian Church for spiritual reasons and their limited involvements were purely to support and sustain the culture.

Three participants held an idea for the existence of the church predicated on a need to celebrate the culture. For example, Armineh spoke about the annual Armenian street festival in London which introduces and shares the Armenian culture with other members of the society. Her motivation of a charitable support for the event gave her a sense of meaning and purpose in identifying with the Armenian Church, heritage, and culture.

In summer we have this big event which belongs to the church, the Armenian street party, and the people are going to help there to raise money towards the church which is very important for me. Every year I go there and help them as a volunteer. (lines 305-308)

Aram supported the existence of the Armenian Church specifically for cultural sustainability. He sometimes attended the church to connect with the culture and not for religious motives.

Historically, culturally speaking it's quite nice, occasionally I go to the Armenian Church ... It's like gauging your culture, and I think a lot of Armenians go to the Armenian Church for that reason, it is culture for them. (lines 338-340)

Ani observed that Armenians in London went to church only during big religious events such as Christmas and Easter. Therefore, many Armenians including herself did not know traditional regular ways of practising. Attending the Armenian Church did not require a religious motivation to partake in a spiritual congregation.

I noticed when people go to church here, the Armenian community, those who don't go regularly, or they go twice a year, you know Easter or Christmas, you don't know what is going on, what they're saying what they're doing during the mass. (lines 51-54)

Nare's view for supporting the Armenian Church was not for her benefit, instead, it was about others in the community having a place to go. For Nare personally, the church did not

offer much more than that. “When I came to London once or twice I attended to church, I felt like traditionally it is seen as a place for the communities’ heart... but it doesn’t do anything for me.” (lines 309-312)

She believed that the existence of the Armenian Church was most beneficial for people who have a religious sensibility. She also noticed it being there for other purposes such as getting in touch with one’s heritage and culture which maintains a sense of comfort and togetherness within the Armenian community. Nare alludes to a sense of care towards others, saying,

“I am glad there is an Armenian Church here because a lot of people are religious and it means something to them and people like their rituals and regularity of ceremonies. It’s a comforting thing a wedding or a funeral” (lines 320-323). However, she critiqued the leaders of the Church for their limited ability to help people in practical ways and wished that more could have been done for some of the community members. She added, “I wish we had better community leaders as priests are supposed to look after their people. I don’t feel that.” (lines 327-328)

Raffi, Minas, Nare, and Armineh expressed the importance of the Armenian Church as a conduit to history and culture. Raffi believed that historically the Church played a vital role in supporting people both emotionally and spiritually through difficult times. This provided the people with hope: “ ... don’t forget that Armenian Church played a major part for Armenians, even during the Armenian Genocide, people always prayed, they went to the churches, church for us was like our king, our palace, our tower.” (lines 276-278)

It is emphasised that the Armenian Church is clearly interwoven with the culture. “Our culture definitely has gone towards the church ... The church was there for some Armenians, expressing their art.” (Raffi, lines 283-284) “... Akhtamar Island, one of the most beautiful Armenian artwork is on the church walls.” (Raffi, line 280)

Likewise, Minas added,

“I also respect the role of the church in kind of maintaining its heritage.” (line 290)

Similarly, Nare said,

“ ... My attachment to the church is only because it was part of connecting to culture. I do like the architecture of the Armenian Church they are very beautiful.” (lines 304-306)

Armineh viewed the Armenian Church in London as providing Armenians with an opportunity and a choice if they wish to celebrate any religious or cultural events.

At least you know that there is an Armenian Church ... if you wish your child to be baptized in an Armenian Church or get married in an Armenian Church at least you know that there is a place that you can rely on. (lines 317-322)

Participants also expressed some critiques towards the Armenian Church. For example, Minas did not see Armenians as a religious minority group as Armenians are not all from the Armenian Apostolic Church; for example, some Armenians are atheists or Catholics. He gave specific importance to his ethnicity thus separating it from religion and church. He thought Armenians, including himself, did not need a religious identity to exist, specifically in Britain. He believed that in a liberal country one can exist as an ethnic or cultural minority and there is no need to identify themselves with a specific religion. He was contrasting the experience of diaspora Armenians living in the Middle East where being a religious minority holds more prominence and meaning to their existence, and this dissipates when living in Britain. He believes Armenians can be seen in Britain as an ethnic and cultural minority group.

In Iran when you've got a Muslim state, maybe you need to push that in the forefront and say 'we are a religious Christian minority within a Muslim society', and that gives it some kind of political credence, some kind of authority, but in a western liberal country like Britain, we should have our own kind of identity, we don't need a church



or a religious identity to exist. We are an ethnic minority; we are a cultural community.  
(lines 299-304)

Spiritually, Ani could not connect with the Armenian Apostolic Church; she could not engage with the teachings as she did not understand the language of the priest which was in the ancient Armenian language. On the one hand, she desires to practise religion within the Armenian Church where she was culturally connected but on the other hand, she could not understand and resonate with the religious language. “I think it’s because they use old Armenian in church, and no-one speaks that now, no one unless you’re a theologian or you study it, otherwise you don’t understand it.” (lines 94-95)

Hrach certainly did not believe in God but could not be open about his belief and how he felt about religion in the Armenian society. He knew that Armenians living in Armenia would not accept and respect his views. He thought that Armenians in Armenia would be very judgemental when it came to religion, culture, history, and heritage. He felt the need to freely be himself and in London, there is no longer a need to pretend, attend church, and follow a religion or culture with which he did not resonate with. In Armenia, he felt his identity conflicted when he had to pretend to fit in. Not being accepted for what he believed, and his worldview triggered conflicts.

\*smirk ... the discrimination of people like me who don’t believe in God or whatever, calling me ignorant of history and years of our ancestors building this country for us and me being very ignorant about it and ignoring that religion. (lines 63-65)

Aram, Hrach, and Ani were against the religious and cultural teachings of the Armenian Church which were enforcing some beliefs and values, specific to young children. “We as kids have forced upon us a tradition which we might not associate with, we might not want to be associated with, religious and culturally.” (Hrach, lines 71-72)

Aram said,

When anything gets turned into an indoctrinating religion, that's wrong, that's not right when people are forced to do whatever, to go to church, to do this a specific time of the day, it's like what is the point? Do you believe it, no, you're just doing it for culture, and that's not right at all?" (lines 345-349)

Ani added,

"If someone doesn't believe I don't think they should be forced to practice a faith that they don't believe in, liberal way of thinking." (lines 68-69)

To conclude, although the Armenian Church is interwoven with the Armenian identity culturally and historically, every participant related to it differently, ranging from valuing the Armenian Church to sustaining the heritage and culture. Some wished the church to be separated from ethnic identity, and a strong belief that these values should not be forced onto individuals, specifically to young children. Therefore, individuals must be given the freedom to choose.

### ***The Armenian Genocide***

Within the various lived experience descriptions of what it means to be an Armenian, the historical Armenian Genocide is cited as a common aspect of this. Six participants related to this event. Raffi was particularly sad about the Armenian Genocide. He was a direct descendent of a survivor of the Armenian Genocide and felt strongly that the lack of acknowledgment by some governments was unfair and politically motivated. He felt that not being acknowledged for what was a traumatic and life-changing experience was purely unjust. He expressed his emotional pain with a deep breath, using words such as "raw feeling" and "open wound."

I still feel very raw, and I think the wound is still open \*sigh. For me, it doesn't matter if the whole world accepts that, it was a genocide, and we know it was because my

grandfather was one who actually witnessed. I feel the political situation doesn't allow the facts to come up and be said in an open way. (lines 293-296)

Raffi and Minas expressed how the transgenerational trauma manifests in their way of being; they feel as if they have become sensitised as they carry the pain of abuse and suffering from their grandfathers and the people as a whole who went through the Armenian Genocide. Minas said,

“\*sigh my grandfather had always told me about his experience as a child, survival of the genocide.” (lines 44-45) Her mother being the daughter of a Genocide survivor taught Minas about temporality. The feeling of temporality as an existential has given thus been poignantly realised and internalised by him.

I left all of my toys, \*sigh all of the things that I felt were important, and since then, I remember at one point my mother said to me when we were in England, we are never going to settle 100%, but we must always have a suitcase ready packed, just in case something happens and ready to go. (lines 200-203)

Raffi held onto a sense of anger and injustice towards some governments who were censoring the truth for political reasons and agendas etc. He saw that his ancestors' sufferings projected and manifested the suffering of the people today when those injustices continued between generations and remained unresolved and unacknowledged. For Raffi it manifested in his way of being more compassionate towards others.

I've got so much empathy, I'm very sensitive about this, that if I make a mistake, I must be able to turn to you and say I'm sorry it was my fault. But that hasn't been done properly so that definitely, I think not only me as an Armenian, I think all Armenians feel, very likely almost all that it has been pushed under the carpet more or less, just because of the political games. (line 298-302)

Another way that Raffi experienced transgenerational trauma was through the loss of culture which occurred when the mainland of Armenia was destroyed during the Genocide. He expressed a strong feeling of sorrow. “I am very sad for the culture, which in the mainland of Armenia was destroyed, what amount of culture has disappeared. The world is a cruel place; it seems to be...” (lines 311- 312)

Loss of culture was deeply meaningful to Raffi and brought a sense of emotional sufferings and feeling of hopelessness. “I am the third generation and it has got an impact on me because I feel the injustice.” (line 306) He expressed the transgenerational trauma as a feeling of sadness and injustice. When he reflected on this experience, he felt that “the world is a cruel place.” (line 313)

Raffi expressed having a mistrust on some governments for their continued lack of acknowledgment and remorse for the historic genocide. In addition to feeling sad about the past, he also experiences fear for the future as he believes that the lack of acknowledgement or denial for the genocide allows for it to be repeated. Furthermore, he supports the actions of the younger generation who are seeking justice and reconciliation from their government. “My fear is, if you don’t acknowledge, then there is a possibility that you may do it again. And I think that’s why you see the very young generation who are asking for justice to be done.” (lines 309- 310)

Aram also felt the pain and sadness of his ancestors, indicating that the feelings were ‘still’ ‘strong’.“ I am the fourth generation so I think that feeling is still quite strong.” (lines 439-440) He believes that other nations who have not experienced the same cannot empathise with him. He does not feel that he is being understood and that his voice is not being heard. He, therefore, avoids talking about it, experiences a mistrust caused by not being understood by others, and expresses feeling a sense of isolation.

You don't usually get to talk about these things to people, you can't just talk to somebody on the street, even someone who might know 'that's an Armenian 'or 'oh the Turks denied the genocide, I feel sorry for you 'you can't really engage with them.  
(lines 450-453)

As a descendent of the Armenian Genocide, Nare stated that she believed some Armenian individuals have been born with the trauma of the Armenian Genocide, including herself, and emphasises the role of storytelling in passing down the trauma. "Trauma of genocide which you are just born with this trauma. You hear these stories from the second that you are born." (line 367)

This experience became part of her identity. She has heard the story of what happened to his ancestors directly from his grandfather. She said, "It's horrible, it upsets me horribly."  
(line 152)

In one way, she wanted to keep the ancestral legacy and pass her truth to the next generation and others. But she is conflicted about whether it was the right thing to do, to pass on such horrifying stories to her children.

She stated,

My grandfather used to talk about it a lot openly ... He witnessed worst horrors when he was 15, seeing his family being killed... you are born with this knowledge in your head and this burden of genocide and all the trauma and all this expectation. (lines 376-378) I told that to my child which I am questioning, is it the right thing to do? \*sigh.  
(lines 388-389)

She saw the event as a burden that Armenians including herself want to share with their children and others. The sharing was an important part of the connection and respect for the truth of the past. She also stated that the first thing that she wanted to share with other people when she left Armenia was the Armenian Genocide to make sure people around her knew about

it and how she experienced it. She felt the burden bear down on her as it manifested in an embodied fatigue, as she encounters other Armenians with a similar sense of this shared experience.

When I came to London from Armenia, you feel like when you meet a new person that's the first thing you want to tell them. Do you know about the Armenian genocide? ... I sort of moved on from that a bit but it's there. So, you have that on your shoulders constantly. We say, there is a fatigue about that I've heard from a few people, I feel it as well. (lines 377-381)

Nare also expressed that "I cannot just say all those suffering did not happen especially it is still happening in Turkey to a lot of other people, it's relevant." (lines 390-391)

She felt unsure about how to deal with the burden of the Armenian Genocide. Would remembering have helped her to move on? She was questioning how she could move on knowing that it was still "happening in Turkey" (*ibid*). For this reason, Nare draws attention to the temporality of this event, showing how this situation was not just a part of history, but it is still present in the now and is experienced as a matter of survival for those affected. The memories of stories that she heard, and the signs of transgenerational trauma presented for her the constant conflict of how to overcome the trauma, putting her in a vulnerable position.

I think we have to remember but I don't know...does remembering help? Is it therapeutic, is the recognition or standing up would it help? would it make me feel better? probably wouldn't ... all I remember my great grandad telling me a story about how he saw his sister being hanged with her own brain, and I was told this as a child, and it is imprinted in my head, and I cannot get rid of it. (lines 386-390)

Nare commented on her experience of the transgenerational trauma of not being able to remove that horrifying picture imprinted in her memory. She stated that she felt confused, helpless, and did not know how to deal, process or heal from it.

Aram believed that the event of the Armenian Genocide and the collective pain unites Armenians together. The Armenian Genocide made every Armenian feel pain and sadness as it was close to their hearts. Regardless of the differences between Armenians, they were all united when it came to defending each other against a perpetrator. Aram was in his early 20s and the fourth generation of a genocide descendent. However, the expression of emotional pain and sadness was still ever-present:

That's one of the main things that unites Armenians, the whole genocide thing, we feel very strongly about it, I don't think any Armenian no matter how much you care or don't care, can look at the genocide and not feel something inside them that makes them very sad, it's a very powerful feeling. I think every Armenian has probably experienced that even though we haven't experienced the genocide ourselves it's still very close to us. (lines 426-431)

Like Raffi and Nare who expressed fear of a repeat of Armenians being killed by the Turkish government, Aram also expressed the similar fear: "... just look at what's happening in north Syria, if you're an Armenian living there, and now the Turks are invading again, it is sick." (Aram, lines 443-445)

Participants continue to relive their inherited trauma by being triggered by similar events occurring in today's world.

In contrast to the views of Minas, Raffi, Nare, and Aram who strongly felt the pain and sadness of the Armenian Genocide, Hrach had a different perspective. He believed that passing on such stories with the quality of hatred to the next generation is destructive as it could provoke another conflict or war-type response thus endangering individuals. "That's just scary because that is provoking another war." (line 215)

He also expressed fear of Armenians being killed. He stated, "why do you want your kids to be on a battlefield? why are you saying to your children that it's okay to die if you are

dying for your nation?” (lines 215-216) Hrach expressed that Armenians should be careful with how they are conveying knowledge about the Armenian Genocide to their children. The expression of hatred is dangerous and may put the Armenian youth in danger of being killed. Hrach objected and expressed resentment towards Armenians who held a grudge towards Turkish people. He said, “when they say things about Turkish people in general, that’s just pure racism and discrimination about the whole nation.” (lines 47-48)

Ani also had a different perspective towards the matter of the Genocide. She was in her early 20s and the fourth generation of genocide survivors. Ani consciously wants to relate with Turkish people, and she did not perceive it as a problem. She believed that she could be open about her feelings and perspectives. She observed that there were Turkish individuals who fought for the truth and justice for Armenians, putting their own lives at risk. She believed that not all Turkish people think the same, some show a more moralistic and fair perspective. She believed that seeing the Turkish people as enemies and not communicating will not be beneficial in gaining sympathy for the Armenian plight. She is expressing an approach of peace-making, desiring reconciliation:

Things like genocide recognition, I don’t think we can ever achieve that if we don’t open ourselves up to a dialogue with the enemy, which who shouldn’t be considered the enemy, because many Armenians don’t want to accept the fact that there are Turks who fight for our cause in this country. Even in Turkey, they risk their lives, they risk everything, to tell the truth, and by shutting ourselves off to those people, we are not putting ourselves in a good situation to gain recognition. (lines 227-228)

To conclude, six participants felt connected to the Armenian Genocide. In addition to feeling the continued pain and suffering of ancestral lived experience through this expression of transgenerational trauma and the telling of stories passed between generations, four of the



participants were worried about a repeat of the killing of Armenians and two participants expressed the need for reconciliation with the Turkish people.

### *Loss of Armenian Heritage and Culture*

Minas felt a sense of loss; he believed that what belonged to Armenians in Western Armenia had been taken away by the Turkish government. Minas appeared to experience grief at the loss of culture and what he believed belonged to Armenians. It was clear from his language and descriptions that he cared strongly for the different elements of culture, such as cuisine. He was conflicted with the death of culture which forms a large part of his ethnic identity. He expressed a felt sense of loss and anger and described the pain with the metaphor of ‘burning’:

This is the crucial thing which really burns me ... because the western Armenia where I am from, or my family is from is occupied, therefore I cannot buy Armenian aubergines from there, because that is now classified as Turkish aubergine. (Minas, lines 148-153)

Raffi expressed a similar sense of loss for the history and culture and has the desire to rebuild. “This culture has to be regenerated, to be discovered again, and to be used in a positive way.” (line 73)

He conveyed that due to the huge historical losses, Armenians ought to work harder if they are to achieve more. He had found meaning in reconstructing this sense of loss. Raffi saw history and culture as an innate human capacity that everyone could explore in their own way. For him, this ties into the historical suffering of the Armenians in Turkey, and this could be why he had felt strongly about the importance of not losing more than what had already been lost. This loss can be experienced as the death of history and culture which he strongly identified as a sudden loss.

What I think any Armenian really should try to prove is that particularly with our past history that we have suffered terribly, we have to try to work much harder to repair what we have lost... A big part of our country in the first world war nearly 1/3 of Turkey was old Armenia and that culture, everything, disappeared within a few months \*sigh... (lines 69-74)

For Nare, it was important to retrieve what Armenians have lost during Soviet times, such as creating music and literature. She strongly identified with her culture that had been lost with feelings of responsibility towards reconstructing some of what had been lost in the culture with a view to preserving it. She gave meaning to the experience of loss when she felt empowered in saving the culture. This meaning-making encouraged a passion for sharing parts of the culture with others, specifically literature. When she was expressing the destruction of literature by the Soviet regime, the deep \*sigh showed the emotional pain, sadness, and grief that she was experiencing. “We have good music, traditional music, traditional medieval music and a lot of it were censored in Soviet time in Armenia so we have lost a lot \*sigh ... We need to try to bring it back.” (lines 140-141)

While Nare was focusing on reconstructing the lost literature, Raffi was experiencing a responsibility to remind others that Armenians still exist regardless of the big losses that they have had. “I suppose the reason I say it is because of the great loss we had, I am all the time trying to remind people that we are still in existence.” (lines 111-113)

Ani expresses her pride towards the Armenian culture and holding onto it. “...especially in a small culture that we have, and the history that we have, I think it’s important to really maintain that and to be proud of it and pass it onto the next generation.” (lines 162-164)

Aram worried Armenian history and culture were in danger of dying out; he felt responsible to play his part in sustaining it out of having a profound care. To him, the death of

history and culture meant the death of his Armenian identity, and Armenian identity played a large and meaningful part in his life. Aram had a passion for history which led him to care about the preservation of Armenian heritage and he felt sad seeing it being lost. His wish was for the Armenian identity to survive.

I feel like if it wasn't for the fact that my culture was isolated and dying, I probably wouldn't care, but it is and I think that's the case with a lot of Armenians. That sense of responsibility to hold onto what you have and preserve it (lines 25-28). You might say nobody speaks the ancient Egyptian language, or ancient Greek or whatever. Armenian is an ancient language of ancient people, and losing that would be a huge historical loss, and it would be sad for all of us. (lines 50-52)

Aram expresses frustration to witness the loss of history, heritage, and culture in the diaspora. "It would be sad, sad for me ... huge loss to global history and culture, it's something that a historian would definitely recognise" (lines 48-50). He proclaimed that the historical Armenia which contained historical heritage had been forgotten by its people and governments alike. The excessive attention given to the Republic of Armenia did not represent all the Armenian people and their culture. Aram's ancestors lived in Cilicia (currently in Turkey) and parts of his family lived in Lebanon and expressed a passion for sustaining the Armenian heritage in the diaspora. He felt that politically and financially all the focus and support is on Armenia (post-independence from USSR) and not much attention is given to the diaspora where Armenians were/are situated and in this way, Armenians are losing a large part of their history and culture.

The civil war started and a lot of Armenians there left, they kind of spread out ..., Lebanon got destroyed and people kind of forgot about it. ...All the focus went to Armenia, sending money there, that's the only thing that matters and a lot of, not just

Lebanon, but pretty much any other diaspora community, historic ones got forgotten.  
(lines 61-66)

Armineh felt that the way to sustain the Armenian heritage and culture is to keep the identity and culture as it is and avoid any assimilation. She saw multiculturalism negatively because it provided the opportunity for mixed marriages. The idea of assimilation was worrying her, and it was like the death of her Armenian identity and culture. To avoid assimilation, the Armenian community became important to her as she strived to sustain the existence of her community.

I'm just thinking that because we live in a country that just a minority of Armenians live in this country, because we have a small community here ..., to expand the Armenian Community if they're married to each other, children become Armenian again and they marry with Armenian so it's just my main aim is to expand the Armenian society. (lines 381-394)

Nare expressed her frustration about the loss of her history and heritage because the Armenian government acted as a "bad parent". She would try avoiding the Armenian news because she could not face knowing that the heritage was being demolished and how the Armenian government did not give credence to preserving it either. Her lived experience of this is manifesting in helplessness. On one hand, she cares for the Armenian heritage but on the other hand, she feels helpless that she cannot do much to sustain it.

Things happening in Armenia, I'd like to learn to disassociate myself a bit but I don't, every day I decide not to read the news so much, not to be so worked up about another old building being demolished or crashed ... It's like having a bad parent; you know that they're being a bad parent but you're attached to them. (lines 94-98)

To conclude, participants experienced the loss of history, heritage, and culture. This reflected that this loss was due to the Armenian Genocide, the Soviet regime, the politicians and newsreaders of today, and the acculturation of people integrating.

Participants spoke of their personal role and meaning making in relation to this loss, for example through rebuilding the lost art, and maintaining the history, heritage and culture which were expressed as vital due to Armenians being a minority ethnic group. Not only would the loss of Armenian culture be a loss to Armenians, but it was also identified as being a loss to the world at large due to the value that this rich culture offers.

## **Superordinate Theme 2 – The Armenian Culture**

Addressing the second superordinate theme of **The Armenian Culture**, six subordinate themes of ‘Family Closeness’, ‘The Armenian Language’, ‘Armenian Sub-cultures’, ‘Importance of Higher Education’, ‘Armenian Art & Literature’, and ‘Prejudice & Snobbery’ emerged. These will be explored below.

### ***Family Closeness***

Family closeness plays a large part in the Armenian culture. Raffi described his experience as ‘obviously different’, indicating that these differences are deeply rooted in the identity of Armenian culture. He missed the close connection with the family, which was lacking for him in London, and left him with a sense of isolation.

The only thing that I may miss is the close cultural tapestry that we had in Iran that we don't have in England. Like for example, uncles, aunties, cousins, and we went to their houses without telephoning them, we just went and knocked on the door and went in \*sigh. That part obviously is very different (lines 12-16).

Minas similarly felt the lack of family closeness stating, “... that close neatness did not exist in London” (line 7). Raffi added, “Oh, I do miss it! ... that is still in my book missing from my life.” (lines 19-24)

The family also had a strong role in Aram's life. He believed that a close connection with his family encouraged 'stability' and reduced isolation. He valued family closeness and was caring towards each other.

I think Armenians, in general, are close to their families, in a lot of cultures, they just don't care and separate out but we are very close people. We stick together and I value that. That's normal to me. It brings stability. (lines 246-250)

He felt happier and comfortable when he was around his family. "I feel happy, if I didn't have family, I would feel very lonely for sure." (line 262)

To sustain this closeness and the positive feeling he made sure that he visited the family "regularly": "family who you see regularly." (line 62)

We get together all the time, we make the effort for each other all the time. We go out for dinner, get together for meals, it feels comfortable. It feels like they care, they are there for you if you need something you always have someone to ring. (lines 255-260)

He could not make sense of why his friends might want to migrate from London and live away from their families. This was not what he would like to do. "I talk to my friends and they say they want to move to Canada or Sweden ..., I am thinking why do you wanna do that? I wouldn't wanna do that?" (lines 235-237) "You always go where your family is." (line 72) He views staying close to family and appreciating them as 'being normal'. "Just sit back, be normal, appreciate your family, appreciate people around you." (line 244)

Armineh also felt isolated and lonely in London because she migrated without her family. Her strong family values seemed to have made her experience more difficulties, wanting to be a good mother to her children and finding it harder to do so without the support of her own family. With a shaking head, Armineh expresses the difficulty and the pain of separation from her parents.

It was very hard to come to this country without your parents. For me, it was very hard [shaking head] because I just left my mum, dad, my siblings, and all my relatives and came here, and I was feeling very lonely. (lines 84-86)

Armineh misses her family as she is unable to travel to visit them regularly. "I'd rather go every year to visit my family, but because of the situation, the kids, and my husband and the life, you can't go every year." (lines 76-77) She also expressed that her family cannot visit her often or live in the UK due to government restrictions. The situation makes her feel hopeless.

Because of the visa, they can't come here often because of the regulations ... they refused to get the visa ... that's why for them it's very difficult to come and live in this country. (lines 64-69)

The way Hrach expressed the feeling of family closeness and meaningfulness of family was as: "Everything that I do, I do it for me and my family." (line 186) He articulated that his family being open-minded allowed him to stay close to them. "Having part of my family in the UK, we share a similar mentality." (line 8) "I was really blessed and privileged, I've been raised in an open-minded family." (lines 75-76)

Minas and Ani expressed a strong connection with their families. When Minas was studying at a university outside London, he made sure that he visited his parents regularly to maintain closeness. "Every other weekend I was back in Harrow where my parents lived" (Minas, lines 29-30). Minas looked up to her parents and their relationship, stating that "my parents were positive role models for me as a couple." (line 41)

Ani did not only view family closeness in her family but among other Armenians too. She said, "Armenians very much value family and family life, and keeping to that in their lives." (lines 262-263) "My family is very close to me here." (line 289)

Anahit expressed her family is close and they value this when they come together to enjoy celebrations: "I love that whenever there's a certain occasion such as birthdays ... the whole family comes together to congratulate, celebrate and just be there for each other" (line 147-148). She added, being family-oriented as a 'core value', emphasising the importance: "My core values are being a family orientated person" (line 112). However, she stated that with family closeness comes restrictions and responsibilities. If she expresses herself as being against the community values, the impact will not only affect her but her whole family would be judged. "In the Armenian community in general, if an individual does something, it not only affects them but their whole family ... That's why I think Armenian children living in London can't make their own decisions as much." (lines 59-61)

Nare expressed the feeling of closeness to her family with humour when she illustrated a fun story of when she met them in Armenia.

\*Laugh my cousins will turn up or my sister-in-law turn up saying have you seen the state of your eyebrows, and I'm like what's wrong with my eyebrows? ... I come back from Armenia far more polished looking than when I went in ... but that's just one example. (lines 44-49)

Nare also stated that the emotional connection towards her family living in Armenia is the only attachment to her country: "What connects me to Armenia at the moment are my parents who live there." (line 98)

Having a sense of connection to her family and other relatives was so strong that it provoked her curiosity to make the effort to seek out her extended family and with a view to re-connecting. Her sense of identity is interwoven with the family, and the extended family contains her roots. "Recently we have been digging a lot of family history and family trees ... I just wanted to see do I have any relatives that I can be in touch \*smile." (Nare, lines 237-240)



The \*smile indicated a pleasant feeling that she was experiencing when she spoke about finding relatives and re-connecting with them.

All participants expressed their close connection with their families seeing it as a vital part of the Armenian culture. Two participants highlighted this experience as missing in London. One expressed that family closeness brings mental stability and happiness. One was missing her family and their support in raising her children and family being part of the process. One expressed his closeness to his family due to their open-mindedness. Two participants enjoyed family closeness in respect of celebrating the events together. One participant expressed that family closeness came with challenges because the decisions of one could have a strong impact on the whole family. For two of the participants this closeness to family connects them to their birthplace.

### *The Armenian Language*

Ani and Minas felt grateful for their parents encouraging them to learn the Armenian language as a way of preserving their Armenian heritage and identity. "I'm glad that my parents spoke Armenian with me at home, otherwise I probably would not speak it now." (Ani, lines 32-33)

Minas valued that his parents provided him the opportunity to learn the language and gave importance to it. This was meaningful to him. "I admired my parents' sense of dedication to the Armenian cores and lives, they always emphasised the importance of respecting our identity, and culture, language ... so I value that very much." (lines 46-48)

Ani felt that through the language, Armenian heritage is with her, and this uniqueness makes her feel proud. "I feel proud to tell people I speak Armenian, because not many people do speak Armenian. And explaining how our alphabet is different." (lines 38-40)

This indicates her ability to find strength in acculturation, not only within her new home country but from her ancestors too. Ani's connection with the Armenian language was

harmonious as she enjoyed learning it and benefited from using the skills to learn other languages and connect with others who speak different languages.

I feel proud because I know I've got another language, another understanding, a whole different heritage by my side, and it's been useful in life. It has helped me learn other languages, like French, for example, I probably wouldn't have been as quick to pick up words if I didn't know Armenian, certain sounds are the same. (lines 35-38)

Ani was worried that the Armenian language was not sustainable. She viewed this as the death of her ethnic identity.

I hope that the language continues, because I see the people who are just above my generation, who are now 29/30 and some of them have children some of those children don't speak the language, and they're very completely westernised. (lines 375-377)

Armineh expressed the importance of the Armenian language many times, she saw the purity of being an Armenian to be able to speak, read and write.

Pure Armenian is, they can understand the language, they can communicate with each other, to know how to write a letter or to know how to read a book ... For me it's important to become a pure Armenian. (lines 35-38) ... We have to keep our language, and to know how to communicate with other people. (line 191)

Armineh also emphasised the importance of teaching her children to speak the language and be connected and aware of their roots. "I want to teach my children to go back to the roots, to know the Armenian language." (line 30)

Raffi expressed the importance of the Armenian language as feeling fortunate that he had the freedom and opportunity to learn it. He compared his fortune to some Armenians who lived in Iran's neighbouring counties where speaking Armenian was not allowed.

We had many schools for the Armenian language, while some others, not mentioning any names, in neighbouring countries Armenians were not even allowed to call themselves Armenian or have Armenian names, it was forbidden. (lines 112-115)

Raffi added if there were any Armenian language classes for adults in London that he could improve her language skills and would benefit from it. He could practice his reading skills by reading Armenian books. He experienced a feeling of loss due to the inability of accessing some of the knowledge that is provided in the Armenian language. "That will add to my ability to read more fluently Armenian books because what I read is basically in English." (lines 360-361)

The Armenian language was always part of Aram's life since a young age. "My parents and grandparents always speak Armenian at home." (line 164) He stated, hearing the Western Armenian language feels like home, as this is a language that he has heard since childhood at home. It brings him a feeling of safety and security. "When I am in Lebanon ... where my family is, they speak Western Armenian. ... You know that feels more home to me." (lines, 168-172)

Aram expressed, learning the Armenian language while growing up in London was not easy for him as English was dominantly present. Due to this challenge, he empathises with other Armenians who may not have made the effort of learning and sustaining the Armenian language. He views being an Armenian in London as "an effort".

We are in a country where no one is speaking Armenian, on day to day basis you can't blame people, the effort of being an Armenian is quite big. It will be a lot easier to just drop it and get on with your life, but a lot of us feel so strongly about not doing that. (lines 195-199)

He expressed the importance of learning the Armenian language and making the effort to learn to read and write even in his adult life. He valued the language classes that he attended

and felt that language connected him to his experience of being Armenian. Aram stated that the Armenian language was not something that he could speak with others in his daily life as part of his diaspora acculturation lived existence. Therefore, he lost some competency and fluency in articulating the language.

I speak Western Armenian and I have since a young age, but my prominent language is English ... in the past 3 years ever since I've been doing the lessons i.e. learned the basics of reading, but I've always struggled to articulate with it. (lines 150-158)

Learning the Armenian language was important to Aram, but he did not view this as the most important element of the Armenian identity. He believed that one may identify with the Armenian identity without speaking the language. "Language is a big thing, but it's not the most important thing. [ ] Look at Irish people in America, they have been living there for 100s of years. They don't speak their old language, but they still very much keep their tradition and culture." (lines 183-185)

However, he expressed sadness for losing the Armenian language and viewed that as a "huge historical loss." "Armenian is an ancient language and of ancient people and losing that would be a huge historical loss, and it would be sad for all of us." (Aram, lines 51-52)

Aram also expressed sadness and anger that some people in the society did not know about the Armenian language. He felt his ethnic identity was unseen and he viewed that as a problem. "That makes me sad and angry, ... because it's so important to me, people don't even know that ... my language even exists. So, I think that's a big problem." (lines 216-218)

Nare expressed the importance of the language and the fear of losing it on many occasions. She spoke passionately about the Armenian language especially about the beauty of Western-Armenian language. "Western Armenia is such a beautiful language." (line 127)

She expressed strong emotions and desire when she talked about the language in particular when hearing people articulate it accurately. "I'm super attracted to the language, Western

Armenian, my knees just go weak when I hear Western Armenian, to one who speaks properly.” (lines 78-80)

She stated a strong connection to the language, and was also worried about losing it by using bodily expressions such as “it breaks my heart”. She voiced the feeling of pain thinking about the danger of the younger generation losing the Armenian language, their roots, and their ethnic identity. “It hurts me to say our children are losing their roots and their culture and their language.” (lines 107-108)

The issue of Western-Armenian absolutely breaks my heart. I think it’s a lost cause, people won’t start speaking a language suddenly because it’s a small community, we don’t speak on a day-to-day basis like bigger communities (lines 352-355) ...I want people to speak the language. I want people to understand their Armenianness. (line 103)

It was noted that each participant related to the matter of the Armenian language differently. One felt proud and saw the benefit of supporting the learning of other languages, others invested time to learn reading and writing at an older age, and made the effort to learn an extra dialect with passion; one saw the Armenian language as a vital part of the Armenian identity; one felt sorry that there were no Armenian language classes for adults in London, and five expressed their worry of losing the Armenian language altogether.

### ***The Armenian Sub-cultures***

Due to the nature of the Armenian diaspora and the roots of Armenians’ migration to the UK, it was revealed that every participant was holding onto some cultural values such as their birthplace and some Armenian and English culture.

Aram expressed, “When you are in a diaspora community you have this other culture to you” (lines 149-150). By ‘other’ he means the culture of one’s birthplace. He believed that the many complex cultural layers that one holds reveal the complexity of Armenian history.

He added, “We have such a complex history and culture dynamic between every one of us.” (lines 462-465)

He does not identify himself with *Hayastansis* due to the Russian culture which they had adopted. Aram identifies more with the Middle Eastern culture as his family originates from Eastern Turkey and Lebanon. “One of the biggest things I struggle with Armenia is the whole Russian aspect” (lines 115-119). “I feel very Middle Eastern, or Levantine Armenian ... whenever I go to an Arabic restaurant I kind of feel at home.” (lines 119-121)

He expressed a tension of not being understood by *Hayastansis* culturally, and also faced some conflicts. and tension towards his identity.

When I go to Armenia it’s kind of like I get conflicted, half of me thinks this is nice this is great, this is Armenia, signs are in Armenian, this is cool. But then the other half of me is like well hang on you barely understand these people, they don’t seem to understand me, and I’m not talking linguistically, I’m talking culturally... (lines 112-115)

Aram viewed *Hayastansis* culture as ‘distant ’influenced by Russian culture which he did not identify with. He expressed strong emotions such as rage.

They don’t seem to understand me, where I’m from, and my traditions. This culture seems kind of different, distant. One of the biggest things I struggle with Armenia is the whole Russian aspect, that is for me the biggest thing almost enrages me. (lines 115-119)

Aram’s experience with Armenians living in London was that Armenians from different birthplaces group and separate themselves from others in the community.

I see a lot of *Hayastantsis* and other Armenians that are a lot newer to this community, and I think because of that, the Western Armenians generally kind of stick to themselves, while the Eastern Armenians stick to themselves. (lines 389-391)

Minas described this as ‘Armenian communities’ by stating: "I don't believe there is one Armenian community, there are Armenian communities, its plural." (line 229)

Nare and Aram witnessed some prejudice between Armenians regarding subcultures “for instance, ... older Western Armenians, they're a little bit pretentious and kind of look down upon *Hayastantsis*, and *Hayastantsis* don't really engage with Western Armenians.” (Aram, lines 394-397)

"Eastern Armenians, Western Armenians, Iranian Armenians stick together, Cypriot Armenian stick together, they are all snobby about each other." (Nare, lines 276-277)

Expanding to the complexity of Armenian culture, Aram emphasised that they cannot be ‘simplified’ as Armenians or even Western and Eastern Armenians. Even within each culture, there are sub-cultures as Armenians emerge from different regions. “Armenians come from everywhere, people simplify it nowadays as to Eastern and Western, but it's so much more than that, even in small regions there was literally, every village had its own dialect.” (lines 37-39)

It was vital for Aram to make a clear distinction that Armenians cannot be generalised under one Armenian cultural identity.

Nare experienced subcultures as witnessing different characteristics and behaviour in different subcultural groups and made a comparison with *Hayastantsis*. She described *Hayastantsis* as being ‘stressed all the time.’

Cypriot Armenians, I like them, they're a bit crazy, but they're warm, very funny, they can be super vulgar as well, they're playful, but that playfulness, we don't have that in Armenia, they're a bit dull. Iranian Armenians, I like, they're so gentle, they're so sweet and calm and tame, and I love them we don't have that. Oh, we are stressed all the time. (lines 81-85)

Raffi expressed the existence of subcultures in him by emphasising that he is the representative of three cultures Armenian, Iranian (where he comes from), and English (where he was adopted), and he felt responsible for representing them well:

My duty as an Armenian is I have to be very careful to keep the standard of what a good Armenian can be, and also my loyalty to the country which has adopted me which is England, and the country I have come from. I am a representative in my own little way, not only for myself but for my culture and my country. (lines 57-61)

Ani experienced the difference between subcultures such as the dialect of the languages, food, and perhaps choice of friends. “We have Western and Eastern Armenian, and I speak Eastern because I am Iranian-Armenian. The food that we eat is very much Iranian based, like barbecues, going to Iranian restaurants ... We have Iranian friends.” (lines 239-241)

Armineh being born in Iran spoke about Iranian culture proudly, she identified with the kind, hospitable and helpful character of Iranian culture. “Iranian culture makes me proud, the people ... they are more welcoming, they are very kind, helpful, and they are quite similar to Armenian culture.” (lines 175-176)

Minas viewed the existence of the subculture not only as an issue but as an improvement and growth. With him being Western and his wife Eastern Armenian, they have learned about each other’s cultures, ‘respected’, ‘understood ’them, and created ‘a new strength’ out of it.

I can understand both, she understands both, we are both very flexible when we meet people from either community or either side, and there is no animosity, no disrespect about either, we are just part of one. ... There’s a lot of common things that they share, and they complement each other, or they complete each other and create something new, you know, new strength.” (lines 87-93)

To conclude six participants expressed that they have experienced that Armenians hold different cultural values according to where they come from. They cannot really be generalised



in respect of the cultures that they are holding. This complexity presented itself as prejudice, feelings of not being understood by others, feeling responsible for the positive representation, different characteristics and behaviours, the taste of food, and finally to creating something stronger from combining these cultures.

### ***Higher Education***

The theme of higher education and its importance was revealed in the experience of five participants, and this is an indicator of the value of higher education in the culture. Anahit acknowledged that higher education could give her a better prospect in life. The use of words such as ‘biggest’, ‘most important’, ‘most successful’ indicated the importance and priority of education for her and the family. Regarding success and independence which she valued, she thought that higher education could open possibilities and growth. She also observed that a good education for her and her parents was more important than staying in Armenia even though they missed being with close family members. She stated,

“I don’t have my grandparents in London which is a hard thing to deal with.” (line 153)

She expressed a great loss but her parents had chosen a high standard of education and a brighter future for her and her siblings.

The biggest thing that’s important for my parents, whenever they say we came to this country for me to have a good education, so it's probably the most important thing, for whatever I do, to be the most successful in. In the future I will have better prospects and be able to have things that my parents didn’t have for example a university degree, that’s important. (lines 93-97)

Armineh believed that having educated children was an important endeavour and she would pass on the value of that to her children. “Education is very important for me.” (line 237)

She could see her children trying hard to get into higher education in good universities. She believed that beyond job prospects and intelligence, education was valued because it can enable her children to self-express. It seems ‘obvious’ to her that without a good education one cannot have good work and surroundings.

Obviously, if you don’t have a good education, you don’t have good work and the community which surrounds you. Whatever you have inside you, you express it with your words and everything, so for me, education is very important, also for my children ... I’m just now seeing that they are trying hard to go to the good uni. (lines 241-251)

Not only was higher education important for Armineh but when she was younger, she witnessed that the subject of study was being forced on Armenian children. She considered that the pressure had a negative psychological impact on her friends, and she did not want to treat her children like that. However, she had some expectations, hope, and desires for her children to pursue higher education at a good university and to choose a good degree.

When I was in Tehran and all the parents would force you to become either a doctor, a scientist, high jobs you know. My friends became so stressed to become a doctor, a subject that they don’t like ... I told my daughters that whatever you want and you wish, because in the end when you finish uni, you are working, as long as you are happy and you know that you can have a good degree and go to a good uni and finish. (lines 251-261)

Ani experienced the matter of higher education as feeling grateful and appreciative of her parents for migrating to London, thus having access to higher education, and the support of the UK government. This was because of the opportunities that education offers her, and she noticed that the educational opportunities in the UK were better than in some other countries. She had a strong appreciation for being given such opportunities to build strength and the ability to secure her position in society.

I probably wouldn't have had the opportunities that I'd have here than if I was living even in Iran. Education, university, I think access to these kinds of things in this country is relatively simple, you've got the government backing you if you don't have the means to get to university. (lines 87-92)

Ani learned the importance of education from her parents indicating that 'they've always valued'. This showed a connection between her parent's values and her own. She believed that education opens doors to possibilities. "I think my values with regards to education probably come from my parents because they've always valued, keep learning, and advancing. But I think it's really important to have an education, it opens a lot of doors for people." (lines 97-100)

Similar to Armineh, Ani also acknowledged that most Armenians push their children to undertake certain subjects in their studies, regardless of their passion or ability to impress others in the community. This caused children/young adults to struggle, and she viewed that as a problem. She believed that young Armenians should be free to choose their education and career path freely with no fear of judgement. She stated that some subjects which were not considered academic were not approved subjects from an Armenians' point of view. Her understanding was that her parents pushed her to reach her potential, however, choosing the subjects was left to her.

I worry that a lot of parents in the community are too concerned about what the wider community would think about their children if they didn't go and study you know medicine or science or law or history. I think that's a problem. (lines 115-118) ... I know my parents very much push me to study and pursue a career in something, but that was mainly because I wanted to do this career, I was never told, you have to study science, you have to study English 'or whatever. (lines 104-108)

Minas expressed his view on the importance of education as supporting newcomers to find a suitable educational path for their children. “One of the motivational reasons that I thought about having a centre which could actually address people’s concerns about ... education for their children.” (lines 63-64)

Similar to Armineh, who believed that education could help with self-expression and articulating the inner world, Minas expressed that going to university brought his attention back to his roots and to who he was. University life and education changed his perspective and self-reflection. “I got to university and my all outlook had changed, suddenly my Armenian roots became much more important.” (lines 14-15)

Raffi’s experience of higher education was that it became his main focus all of the time. “University, home, then from school, home, so I never had a chance to expand my social life and friends.” (lines 11-12)

Although he gave priority and importance to higher education he strongly believed this is not for everyone. One must be good at what one is doing.

You can be a good butcher but a very bad professor. I think it’s very difficult to say that everybody should achieve academically. ... but there is no doubt about it that you have to also compete with a very fast world now. And without any good background, it will be hard. (Raffi, lines 85-89)

To conclude, participants expressed that higher education provided a better prospect, changed their outlook on life, and strengthened the ability to self-reflect and self-express. Some Armenian parents liquidised belongings and properties in their countries of origin for their children to access a better education for them in the UK. Some participants expressed that education was important for some Armenians and this can be due to the fear of facing a judgemental community. It appears that even though higher education can be beneficial in a fast-growing world, it may not be necessary for everyone.

### *Armenian Art and Literature*

The artistic part of the culture such as architecture, music, painting, film, literature, food, and dance was present in the transcripts of five participants in one way or another. Hrach valued artistic aspects of Armenian culture such as music and film which connected him with the Armenian identity. He expressed it by using the phrase ‘absolutely adore.’ “... a lot of things came out of that culture which I absolutely adore, such as music, art, films, you know all those individuals who happened to be Armenian. That’s what I associate with.” (lines 104-106)

Anahit enjoyed the Armenian dance and made the effort to attend classes to learn it. “I was part of ... Armenian dance and I attended them weekly ... whenever I had free time it was ... Armenian dance.” (lines 181-186)

Like Hrach, Raffi also enjoyed Armenian music. He spoke proudly about Komitas who was an Armenian musicologist and the founder of the Armenian national school of music. He mentioned that the collection of the works of Komitas had a cultural value for him. Music and songs reflect the culture and mirror history. He might be connecting to his music that inspires him. “The music of Komitas who was collected nearly 70,000 pieces I am told, music, folk, love music from different Armenian villages.” (lines 287-288)

Minas expressed worry about the death of Armenian art outside Armenia. He believed that even one tries to create Armenian art, it is only the Armenian style, it is not ‘really’ Armenian art. He is grieving and experiencing this as a sense of death when the purity of his culture was mixed and diluted by other cultures in the diaspora.

...I came to the conclusion that you cannot really create Armenian art if you are not really living in Armenia, because you are so much influenced by other things ... the only thing that you can do is maybe an Armenian style art. In the same way, if you go to the supermarkets, you buy Greek-style yogurt. (lines 136-141)

Raffi observed that some Armenians have special skills to work on stones. They create the Christian symbol of the cross on stones, which is called Khachkar. The artistic work on Khachkar communicates valuable information about historical events. The motive of sharing is meaningful for him.

... We have what we call Khachkar, which is a big cross made of stone, it's so beautifully done. (line 282) ... To me Armenians are perhaps much more leaning towards being artistic in different fields, that's what that culture means to me. (lines 163-164)

He expressed that Armenian art has been introduced and shared in the Armenian diaspora by some Armenians. "In Iran the first person who opened the school of dance, there were three Armenian ladies. And good painters, I remember that, and even filmmakers, Armenians always took a very keen interest, in theatre." (lines 166-168)

Raffi and Nare mentioned the interwoven nature of Armenian art, culture, and the Church. Raffi viewed the artistic work of Armenians in the Churches which some were preserved in a museum.

"Some Armenians, expressing their art through the church, and books, and paintings in the books which are still in a big museum in Yerevan which has got the biggest collection, so it played a big role in cultural life." (lines 284-286) Nare also admired the architecture of the Armenian Church. "I do like the architecture of the Armenian Church they are very beautiful." (line 305)

Nare passionately spoke about Armenian literature recognised by UNESCO, she emphasised words such as "most incredible" and "ever created." "*Sasuntsi Davit* is Armenian national epic which is one of the most incredible works of literature ever created, UNESCO has classified it as a special treasure of humanity." (lines 357-359)

Nare expressed enthusiasm about the existing Armenian literature and passionately gave people access to reading it; this motivation to share provides meaning and encourages

healing for the loss of literature. “A lot of people say it’s important for non-Armenians to read it but for me, it’s even open a door to Armenians to see this exists.” (lines 130-132)

To conclude, participants expressed their passion for Armenian art such as music, film, dance, architecture, and literature. One participant worried that Armenian art is dying outside Armenia. One participant spoke proudly about Armenian art being introduced in the diaspora. Two participants highlighted the interwoven nature of Armenian art and architecture with the Church and its unique beauty.

### ***Prejudice & Snobbery***

Five participants expressed a critical view of certain Armenian cultural norms. Two of the participants experienced judgments and prejudice from other Armenian subcultures and they were critical of this. Such a perspective creates divisions between Armenians. Nare expressed her experience using phrases such as ‘snobbery’. She critiqued the judgment of some diaspora Armenians who viewed *Hayastansis* as ‘Russianised Soviet people.’ She also witnessed that some *Hayastansis* called diaspora Armenians as ‘not real Armenian.’ Nare expressed it as feeling stuck in between these judgments using the expression of being ‘caught between’.

There is certain intellectual snobbery like you are all Russianised Soviet people, you don’t know what is real Armenian culture, exact symmetrical attitude exists from Armenians in Armenia, we are the real ones, you are all, you became more Turkish, you became more Arabic, you became more Persian, so it is symmetrical, the judgment, and I have been caught between all that. (lines 344-348)

Aram articulated a similar prejudice. As he was born in London, he felt rejected by the *Hayastansis*. “I think while I am very Armenian the fact that I’m brought up here, very British it’s up a few walls.” (lines 419-420)

Raffi experienced that some Armenians can be 'judgmental' and direct in giving their personal opinion without considering the impact on the other. Raffi felt 'uncomfortable' with such unsolicited opinions. The theme of judgement and acceptance emerged on several occasions in Raffi's transcript which indicated that it held value of being accepted by other Armenians and disliked the opinionative attitude.

I felt that most Armenians that I have come across, they tend to be a little more judgmental than perhaps other nations... Armenians, I think they are quite ready to be quite open and say without maybe being a little gentle... That can make me feel a little uncomfortable. (lines 207-214)

Nare expressed a similar experience as Raffi. She said, "I'm sure people have lots of opinions but you don't get much unsolicited opinion like you would in Armenian culture." (lines 9-10)

Hrach experienced some judgments from fellow schoolmates in Armenia getting the message that his clothes 'should' be in a certain way. "At school, I was told that my jeans are brighter than it should be, like bluer, and here it sounds so silly when you say it to people." (lines 36-37)

Ani had a similar experience, she added, "... ripped jeans are a no-go, but to me that's normal, and I would probably choose clothes differently if I was in an Armenian setting than if I was in a non-Armenian setting." (lines 146-147)

Due to the traditional mentality of some Armenians, Minas stopped interacting with them and was pushed away. "I hardly interacted with any Armenians, which I found very conservative very old-fashioned and not welcoming at the time." (lines 11-12) Hrach added, "the reason for my moving was the mentality of people." (lines 12-13)



Hrach and Aram critiqued the forcing of any cultural practice or beliefs on the next generation. Hrach was expressing the importance of accepting individuals for who they were. He was voicing how such important matters can be 'ignored' due to cultural norms.

Why are you forcing your kids to learn a prayer if they might not be associated with it? ... or if your kid is one gender and one day they come and say that they want to be another gender if the kids say that they are not comfortable in their skin, I don't understand why would you ignore that in order to support your cultural values? (lines 219-223)

Aram similarly added, "When people are forced to do whatever ... what's the point? Do you believe it, no, you're just doing it for culture, and that's not right at all?" (lines 349-350) However, it seemed that Raffi 'sensed' that the new generation of Armenians was ready to change towards having less of a judgmental attitude towards others and highlighted that, this change would need a collective effort:

I think one of the specific characteristics of our nation is that we can be quite cruel without wanting to be cruel by saying things in a very open way, but these are the things that probably the new generation ... are a little more flexible in that sense. (lines 234-238)

Hrach added that however difficult it is to change the mentality of a whole society, he expressed a sense of optimism. "It has a long way to go, it's very difficult to change the mentality of the whole nation quickly, it is not going to happen, but I think they are doing a good job." (lines 134-135)

To conclude, some of the participants critiqued the prejudiced nature of the culture which exists within the Armenian subcultures. Two participants critiqued the bluntness of self-expression and opinions being solicited. Two participants experienced judgment on their way of dressing, and one labelled some Armenians as being old-fashioned. Two participants

opposed forcing any cultural norms on children. However, two participants had an optimistic view of the change of such norms.

### **Superordinate Theme 3 – Armenian Community**

Under the superordinate theme of **Armenian Community**, two subordinates that emerged were ‘Feeling connected to the Armenian Community and Friends’ and ‘Challenges Faced in the Community’. Five participants expressed some connections with the community, how they have benefitted from it, and the importance of community for sustaining the culture. However, these engagements were not without challenges, which will be further explored below.

#### ***Feeling Connected to the Armenian Friends and Community***

Anahit experienced the connection with the community as liberation knowing she had a community of similar people. This reduced her feelings of isolation, she articulated this as ‘never feel alone.’ She felt that the London Armenian community provided her with the opportunity to celebrate cultural events which helps sustain them. She appreciated growing within the community and having an opportunity to meet other Armenians. She valued that community brings people together giving her a sense of belonging.

A liberating feeling knowing that there are people similar to you in the community, ... it’s nice to have events, ... and express the fact that you are Armenian and celebrate your Armenian traditions and meet people from the same place as you in a different part of the world... it brings people together so you never feel alone you never feel like an outcast in society because you belong in that group. (lines 174-177)

Minas, Armineh and Nare found meaning in carrying out charitable work for the community. Armineh believed in keeping the community together, cultural events, and fundraisers as vital activities. Fundraising was important to them because they felt it enabled

the Armenian culture to stay alive. All three, Minas, Armineh and Nare dedicated years to supporting the community. Perhaps involvement in the community reduced their sense of isolation.

Being an Armenian living in this country and paying attention to every aspect which the Armenians are doing here like the communities, Armenian school. I was in the Armenian school for 20 years ... I am proud to be Armenian and working in Armenian place and help to raise money towards the community. (Armineh, lines 8-12)

Minas has been closely committed to the community since he was a student. "In the community, there was Armenian student society set up mainly by Armenian Iranian students who had come to study here and we were active for about 10 years." (lines 27-28)

Three of the younger participants felt a strong sense of 'closeness' connection and 'belonging' to British-Armenian friends who had a similar upbringing. Ani expressed a sense of belonging to her group of friends which also connected her to the community.

I'd say my belonging to the Armenian community is mainly through my friends \*pause. I would still go to Armenian events if there was a youth event ... I think it's difficult to not be part of the Armenian community in England ... you are very close to each other. (lines 285-288).

Ani valued being part of an Armenian group, having the opportunity to practice and sustain Armenian culture. However, she expressed that being so close to the community and being involved in its activities 'restricted' her in giving up her time for social activities outside of this. This made it difficult to make new friends outside the community. "Sometimes it felt very restricting because I found it very difficult to make friends outside of that community." (lines 298-299)

Like Ani, Anahit valued the sense of 'belonging' to Armenian friends. Being able to relate to other Armenians living in England and having shared similarities encouraged a

connection, understanding, and feeling of being validated and understood. “I belong in my group of friends who are Armenians who are living in England because we’ve had the same upbringing and the same experiences growing up.” (lines 162-163)

Anahit wished for the community to sustain this so that other children could have similar friendship opportunities and experiences. It was so meaningful and valuable to her that she used the phrases such as ‘wouldn’t change it for the world’ and ‘biggest blessing.’ “I want other kids to have the same experience that I had when I was growing up because I wouldn’t change it for the world, ... having Armenian friends is the biggest blessing. (lines 220-223)

Anahit expressed strong emotions using the word ‘love’, she appreciated her teenage years’ experience with her Armenian friends. “I loved growing up in the Armenian community, and it made me have the friends I have today and I love my friends so much and I don’t think, like my experience as a teenager would not be the same.” (lines 189-191)

Aram expressed his closeness to Armenian friends naming them as ‘extended family’ and making sure they ‘always’ keep the connection.

We hang out like we have a core group of Armenian friends, we always get together every now and then. They are sort of extended family. Every time we have a family gathering usually these people and parents are there. We do a lot together and even if we don’t see each other for a long time, we always make the effort to get together. (lines 265-269)

Armineh added, the community helped her to find friends when she came to London, to meet other Armenians, to feel connected with others, and perhaps help to come out of isolation: “to meet the other Armenian people. I started to make friends.” (line 194) Nare expressed her ‘care’ and ‘love’ towards the community members using the metaphor of the Italian Mafia and described it with humour. She experienced the phenomenon of feeling attached to the community.

It's like Italian Mafia, once you are in you can't get out \*laugh. You end up caring for them, you end up loving them, there will be some an old professor that you fall in love with, you go to his lectures. (lines 280-281)

To conclude, seven participants spoke about their experience within their Armenian friendships and the community in London. One felt the experience of liberation, feeling part of a group, and having the opportunity to celebrate the culture within these friendships. The community gave meaning to four participants allowing them to offer some charitable support. Three of the younger participants felt a strong sense of 'closeness' connection and 'belonging' to British Armenian friends who had a similar upbringing. This opportunity provided some participants to be able to offer love and to be loved.

### ***Challenges Faced in the Armenian Community***

Participants expressed specific challenges that they faced within the Armenian Community. For example, Anahit's hope and wish was that Armenians be more supportive of each other, respect individual differences, and accept the choices that other people make. Furthermore, to help each other to grow. "I hope that we grow more, and people feel more comfortable in the community. I hope that people face less judgment in the community in terms of they can be free to be whoever they want to be." (lines 216-218)

Anahit found it challenging to express herself in the Armenian community and avoided facing judgments. She expressed that due to the community being small and close to each other, one of the challenges is that words spread easily. Therefore, she found it difficult to find her individuality and to separate herself to focus on what she wanted. She felt restricted. She believed that she was under the strong influence of Armenian culture due to the community she belongs to.

As a community, we are quite close together, so whatever you do or say goes around in the community so it can make it quite difficult to be your individual self. And all the

outside, all the influences from the community can make it quite difficult to figure out who you are, by yourself. Because you are often thinking ‘oh what would the community do? (lines 22-25)

Like the experience of Anahit, Minas also did not feel that his growth was supported by the community. He had the personal experience of not being appreciated by the Armenian communities for all his charitable work; he experienced individuals within the communities who worked against him to stop him from achieving his goals to support other Armenians. This created a feeling of betrayal and disappointment with other community members. He did not feel that he was understood, and this made him feel vulnerable.

When I started trying to do things for Armenians ..., I was always told ‘don’t expect any gratitude’, so I said OKAY great I don’t want any gratitude. But I didn’t expect certain individual people to actually actively work against that, which I was trying to achieve. (lines 354-356)

Aram expressed the challenges of community connection due to the different waves of migration that took place. He believed that in the 1970s the community was ‘simpler’ and more united as the majority of the community were Cypriot Armenians. The following waves of Armenian migration changed this dynamic and created with it the separation in the London-Armenian community. This is explained further in the theme of Armenian subcultures.

My mum always tells me things were better in the 1970s, things were simpler, in terms of the Armenian community, everyone knew each other, they’re all from the same place and that was it. Then you had all these other waves of Armenians moving, and that sort of changed the dynamic of the Armenian community here. (lines 403-406)

Aram expressed his experience of sub-groups as being unfamiliar. It appeared that he felt resistance to mixing with other Armenian groups.

For instance, there are Armenian societies in universities ... My friend who he loves and organises everything ... we don't really go anymore because ... there are like, new students straight from *Hayastan* [Armenia] or whatever, and they form their own thing, and I don't know these people. (lines 408-414)

Hrach viewed London Armenian community as being conventional compared to himself and felt a resistance to socialise.

When it comes to the community outside my family it is more like no than yes, purely because like we do have Armenian family friends who even though they lived in the UK for a long time, they still have that stereotypical way of thinking. (lines 42-44)

Nare identified that Armenians either work individually or very disjointedly, not well as a group or collection. Being involved with that was 'hard work' and challenging for her. She described the Armenian community as 'fragmented' and 'chaos' with no patterns.

... How molecules move like in completely without any pattern around each other, in complete chaos, that is how I visualise the Armenian community. It's like a movement which doesn't follow any rules, so it's hard work. (lines 276-278) There is a lot of richness but we don't do collective work together so it's hard work. (line 283)

Ani expressed a lack of understanding about mental health issues in the Armenian community 'here'. She identified the issue of being unfamiliar with the country of origin they came from. She also mentioned that the Armenian community should be more accepting and understanding of mental health issues. Ani is looking into the matter of mental health with empathy and understanding. Her perspective is to accept and involve individuals with different abilities within the community engagements and support them with care and kindness.

... Armenians will be more open to accepting that some people have mental health issues, and some children are born differently, they have learning problems, they struggle, so I think we need to involve these people more and make them feel more

welcome in our community because I don't think we do that at the moment. (lines 410-413)

Ani observed that for individuals coming from Iran or the Middle East mental health was not recognised, so even when they came to London, they bring this mentality with them and are not open-minded about mental health.

I know where my parents grew up in Iran, mental health wasn't recognized as much as it is in this society, you know, depression wasn't regarded as a disease, anxiety wasn't even a term that existed in their kind of culture so many Armenians who have come here have brought those ideas here with them. (lines 415-418)

Ani also critiqued members of the community for not being accepting of the differences of individuals and allowing them to self-express freely. This mentality can result in pushing Armenians away from getting involved with the community.

There are people in the community who think in this way, someone to express themselves in a certain way and I don't think we are very accepting of that in this community.[ ] That could lead to people being pushed away from their community and families ... I think is a problem. (lines 137-140)

Minas and Ani hoped for the Armenian communities to be collaborative and to focus on what is important, which is sustaining the heritage, Armenian culture, and at the same time integrating. Minas felt this may be achieved with better coordination. It was important to him what Armenians had contributed to the world as a group of people and not just individually. "I wish greater cohesion, more communication, more interaction. There should be more coordination, there should be more mutual respect; there should be more effort to strengthen what's important." (lines 321-327)

Ani added, "We don't collaborate you know our scouting group here, we don't collaborate with the British scouts, we always view them as they are different." (lines 190-191)



To conclude, for all participants there were positive and negative perspectives regarding the Armenian community. The three younger participants were appreciative that the community provided an opportunity to find Armenian friends, the four older participants were active in supporting the community and charitable activities. Six participants wished to witness less judgment from the community, and one participant experienced the community as a barrier to finding their individuality. Two participants believed that the Armenian communities needed to be more collaborative.

#### **Superordinate Theme 4 – The Experience of Adaptation**

All participants had different experiences when adapting to life in England. Five participants expressed a feeling of appreciation and gratitude towards England, its offerings, and the English people. Six participants expressed a sense of belonging to England. Five participants expressed an emotional connection to their country of origin. All participants adopted an integration strategy for their settlement in London, however, all of them experienced this integration differently.

##### ***Gratitude***

Five participants expressed their gratitude for the higher quality of education in England which was covered earlier under the theme of ‘Higher Education’. Additionally, five participants expressed their appreciation for some other factors they have experienced from living in England. These positive experiences not only pointed towards the country but also the English people.

Anahit appreciated the ‘multicultural’ nature of London, so she does not feel like an outsider. “London is quite a multicultural place, so I don’t feel like an outcast.” (line 6) Hrach expressed appreciation for the career opportunities and pathways which were readily available in London. He felt this would open doors leading him to a ‘bright future’: “The career opportunities here. You know at least at the time it looked like that they would give me a bright

future.” (line 14) Raffi expressed his gratitude towards the English people which he has heard about their helpfulness from other friends before his coming to England. This gave him confidence not to be ‘afraid’ of the unknown. “Before I came to London, a few of my friends said don’t be afraid because people in England are very helpful and it was very true.” (lines 141-142) Moreover, he emphasised the effort being mutual, the importance of taking personal responsibility to grab the opportunities within the context in which one exists. While London provided him with the opportunities, he saw it was his responsibility to bring these opportunities to life. He also felt responsible to give something back to England which gave him such opportunities. “England is the country that gives you the opportunity and you have to make the most of it and to think all the time not only am I here for myself but I am also here for the country which is giving me the chance.” (lines 99-101).

Minas also spoke about opportunities and freedom given to him in England. “It enabled and gives you the opportunity to do things and try things out.” (line 75) He appreciated the ‘liberal’ society of London, feeling grateful for the ‘freedom’ as well as safety and ‘security’. He did not feel ‘threatened’ as he may have felt living in the Middle East.

One of the positive things of this country is that it’s a liberal society that it does have freedoms which in certain countries you don’t have, whether it’s starting your own business..., it offers you security which you don’t have in the Middle East or certain countries which you feel threatened, \*em you know it’s not a dictatorship, it’s not you know wars. (lines 70-74)

Anahit felt grateful to be allowed to express herself ‘unapologetically’ and felt the freedom to do that. “The fact that you can be unapologetically yourself, I feel like that’s a big part of English community; to be who you are.” (lines 117-118)

Similarly, Nare said, “You don’t have to conform to the rules of your bigger collective culture.” (lines 38-42)

Hrach expressed a feeling of comfort in his self-expression and felt ‘respected’ for who he was. “A positive fascination about this UK culture, in terms of respecting the differences and me straight away feeling more comfortable here.” (lines 31-32)

Another benefit that Minas was thankful for living in London was having a ‘choice’. He appreciated having the choice of how much he would like to engage with his ‘own people’. Whereas in cities that have closer Armenian communities this may not be possible. For example, he chose to work with Armenians, on the other hand, he had the choice of not engaging with them outside working hours. Whereas in Armenia this choice did not exist, as all are Armenians and one only engages with Armenians. He sees that as an advantage living in London. This provides an opportunity regarding engaging with both cultures and at the same time being able to draw boundaries.

Once you live abroad, outside of your country you kind of have this choice as to how much of your you want to engage with people from you know with your own people so for example, I can spend five days a week working with Armenians and at weekends when I can completely shut myself off so I could go to the cinema ... or to do something which is totally un-Armenian so in a way, it’s a voluntary thing that you can move in and out. (lines 102-107)

Raffi felt seen and acknowledged by the English people. His experience of the English people was welcoming and helpful, the educated English individuals understood him and recognised his identity and were supportive. Raffi has found that the Armenian population has stereotypical views of English people and that these stereotypes are usually positive, such as being clever and artistic. Raffi appreciated that view as he identified with these traits and values which form a part of his self-identity.

When I came to Britain I’ve had more or less the same experience. I mean people who have read one or two books, and they knew as soon as I said I am Armenian, they say

\*oh, very clever people, very artistic, very this, very that. So I enjoyed the same reaction in England. (lines 132-135)

Nare spoke about her experience of battling cancer and how her English friends kindly supported her through this traumatic process. She felt grateful for the facility of the National Health Service existing in the UK, she used the word 'love'. She also expressed her gratitude for her English friends. She expressed how her child's school gave her valuable support even without knowing. She also talked about the NHS, and without their support, she would surely have lost her life at a young age.

One of the things which I absolutely love and appreciate about this country is the NHS (lines 220). When I was diagnosed with breast cancer, Alex my son was at school then, a few of the school mothers heard about it, I didn't even know them ... Caroline messaged me saying that I am Ann's mum I didn't even know which one she was, she said can I come and visit you? And she came with supermarket bags, just thinking that being a single mother who's ill, I would need food. (lines 24-30)

Hrach described the English people as 'nice', 'super polite' using the word 'extremely'. "English people are generally nice people most of the time." (line 18) "English people are extremely super polite." (lines 138)

Aram described his English friends as humorous and expressed having fun with them. I hang out with my English friends although we have a completely different engagement ... English boys, there's this whole banter culture of taking the mick of each other. I think it's a very British thing. (lines 297-298)

Nare appreciated the manners of English people and expressed her emotions using the word 'love'. She found that the English did not readily display their views if they were not asked and respected her space. She compared this to Armenians who were more upfront. She

also experienced that the English were as affectionate and warm as Armenians. She received support from English people when she needed it most and she was grateful for that.

Manners, \*oh, I love that, I love manners, I love the British being understated, non-judgmental, reserved, there's gentleness in it, not opinionated, not judgmental, not interfering not imposing, I'm sure people have lots of opinions but you don't get that much-unsolicited opinion as you would in Armenian culture, and I love that. (lines 6-11)

To conclude, five participants expressed their gratitude to England and the English people. One expressed his appreciation for the career opportunities. Three participants expressed the feeling of freedom in England. Three participants spoke about the politeness and helpfulness of the English people. One appreciated the freedom of having a choice. Two expressed appreciations for being seen and helped.

### ***Sense of Belonging***

As discussed in the previous theme, five participants expressed their gratitude to England. Furthermore, they expressed a sense of belonging to their new home and the country which accepted them. Their sense of belonging is strongly influenced by the social attitudes of the English people who made them feel welcome. Hrach said, “my sense of belonging is London, it is UK.” (line 197) Nare added, I belong to London. (line 232) Raffi used the word ‘homeland’ for England feeling that he has gained a lot. He also expressed that this relationship should be a mutual give and take. Expressing responsibility to give back to England. He used ‘really’ and ‘home’, to describe his true feeling of feeling at home in England.

My homeland is in England because I think England has given me a lot, and I have given as much as I was able to. ... The tolerance in England towards foreigners, I think is next to none in the world. They were very welcoming when I came, they really helped me a lot, so I really felt like this is my home. (lines 150-154)

The sense of belonging and feeling at home for Anahit, Aram, and Ani were also felt strongest in England. All three were born and brought up in London, they felt ‘free’ and ‘independent’ and ‘happy’, such feelings made them feel at home. “[ ] Because I didn’t grow up in Armenia, and I personally wouldn’t want to just because of being a free independent woman. That’s the honest truth, so yeah, home is England for me.” (Anahit, lines 166-167)

Aram added, “I belong here; I am happy here.” (line 232)

Ani said, “I do belong here because this is where I’ve grown up, this is where I’ve lived my whole life and I don’t know any different.” (lines, 252-253)

To conclude, all participants commented on the sense of belonging. Two participants who came from Armenia felt a strong sense of belonging to England/London. One of the participants emphasised the importance of contributing towards English which has helped him enormously. And three younger participants born in London felt a natural sense of belonging to London, appreciating their freedom and independence.

### ***Emotional Connection with the Country of Origin***

Five participants, four from the older age group and one from the younger expressed some emotional connection to the country of origin. Armineh, articulated this emotional connection as it ‘makes me happy’ and with \*smile when thinking about it. ‘Good memories ’ makes her happy and reconnects her to Iran. She appears to be divided between the two countries and not living life to the fullest in either country. Although going back to her birthplace brings happiness for her, she cannot fulfil it due to her established life in London with her family.

The only thing that makes me happy is that I go back to my birthplace \*smile. I always have the good memories when I have it from there, and I still have the memory from my mind. (lines 132-134) ... my life is here, my husband is working, my children are

born here, so for me, it's difficult to go back to my birthplace. I can't go back to my birthplace and live there, because of the kids. (lines 44-46)

Nare also expressed a sense of emotional connection to her birthplace using the word 'belong'. "I belong to Yerevan where I was born ... we go outside Yerevan in a small village and in some very instinctive subconscious level you are like \*sigh I belong here." (lines 229-232)

Raffi expressed his positive feelings towards the country of origin using strong expressions such as 'most pleasant', 'extremely good', 'very good', 'high quality', 'lucky' and illustrated with good memories. His \*smile also indicated feeling positive while he was expressing it during the interview. He also expressed that this may not be a shared experience with other Armenian Iranians, highlighting:

I was a lucky one." (line 105) ... I had the most pleasant time in Iran, all the professors, all the lecturers were extremely good, very good, very high quality, and I enjoyed every second of it, I never felt any discrimination, I've got fun memories from my past indeed \*Smile. (lines 103-105)

Minas presented strong emotions regarding leaving his birthplace. A sense of longing for Eastern Turkey where he was born and currently it did not exist due to the Turkish invasion. He is experiencing this as a loss of his belongings. He expressed deep sadness due to this loss feeling a sense of vulnerability about that. The sense of not belonging wherever he goes using the metaphor – "I felt like a fish out of water." (line 195)

It appears that Minas is expressing a sense of alienation expressed in his metaphor.

That hasn't changed, however old I get, I still don't feel at home anywhere... It's partly to do with the fact that at a young age I lost a lot of the things which were important to me at the time. So, I was literally, I don't know how old I was, maybe 7/8 years old []

we left our home in Turkey came to Cyprus. I haven't been back to my house since then. (lines 195-200)

The feeling of connection to the birthplace for Minas is very strong that he found it difficult to make his house a home due to not feeling 'at home'. He used the metaphor of a 'hotel' to illustrate his sense of impermanence. With \*laugh, he was masking his pain. He experienced having a house as a changeable and temporary object. His lived experience had shaken his sense of being grounded due to the loss and the pain attached to it. Belonging to a place has lost meaning for him, he has experienced uncertainty and impermanence all his life.

Wherever I've lived, in whatever house, I have never felt at home ... so in a sense where I've never really decorated my house, I don't have anything hanging up as such, because I don't think it's permanent. I almost treat it like a hotel \*laugh. It's almost like a tool and then you throw it out and buy a new. I can't really remember the last time I felt a sense of belonging anywhere... (lines 203-207)

Aram's mother side of the family are coming from Lebanon, and some still live there. He has expressed this feeling of 'home', where he meets family members, and he hears 'Western Armenian' language.

When I am in Lebanon a lot of my family is in Najjar which is a town with not many Armenians, you said where do I consider home? I think it probably would be Najjar because it is home. That is where my family is. They speak Western Armenian ... you know that feels more home to me than Armenia. (lines 168-171)

To conclude, five participants felt an emotional connection to the country of origin. Three participants spoke about their good memories and a feeling of happiness attached to it. One participant was still grieving the loss of what was important to him, his home, and belongings. The loss resulted in him feeling alienated. He connected with these sad memories with sorrow, and not being able to make anywhere 'home' and feel 'at home.' It was clear from



some experiences that one can have a sense of belonging and ‘home’ to multiple places. The country of origin and their ‘adopted home.’

### *Integration with English Society*

All participants spoke about their experience of integrating into English society. For example, as part of the experience of integration with English society, Raffi expressed that England ‘adopted’ him therefore he felt a responsibility to give back to the English people. Moreover, he feels that his Armenian culture should be shared with the wider society.

To be able to give that culture to the country which has adopted me, to say yes, we can do this, we have done this, and share it ... because a good culture is not only for one country, it’s an international thing. (lines 74-77)

Ani appreciated that due to her integration, she has learned about the English culture and expressed an appreciation for both Armenian and English culture. “I am happy that I grew up in a diaspora kind of country because I now understand two cultures, I appreciate the British culture and western ideas.” (lines 85-86)

Two of the younger participants, Ani and Anahit as part of their integration learned about gender equality. Ani’s perspective was conflicting when she witnessed gender inequality going back to Armenia. Being born in London and going to an English school changed her outlook in terms of intergration with the English society. As a second-generation Armenian immigrant Anahit’s personal view in regards with gender equality highly contradicted the perspective of her family. This difference of view resulted in some challenges with other family members. Even in London, Anahit felt disadvantaged by being female, as she was treated differently compared to the males in her family, who had more freedom regarding conducting relationships outside marriage, staying out late, and their many fashion choices. Although the process of acculturation was stressful and frustrating for Anahit due to this process, she has gained a new perspective and confidence to defend her rights and the courage to say no to her

family. Anahit was treated unequally in her family, feeling that the males had many advantages compared to her. Growing up, she experienced some control over how to dress and not to socialise with non-Armenians, and in adult life, she experienced interference with her relationships. Her \*looking on the floor and avoiding eye contact during the interview can be translated as a feeling of shame for an action which she expressed as a ‘huge mistake’. She faced this challenge as an Armenian teenager in London.

Like just dating someone was made to be such a huge mistake, but I don’t feel like I did anything that bad [looking on the floor] ... because I’m Armenian it was such a bad thing, but literally just dating someone was considered a huge, huge, mistake. That’s the main problem that I’ve experienced as an Armenian ... just being a teenager. (lines 236-239)

Anahit felt her voice was not being heard and not being understood by her family. This was happening due to the generational gap and her being integrated sooner than her family. She used the word ‘frustrating’. The issue is ‘still’ present; however, she has learned how to defend her position.

I’d say I’m definitely at a disadvantage because I have cousins and what they’re allowed to do, I’m still not allowed to do it. (lines 125-126) From a young age, it would be staying out late, having certain friends, going to specific places on their own, having independence, even relationships, date who they want to date. That I would be like, why can they go out till whenever they want but I can’t? (lines 131-132) To have that was so frustrating because we are at the same age level, I’d say maturity-wise I was more mature than them. I still experience it to this day but not as much because I stand my ground and I say no. (lines 136-139)

Ani felt that her mentality is different from her parents, due to her integration experience. She also felt the generational gap, witnessing English parents treating their children

differently. Ani spoke about how she experienced the acculturation and generational gap. For example, she used the word ‘stricter’. She felt restrictions compared to her parents to English parents when she was attending school. She felt English children were allowed to be independent at a younger age and moved out sooner. That led her to socialise more with children from ‘similar’ traditional/cultural backgrounds than her English classmates, feeling she fitted in better where she felt understood. At that age, the experience created some limitations.

Armenian parents I would say are usually a lot stricter and the British let their children be independent sooner, I think, the British usually move out of their parents’ houses much sooner, we don’t do that (lines 11-12). ... the British group of friends that I have are from other cultures, so they’re not British themselves, so it’s easier to understand each other... their parents think similarly and it’s a bit easier. (lines 22-26)

Ani added that as a child, she found it challenging to create friendships with English people due to different family and cultural values. It was challenging for Ani to find a balance for investing time in socialising with Armenian and English friends separately, this created some conflicts with others in her social engagements.

Different values, different traditions, and sometimes I found that especially in the younger years at school I couldn’t separate the two, sometimes it was difficult to create relationships with British people because I had my Armenian culture. (lines 7-9)

Letting me do things later than my friends would, like going out on my own with friends, some of my friends were doing that when they were 11 or 12. I was allowed to do that when I was 14,15. So that’s a big difference I guess. (lines 325-327)

Anahit’s parents came from a small homogeneous village in Armenia and never met anyone from other racial or ethnic backgrounds. This created fear for them when they moved to London. It had an impact on their integration with others as well as Anahit’s integration.

Due to the unfamiliarity they did not allow Anahit to mix with children who were not Armenians. Anahit felt restricted and not being ‘allowed’ to freely engage with his English friends.

When they first came to the UK ... for example, my dad came from a village in Armenia, he had never seen different types of people, all sorts, a different religion, different sexualities, there are so many differences in society and they were all closed-minded ... Just, we have to hang out with Armenians, even in school when I had English friends I wasn’t allowed to go to their house. (lines 39-44)

As part of the integration, Aram questioned himself about how others would see him. London is a cosmopolitan city accommodating people from diverse backgrounds, which made it possible for Aram to blend in. One may view this possibility of blending in as something positive, but it seemed like being identified as an Armenian is important to Aram. He believed that Armenians cannot be easily identified by their physical appearance. He therefore felt invisible and not seen as an Armenian who he identified with. He called individuals who see Armenians as major groups of either Arabs or Indians, ‘ignorant’ to the difference.

I think in London it’s such a diverse community but it’s very easy to blend with anything \*sigh ... I think being an Armenian to an outsider is no different to being anything really. Especially to people who are a little more ignorant to the facts, they probably look at everyone as the same, oh like some Arab or Indian or whatever. So from an outsiders’ point of view probably we are all the same. (lines 2-6)

Ani also felt unseen during her school years and growing up. She felt this was due to ‘many’ people in society not having any knowledge about Armenians. She has experienced that as being a ‘problem.’

Many people don't even know who we are. So I think that's a problem, and it makes me sad when I'm at school and I'm in a non-Armenian setting and speak about my culture, and people don't know anything. (lines 214-217)

Ani experienced not being seen by others and the lack of their knowledge caused her the feeling of 'sadness' and 'anger.' "That makes me sad and angry ... people don't even know that my country exists, or that my language even exists." (lines 218-219)

Anahit expressed her integration into English society with the following example. When she went to Armenia to visit her grandparents and extended family, she felt confused and did not belong to that society. That is when she has realised that she changed due to integrating and does not fully identify with *Hayastansis*. Regardless of their similarities with people from her country of origin, including similarities such as speaking the same language and familiarity with the culture. Anahit constructed a new way of being due to her integration. On one hand, she was part of the family but on the other hand, she did not fully fit in with the mentality and therefore faced some conflicts. When she asked herself, "who am I?", it showed itself as a dissonance in her not fully identifying with Armenians or English. In the UK, she introduced herself as an Armenian with which she partially identifies herself.

"I identify as an Armenian, so if someone asks me 'what are you?' I'm an Armenian. But that's only when I'm in the UK." (Anahit, line 109) When she goes to Armenia, she does not feel like a traditional *Hayastansi* as a result of her integration with English. "When I'm in Armenia, I feel like a tourist. So it's very confusing where I'm like 'who actually am I?" (line 110) She identifies with both Armenian and English calling herself a 'British-Armenian'. She added, "It comes down to I am a British-Armenian." (lines 109-111)

The way Minas experienced integration was to move away from the Armenian community. He separated himself to integrate more with English culture in his teenage years. However, at university, he started to make sense of his roots and he found re-connection again.

He found that because Cyprus and London are multi-cultural societies, his way of being has always been under the influence of different cultures, and therefore he did not see himself as 100% culturally pure Armenian. As a teenager, he ‘embraced’ the English culture, it was more appealing as he felt that Armenian culture was traditional, with elements of oppression.

I felt lots of alienation from my Armenian roots and actually, I embraced my new environment by moving away, culturally away from my Armenian roots in fact in one point I have almost forgotten my Armenian as a young teenager. I thought what was more important was the British culture and pop music and making friends which were English friends ... by the time I got to university my all outlook had changed, suddenly my Armenian roots became much more important. (lines 7-11)

Hrach and Aram were strongly against segregation in societies, that is how they have expressed their integration perspectives. They disapproved of the communities that stayed in their ghettos who did not integrate. They viewed that as a form of racism. Going to school and university in London, specifically in a part of London that was multicultural, they have integrated with others comfortably. For example, Aram said:

I feel very British and I think it is wrong when people only have Armenian friends and stick to their own ghetto. (lines 271-272) ... If you move into this country, it is fine to appreciate and have your own culture, religion or whatever, but you need to integrate with the culture that you are in, otherwise what is the point of being here, and then you get very polarised to the natives of that land, and you get this problem of racism, that’s how racism comes. (lines 281-285)

Hrach added, “I think if you move to a country it’s disrespectful not to integrate and be ignorant to the traditions that these people have and what traditions do these people have.” (lines, 229-230)

Ani observed that some older generation Armenians in London have not fully integrated. She believed the influence of some English values and ideas shaped her perspective that is different from some older generation Armenians.

Our acceptance of other races, I've never seen an issue with collaborating with people with other backgrounds or other races but for many Armenians that's an issue ... you notice that especially the older, ... they don't really mingle with other races, you don't see them inviting people of other backgrounds to their houses, or going to people's houses who are not Armenian. (lines 179-181)

Ani thought Armenians did not have a collaborating approach due to the 'fear' of 'losing' their identity as it is linked to their history. They saw the truth that Armenians may 'push' others away due to their 'fear' of assimilation and loss of culture. Due to integration, she gained some balance on her perspective being different from some older generation Armenians.

I think that comes with the fear of losing their identity. They don't want to let other people in, because our history has always been others attacking us and others trying to bring us down, so now that we've established here a lot of people are very careful to keep their identity, and they push other races out which I don't think is a good thing, but that's just the reality. (lines 182-185)

Nare felt that she had integrated well to call herself British Armenian 'very comfortably'. Even putting the 'British' at the start, she gave more weight to the British, identifying more with British culture. She appreciated that she could adopt parts of both cultures and that she could choose the parts which resonated with her most. Nare felt grateful to be able to choose and saw this as a valuable advantage rather than a loss.

I am British-Armenian very comfortably but I would put British first. (line 179)  
 ...between Britishness and Armenianness, I'm quite clear, there I am, they fit beautifully. (lines 89-90)

... I like London, I like the culture and the values, and I have in a way best of both worlds of having my Armenian values and my British values and I can pick and choose whatever I want. I don't see any conflict. (lines 2-4)

When exploring Nare's experience of integration into English culture more deeply, Nare expressed feeling more English than Armenian especially when it came to politics and individuals with who she socialised. It seemed that the social groups that she was with, impacted her sense of self and who she wanted to be.

I vote labour, these are the things I do, these are the places I go, which puts you in a certain box. I am very well aware that I fit into this champagne socialist type of left-liberal box ... I don't know, I am sitting on a pavement in Bristol drinking beer with my football hooligan friends, I am a completely different person there. (lines 261-268)

Describing her integration, Nare expressed the feeling of 'love'. She remembered her English friend evoking the feeling of fun and happiness to her, and she \*laughed.

I love the culture. I watch BBC, I love all that. \*laugh I have this very racist British friend in Oxford, really chavvy, racist, drinking girl, chavvy stereotype, but a good-hearted girl, ... one day she was ranting, Brexit and foreigners, this and that and I am like you know I am a foreigner, she is like naaa you are one of us, you watch EastEnders \*laugh. (lines 190-195)

Not only Nare views herself as integrated with English culture but also her English friends confirmed that. She was strongly supportive of encouraging Armenian integration with others. She saw mix-marriages 'diluting' Armenian genes as being a positive thing. She believed it would be beneficial, even physically advantageous for future generations. From



Nare's perspective, one of the benefits of mixed marriages was that it would encourage physical health in some Armenians.

In Armenia, we stayed in this very small homogenous country, we didn't have any minorities, Armenians marry Armenians traditionally, we became a very imbrued, so this connection with diaspora allows us to refresh our blood ... this Mediterranean fever periodic disease Armenians suffer and it's a genetic illness which is passed on to next generation only if they have two defective genes, \*sigh we need to dilute our genes and diaspora can be our salvation. (lines 167-175)

Ani rejected the traditional perspective of only being in a relationship with an Armenian and would not ask that of her children. She gained this perspective growing up in London due to integration with others. This is the indication of acculturation and the impact that English society had on her way of thinking.

I personally wouldn't raise my children like that because I think it's wrong to tell a child you have to find someone from this specific race because there are so many people out there, there 9 billion people in the world, and Armenian form a tiny community in that. (lines 336-339)

Nare felt disconnected from newcomer Armenians who had strong traditional perspectives, which indicated her integration within English culture. She experienced a sense of isolation, 'alienation' from people with whom she shared heritage but did not share an understanding; however, she created a new circle of English friends.

I went to an Armenian gathering recently with Armenian girls from Armenia, my age, doing pretty much similar jobs, having pretty similar backgrounds ... but they are relatively new to London and I felt so alienated. (lines 184-186)

Culturally Aram felt fully integrated. He felt 100% English and 100% Armenian. He seemed clear about who he is, which cultures he identifies with and he is comfortable with them.

My upbringing was very integrated anyway so it's not like a lot of people stick to their ghetto or whatever, but my family was always like integrated, be both, Armenian as much as you can, but also British as much as you can, I think Charles Aznavour once said, I am 100% French and 100% Armenian, that's kind of the way I would view it as well, I am very much British in culture but I am also very much Armenian. (lines 10-14).

Part of the integration was the generational gap that appeared in the experience of Armineh. It seemed like Armineh's children integrated faster into the English society due to being born in England/London. Armineh seemed to be struggling with integration and accepting the current societal norms where her children are growing up and interacting with others. She compared it to her teenage years in Iran where daily life and the social norms were very different. Her parenting style was controlling, and she was battling psychologically with the loss of 'control' over her teenagers growing up in London.

Here the teenagers become an adult, they think that they are adults in this country. I was 18 years old I was still thinking like I'm a child. In my mum's mind, I was still a child. 18 years old in this country, when they are 13 years old, when they become teenagers, that's it, you can't control them. (lines 214-218)

Armineh experienced integration with some trepidation. She expressed struggling with multi-cultural London society and was open to possibilities of her children finding non-Armenian partners for marriage. This creates stress for her and is anxiety-provoking. It seems that the lack of control Armineh has over her children's freedom to choose a partner is upsetting

for her. This puts her in a vulnerable position. She is envious of other countries where this parental control is acceptable and possible.

It's difficult, especially living in a multicultural country, it's very hard to tell your children to marry someone that you want to choose because now you can't choose the guy who married your children, but in other countries still they're doing it, like other countries they are choosing their partner for their daughter and their sons. (lines 419-422)

Similarly, from the younger participants, Ani expressed some fear of full assimilation and losing the Armenian identity. She emphasized the importance of keeping the balance between Armenian and English cultures, as she can identify with both cultures. She experienced a parallel life, engagement with Armenians, practicing the Armenian values and connection with the wider English society.

I think, growing up trying to make sure that I don't separate myself from kind of people at school because I have this Armenian background, but at the same time trying not to lean too much towards the British way of living because then I would forget my Armenian side. (lines 1-3)

Armineh was struggling with change and acculturation having traditional views of specific ways to raise her children. She believed that children in London became independent earlier and picked up certain attitudes and ways of being from the wider society which was against Armineh's cultural values. One of her life challenges was to prevent acculturation for her children. She noticed big differences between her own experiences as a teenager, and the experiences of today's teenagers in London, highlighting a generational gap.

First thing that they soon wanted to become adults, like, makeup or going out, like partying, and some children start drinking when they're like 13 years old... underage,

smoking, drinking, this is not acceptable for me. When I was in Tehran, I was 18 years old and I still didn't drink any alcohol. (lines 224-230)

Hrach faced some challenges concerning the English language barrier as part of his integration experience. The frustration was innate out of not knowing English and his feeling of annoyance for those who did not empathise with him language-wise when he first moved here. This barrier made it difficult for him to communicate and connect with others at the time. Not speaking the English language was expressed as 'not easy' and 'still struggle'. He had studied the English language in Armenia and he had the impression that he would not have an issue with communication. He was not aware of the reality and had unrealistic expectations of himself and others.

When you move here you realise that it's not as easy as it might feel like. The challenge was to adapt. To learn the language. (lines 15-16) In Armenia, I was told that my English was okay and I thought I am going to adapt quickly but to be fair, I am still struggling to this day. (lines 25-26)

As part of his integration, Hrach faced some feelings of confusion with the matter of Brexit. On one hand, he faced a welcoming attitude of English people and witnessed their mannerisms. On the other hand, the matter of Brexit confused him. He used some strong keywords to describe his feelings, such as 'disappointed' and 'disrespected'.

I was very disappointed with the Brexit results. That was very disrespectful and ignorant that I wasn't expecting from English people, from British people. I am very disappointed because when we moved here the first year it was very nice. In the beginning that cultural shock for me, the shock was, how these people are extremely nice people? then the Brexit happened and I had this mixture of emotions \*smirk. (lines 149-154)

While integrating as a child, Anahit was impacted as her parents had an English language barrier. She felt disadvantaged compared to non-immigrant children. She had to complete her homework independently, without any parental help, her parents could not help her because of the language barrier, and her parents had to work harder to provide her with basic resources, due to the language barrier. She had to interpret for her parents and read emails and letters, which as a child she found frustrating, and that feeling created conflicts and she would ask herself how other children did not have similar responsibilities. Anahit drew attention to how her experience differs from her parents. She felt abler to understand the English system than they did, and her parents' lack of understanding has given her challenges that her English peers did not have. This gave her a closer connection with peers who were also from immigrant parents.

I'd say it's been hard being a second-generation because obviously, my parents couldn't speak the language properly. (line 65) ... It was quite frustrating every time my parents would ask me 'oh, come tell me how to write this email'. I know that my other friends from school weren't doing things like that and I would tell them stories and they would be like 'why do you have to do that?' I think that's why I got along quite well with other immigrants in my school because they understood what it was like to be a child of an immigrant. (lines 84-89)

Hrach recognised that his difference was appreciated by the English society, whereas Armenian society in Armenia always required people to be the same. He said,

... Back in Armenia people have certain criteria in order to fit in, whereas here, sometimes it feels like exactly the opposite. The more interesting you are ... the more different you are, the better you fit in this society. (lines 33-35)

Although Hrach felt that the English society respected the differences but Anahit did not feel that her female friends experienced this. She has a fair complexion and a European

look, she did not experience this, but she has witnessed Armenian friends distress because their features looked different; for example, being hairier compared to some Europeans. Some Armenian girls as children may feel different or ashamed, from a social perspective that considers hairiness to be unfeminine. She called that an ‘Armenian problem.’

“I’m lucky because I look kind of European, but in terms of being hairier than the other kids which is an Armenian problem.” (lines 77-78)

To conclude, all participants expressed their experience of integration with the English society differently. One expressed the responsibility of mutual gain, therefore giving back to society. Two younger women found their voice in relation to gender equality. Two younger women experienced a strict parenting style which made them feel different within the English environment. This fact encouraged them to mix more with other ethnic groups of a younger age, rather than with the English. One felt not being seen within the context of the multicultural London society. One felt confused in Armenia due to her integration experience. One felt that the English society was more appealing during his teenage years viewing Armenians as more traditional. One felt Armenian’s resistance towards integration can be related to their history and fear of assimilation. One felt more sense of belonging to the English society rather than Armenian, feeling fully integrated with the English society. One felt a strong generational gap, as she was struggling seeing her children’s fast integration into the English society. One felt the language barrier limited him as he integrated into English society when he was new to England.

## Discussion

By using the IPA method, I analysed the data and explored the in-depth subjective lived experience of eight participants which was presented in the Findings Chapter above, highlighting how participants made sense of their life journeys in the context of living in London. Unique narratives were presented in the participants' testimonies.

This chapter critically evaluates the research findings from the previous chapter and discusses them in relation to existing academic literature presented in the literature review chapter. The strengths and limitations of this study will also be discussed, and some final reflections about the relevance of this research are presented.

A recurring theme throughout the findings was the existential paradox where participants' experienced in relation to numerous life events and experiences. It has therefore been considered necessary to use an empirically supported existential model as one lens of exploration as this will add depth to the investigation of the research question concerning how life was experienced by Armenians who live in London. This model will now be presented below and is further illuminated in tables.

van Deurzen (1998, 2014) introduced a model called Paradoxes of Human Existence. In Table 5.1 van Deurzen and Adams (2013) presented the paradoxes of human existence and displays in which dimension of existence individuals may experience challenges, gains, or loss, when experiencing a specific emotion, thoughts, beliefs, or values. This table can then further be expanded to (4 x 4) 16 paradoxes as shown in Table 5.2 below.

In Table 5.2 van Deurzen (2014) outlines some examples of paradoxes. For example, Life/Death presents two sides of polarities, 'Life' being one side, and 'Death' the other, one is experiencing paradoxes moving between these two polarities. This model of paradoxes expands on the popular 'Four Worlds Model' of 'Dimensions of Existence' which was

introduced by Binswanger (1963), before being popularised by van Deurzen in modern psychological literature (van Deurzen, 2014). These models were also understood in the context of Structural Existential Analysis which van Deurzen (2014) developed first as a clinical method, then as a research method of investigation. The scope of the current paper does not offer the space to introduce these approaches in great detail, however, it will be elaborated with examples of experiences throughout this chapter in order to bring clarity on how individuals experienced different phenomena and the paradoxes of living.

**Table 5.1**

*Paradoxes of human existence*

	Challenge	Gain	Loss
<b>Physical Dimension</b>	Death & pain	Life to the full	Unlived life or constant fear
<b>Social Dimension</b>	Loneliness & rejection	Understand & be understood	Bullying or being bullied
<b>Personal Dimension</b>	Weakness & failure	Strength & stamina	Narcissism or self-destruction
<b>Spiritual Dimension</b>	Meaninglessness & futility	Finding ethics to live by	Fanaticism or apathy

*Note. From “Love and its Shadows”*: SEA25th anniversary conference, by van Deurzen, E &

Adams, M. (2013)



**Table 5.2***Paradoxes of human existence*

	<i>Umwelt</i> <b>Physical</b>	<i>Mitwelt</i> <b>Social</b>	<i>Eigenwelt</i> <b>Personal</b>	<i>Uberwelt</i> <b>Spiritual</b>
<b>Physical</b>	Nature: Life/Death	Things: Pleasure/Pain	Body: Health/Illness	Cosmos: Harmony/Chaos
<b>Social</b>	Society: Love/Hate	Others: Dominance/ Submission	Ego: Acceptance/ Rejection	Culture: Belonging/ Isolation
<b>Personal</b>	Personal: Identity/Freedom	Me: Perfection/ Imperfection	Self: Integrity/ Disintegration	Consciousness: Confidence/ Confusion
<b>Spiritual</b>	Infinite: Good/Evil	Ideas: Truth/Untruth	Soul: Meaning/Futility	Conscience: Right/Wrong

*Note. Structural Existential Analysis (SEA): A phenomenological method for therapeutic work, by van Deurzen, E. 2014.*

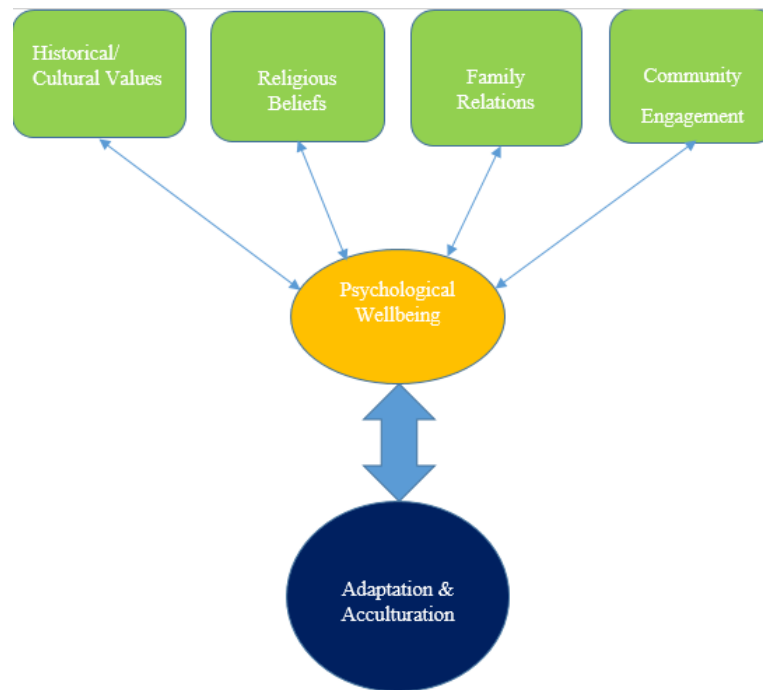
The following sections will explore and discuss the findings in detail. Yet first I will discuss some overall findings that are important to highlight.

Above all, the anxiety of future safety and security due to the past lived experiences impacted on the individuals' way of being today. For example, Minas who expressed treating his house like a hotel, viewing it temporarily. The sense of 'home' has been shattered for him and lost meaning. He is facing paradoxes under spiritual and personal dimensions (*Soul: Meaning/Futility*) (see Table 5.2). Following the aim of this study which is to explore how life is experienced by the Armenians who are living in London, literature review and findings indicated the complexity of an Armenian's life. For example, historical events, identity reconstruction, Armenian cultural and sub-cultures, family relations, community associations

impact participants' psychological/personal wellbeing and their openness or resistance to adaptation and settlement in the British society. The process of adaptation and acculturation, in turn, has an impact on one's psychological wellbeing (see Figure 11).

**Figure 11**

*Interwoven nature of revealed phenomena*



All participants do not present a unified definition of their Armenian identity and it was revealed that their unique perspectives and subjective meanings differed. When discussing the lived experience of migration in her recent book, existential psychologist van Deurzen (2021) stated, 61% of migrants faced identity issues due to different post-migration challenges. Furthermore, mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, and self-esteem were found to be prevalent.

It can also be beneficial to consider more historical research into migration experiences. For example, Talai (1989) stated, Armenians living in London demonstrated clearly that ethnic identity is not simply 'a given', but instead it is 'reconstructed'. All participants in the current study supported this idea and expressed that ethnic/cultural identity

is fluid in nature and is changing with integration. Heidegger (1927/2010) said, in loss of 'home' one feels 'homeless' and is forced to find the self again and create a new familiarity, again supported in the themes which emerged in the current study.

When considering what causes the above experiences, several answers emerged in the study which were supported by published literature. For example, in consideration of the role on language, Jendian (2008) found that some Armenian Americans although not speaking their mother language, and not practising their culture, are still see themselves as Armenian, feel like and refer to themselves as an Armenian. Bakalian (1993/2017) elaborates on this sense of 'being Armenian' and added that one must feel Armenian, otherwise the given identity is meaningless.

When reflecting on the transferability of the findings, although this study selected Armenian individuals who live in London (due to my personal experience), the location of the NSPC who were overseeing this research, and to provide a homogenous sample, the findings might be applicable within the context of other ethnic/cultural groups living in London or even other places in the world. For example, there were correlations between how these findings may be applicable to other underrepresented groups by way of invisibility, insecurity, fear, sadness, and rejection by society due to past and present experiences.

I will now present the in-depths investigation of the findings in several sub-headings for clarity and ease of reading. While these phenomenas are presented separately, it is important to acknowledge that each experience occurs woven within each participant.

### **The Armenian Apostolic Church**

The Armenian's relationship with religion is an intricate part of Armenian history and culture as evidenced by existing literature and the participants in this study. In seven interviews either positive or negative there was an association with this about their lived experiences. All seven participants view the Armenian Church interwoven with the culture

and as a heritage it is part of the ethnic identity and needs to be sustained. None of them felt any deep affiliation to the Armenian Church for spiritual reasons.

For some participants, annual gatherings such as Christmas, Easter, and the summer street festival are valued as they keep a connection with their Armenian identity and culture. This may avoid the challenge of possible loneliness that migrant individuals have been found to often face and reduce their experience of isolation.

Allport (1950) introduced intrinsic religious (IR) and extrinsic religious (ER) orientations. He stated that an intrinsically oriented person considers religion as an ultimate end. Religion becomes the master motive of their lives, and they adopt personality traits such as humbleness, compassion, and kindness. They internalise these characteristics; their other needs, goals, and meanings are organised around these traits. In contrast, an extrinsically oriented individual approaches religion as a tool, which helps one to fulfil self-centred motives such as safety or sociability. Therefore, religion is not reflected on and not deeply integrated into their lives and being. Allport (1950) added, extrinsically religious motivations sometimes present due to force exerted by others or the threat of punishment. An adolescent who is expected to go to church by their parents does not identify with these parental expectations to attend church. The findings of this study suggested that three of the younger participants attended church due to parental and relatives' expectations. Other participants viewed the existence of the church as having some political agenda behind it.

Activities such as attending church can also be pressured from within, by internal demands of feelings of guilt, shame, or contingent self-worth. A child with insecurities, inferiority, and distrust is likely to use religion as a means of psychological security (extrinsic religious orientation). In contrast, a child with basic trust and security at home is more likely to develop an 'intrinsic religious orientation'. The differences between the orientations can be differentiated using means-ends analysis as shown in Table 5.3 (Allport, 1950 as cited in

Tiliopoulos et al., 2007). The intrinsic-means orientation is highly embedded in one's life, and has more of a spiritual nature, while the extrinsic-means is a lightly held religiosity and deals with the need for safety and comfort. The 'extrinsic religious orientation' that Allport is evidenced is in the experiences described by seven participants in some way, indicating that they may were using religion to achieve a sense of psychological security.

**Table 5.3**

*Allport's religious orientations as means and ends of significance*

	<i>Intrinsic Religious orientation</i>	<i>Extrinsic Religious orientation</i>
Means	Highly embedded in life Guided for living Convincing	Peripheral Lightly held Passively accepted Sporadic
Ends	Spiritual Unification Compassion Unselfish	Safety Comfort Status Sociability Self-justification Self-gain at other's expense

*Note.* From *ScienceDirect*, volume 42, 1609–1620 (adapted from Pargament 1997, P.63a) by Tiliopoulos, N. et. al. 2007.

### ***Critiques***

In contrast to the positive aspect of the Armenian Church as something which sustains the culture and provides a social venue to bring the community together, four participants had some contradictory views of the church. For example, two participants expressed that the teachings are traditional and not in line with Christian teachings which are liberating. Another participant believed that the church was trying to present Armenians as a religious

minority which they are not. One of the participants strongly faced the challenge of rejection under the social dimension. He said, “the discrimination of people like me who don’t believe in God.” Two participants believed that teachings of church take the freedom of critical thinking and choice from Armenian children: “We as kids have forced upon us a tradition which we might not associate with, religious and culturally.” This statement is in line with Allport’s (1950) theory which said if religion is forced on individuals, it is more likely that they adopt the ‘extrinsic religious strategy’ and not be deeply connected to religion. Pattie (1997) in London, Bakalian (1993/2017) in New York, expressed their opinion on the Armenian Church in Diaspora. Pattie emphasised the importance of the Armenian Apostolic Church for the Armenian community in London by saying that Armenians in London accept the Armenian Church as it is, whereas the participants of this study expressed otherwise. Participants who critiqued the teachings did not accept the church as it is. One of the participants of Bakalian’s (2017, p. 103) study said, “I would like to rediscover my Armenian heritage but as an agnostic, joining a church is out, though I would not mind attending functions at a church.” This view of church merely as a cultural or social venue resonates with those of the participants in London (in my study).

### **The Armenian Genocide**

All participants in this study had their lived experiences impacted by the Armenian Genocide in some way. Six participants related to this event (three from a younger age range and three older). Five direct descent of genocide survivors expressed hearing sad and horrifying stories from their grandparents. Kalayjian et. al. (1996), found that three out of four Armenian survivors interviewed asserted that they did not talk to anyone about their experiences of the Genocide. This general lack of communication suggests their traumas were not resolved (Kalayjian et al., 1996). Mate (2021) said, if we do not heal from the trauma, we will pass it to the next generation. The most psychologically significant event in

Armenian history was the Armenian Genocide (Dagirmanjian, 2005). Douglas (1992) in his powerful quote (see page 43 of this thesis) tried to voice the emotional pain, fear, and sadness of some Armenians who went through the horrifying event of the Armenian Genocide. Some Armenians continue to experience trauma and transgenerational trauma caused by the Armenian Genocide (Bakalian, 1993; Der Sarkissian, A., & Sharkey, J.D., 2021; Douglas, 1992; Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Karenian et al., 2010; Kira, 2001; Mangassarian, 2016).

One participant said ‘it burns me’ about leaving his toys because of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the destruction of his home. The psychological impact in early childhood is the disturbance of identity formation and healthy autonomy (Kira, 2001). When Minas came to London, he felt that he had lost his identity ‘like a fish out of water.’ He distanced himself and re-connected again, as van Deurzen (2021) stated, migrants reinvent a new existence, they start searching for new connections or repair disconnections. That is what ‘the connections’ are about.

The other participant experienced the matter of the Armenian Genocide as a feeling of ‘unjust’. He said, “the world is unjust and evil if they push the matter under the carpet.” Three participants expressed that what happened was not just a history, it could be repeated if perpetrators were not made accountable. They highlighted the killings of Armenians in Syria and Azerbaijan by current Turkish Governments.

### ***Collective behaviour***

Perhaps we need to move away from saying “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” (Perry & Winfrey, 2021, p. 92). One participant said, “*Hayastansis* are always stressed.” This can be a collective learned behaviour as the result of the difficult life that *Hayastansis* experienced, constantly being in a fight or flight position. In people who have experienced chronic stress, the prefrontal cortex remains in a state of hypervigilance (Mate, 2019; Perry & Winfrey, 2021; Rothschild, 2000; van der Kolk, 2014). Mate (2021)

added people become addicted to their own stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. Such fear for survival creates paradoxes in the physical and personal dimensions (van Deurzen, 2014). A child who was raised in a stressful environment could become reactive when facing a similarly stressful situation (Mate, 2021; Wolynn, 2016). Two older participants of this study who are descendants of Genocide survivors spoke about constantly worrying about their children; one felt sad to see the struggle of his parents due to the settlement in London. One can argue that overprotectiveness and worry for children or parents is common in all humans and it is not specific to Genocide survivors, however, the degree of worries may vary. This experience continues to impact Armenians across the world as 'transgenerational trauma' where someone who never experienced the trauma directly inherits it from their ancestors (Bakalian, 1993; Kira, 2001; Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002; Karenian et al., 2010; Mangassarian, 2016). However, Vollhardt and Bilewicz's (2013) study on descendants of genocide survivors concluded a lack of evidence for this type of transmission. Moreover, Youssef et al (2018) stated, it requires further research.

Mate (2021) noted that trauma including addiction, depression, and anxiety runs in the families transgenerationally because, for example, a traumatised parent can consistently yell at children, and children need to develop a soothing mechanism. Therefore, they may turn to either addictive substances or behaviour addictions such as shopping, gambling, or overworking. The question is, have these traumas and addictions passed genetically, or did individuals develop them by recreating similar conditions that they grew up in it? Mate (2021) added, it is 'predisposition,' but predisposition is not the same as predetermination.

Nare, one of the participants, felt the unexplained fatigue pain as other Armenian's pain exactly as Rothschild (2000, p. 56) stated, "emotions, though interpreted and named by the mind, are integrally an experience of the body." Nare spoke about the traumatic Genocide stories that she had heard from her grandparent's experience 'since birth.' The pain



experienced by the body may be due to these triggers. She also shared that she suffered and survived breast cancer. Mate (2019) presented the relation of transgenerational trauma and cancer.

Mate (2019) in his book *When the Body Says No* wrote numerous case studies from her medical practice relating physical pains as symptoms of underlying trauma and experience of stressful life. Mate (2019) presented a quantitative study from 1990 of women patients conducted at the gastroenterology clinic of the North Carolina School of Medicine, 44% of the women reported sexual and/or physical abuse. Women with a history of abuse presented with pelvic pain, backaches, headaches, and fatigue, as well as lifetime surgery. Similarly, Best et. al. (2020) undertook a qualitative - IPA study on the subjective experiences of six women participants who experienced violence from their intimate partners and found that such traumatic experiences could have a long-term impact on physical pain and psychological distress. One of the main themes revealed in this study was 'physical pain as a symptom of violence'. This pain reflects the somatic (physical) responses that these women identified (see Mate, 2019; 2021 for more examples such as developed cancer, asthma, and undiagnosed abdominal pain because of unhealed traumatic experiences). These studies suggested the importance for practitioners to ask their clients, including Armenians, questions about traumatic history when they have unexplained physical pain that is not attributable to an organic physical disorder (Best et al., 2020; Mate, 2019; 2021). These traumatic memories might be the triggers that cause them to feel helpless and/or have physical responses. The body remembers and responds to traumatic memories interpreted by the mind (Perry & Winfrey, 2021; Rothschild, 2000).

### ***Resilience***

Resilience was seen in the experiences of six participants who spoke about connections with the Armenian Genocide. Perry and Winfrey (2021) added, moderate,

predictable, and controllable activation of our stress-response system leads to a more flexible, stronger, stress-response ability that lets a person demonstrate resilience in the face of more extreme stressors. Although many studies confirmed the resilience by survivors of trauma and genocide (Beardslee & Podorefsky, 1988; Helmreich, 1992; Kalayjian & Shahinian, 1998; Lev-Wiesel & Amir, 2003; Powell et al., 2003; Rousseau et al., 2003), but Der Sarkissian and Sharkey (2021) stated, some argue that such researchers are trivializing the suffering of the survivors.

### ***Meaning making***

All eight participants created different meanings. There are ways to overcome the intense pain of trauma with meaning-making (Adams, 2019; Cassel & Suedfeld, 2006; Dekel et al., 2013; Frankl, 1946; Sagi et al., 2002; Sigal, 1998; van Deurzen, 2021; Vollhardt & Bilewicz, 2013; Yalom & Lieberman, 1991). Three young participants engaged with higher education, one with reading about history and politics and creating forums and blogs. Van Deurzen (2009b) supported such activities as a way of overcoming a traumatic experience. Three out of four older participants engaged in community fundraising and activities. Of the four older participants, one worked as a medical practitioner saving lives, one with music making, one translating literature, and one raising and supporting three children at university. All participants were engaged with the world, making meaning, and doing meaningful work to overcome the trauma they experienced. However, meaning is constantly changeable depending on life situations and the new events that happen in life (Vos, 2018; van Deurzen, 2021).

One participant's great grandfather who openly talked about his traumatic experience died in peace at the age of 96, showing that perhaps validation is one way of overcoming the trauma (van Deurzen, 2009b). Mate (2021) said half of traumatised individuals do not have an awareness about their trauma and its impact on their selves and being. Another

participant's parents had a difficult time witnessing the invasion of Cyprus by the Turkish government but had the resilience to rebuild their lives; this experience did not break them but instead made them resilient and embracing stronger 'possibilities' for humans (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Experiencing life difficulties is not entirely negative from an existential point of view, as it can lead to Post Traumatic Growth. The individuals become open to possibilities and discover different aspects of themselves (Wharne, 2019). Mate (2021) said, trauma can bring wisdom and it can teach us a lot in life.

This claim was presented in the experience of all participants trying to make meaning in their daily lives. Trauma is part of life and so is recovery from trauma (Heidegger, 1927/2010). One needs to bear in mind that 'loss of home' may be shared by all migrants but not 'trauma' (Papadopoulos, 2002). There is an assumption that certain external events are traumatic to all people (Papadopoulos, 2018); each person perceives, digests, and responds to external situations such as traumatic events in a highly unique and individual way.

Three out of six participants who related to the Armenian Genocide strongly believed in reconciliation, another three did not express any views. Two participants expressed a feeling of disappointment for The Armenian Genocide not being acknowledged. The nature of trauma is bad but what is worse is when others do not acknowledge its effect (Adams, 2019). Herman (2015) argued that it is easier for a perpetrator to forget about an inhuman act than for the victims.

### **Loss of Armenian Heritage and Culture**

All participants had a unique core Armenian culture different from the English. Six participants expressed a connection with Armenian history and heritage, the importance of sustaining it, and expressed the value of learning about the culture. While different participants had different experiences of Armenian history and what their heritage meant to them, there was a noticeable theme that each felt it was being lost. The feeling of the loss of

heritage and constant fear created paradoxes in the lived experience of some participants. Armenian history may be the past but cannot be separated from the present. The history of Armenians has an enormous impact on their way of being in the present and determining parts of their future.

### ***The Loss of heritage***

The loss of heritage that participants expressed in this study appeared with a feeling of grief, loss, and fear of non-existence. Three participants believed that due to the historical losses, the duty of recreation of culture becomes more important for some Armenians. Seven of them expressed that it is important for Armenians to know about their history and sustain it as a large part of their ethnic identity. As we looked at the participants' experiences more deeply, they shared how Armenian history and heritage influenced their lives, why it is important, and how they suggest it should be preserved. For example, Aram expressed it as "I feel like if it wasn't for the fact that my culture was isolated and dying, I probably wouldn't care." This represents conflict, fear of death of culture and identity, fighting to keep the heritage and culture alive and to prevent a historical global loss (*Life/Death*). For Minas, the pain of the 'death of culture' was so strong that he expressed it as a physical sensation 'that burns me' when talking about the Turkish invasion of the Armenian lands in Eastern Turkey and later during the invasion of Cyprus which destroyed some of the Armenian cultures.

### ***Reconstructing***

Three participants thought that lost history, heritage, art, and literature need to be reconstructed and shared with others and this requires hard work. For example, one participant said, "we have to try to work much harder to repair what we have lost." Another participant added "a lot of it was censored in Soviet time in Armenia so we have lost a lot. We need to try to bring it back." What these three participants expressed resonates with the

writing of Douglas (1992) who said, “their books, churches, composed pieces of music were burnt to destroy this nation, their culture, and religion.” (p. 3)

In existential philosophy, reconstructing is related to ‘meaning-making’ or ‘creating meaning’ (Frankl, 1984/2006; Vos, 2018). Creating meaning is ‘gain’ under the social and spiritual dimensions of existence. For five participants, the meaning-making was their involvement in the community whether to support others or fundraise. For two participants meaning making was raising children who identify with Armenian identity, sustaining, and passing the culture on to the next generation. Similar to Frankl’s (1984/2006) idea of meaning-making which says meaning can be discovered under all circumstances, even in the most miserable experiences of loss and tragedy. Van Deurzen (2009b) added one may commit life to the causes which give a sense of overcoming the traumatic experience. This was seen in the charitable commitment of five participants to the cause of reconstructing and sustaining what has been lost. Furthermore, reconstructing meaningful objects or heritage resonates with van Deurzen’s (1998) idea that one surrounded by familiar objects may feel at ‘home’ and more secure.

### ***Fear of assimilation***

The previous literature review indicated that some Armenian families tend to carry a sense of responsibility for maintaining and passing on their traditions to future generations (Vartan, 1996; Ghazarian et al., 2007; Saroyan, 2019). One of the participants expressed her fear of loss of identity and traditions by opposing marrying outside of Armenians. She experienced the loss of identity as non-existence facing paradoxes within her physical dimension (*Nature: Life/Death*). Her way of protecting the family and sustainability of her identity and community was to avoid out-marriage which also faced her with paradoxes with others in the social dimension (*Dominance/Submission & Acceptance/Rejection*). She saw multiculturalism as a threat because it provides the opportunity for interracial or intercultural

marriages. Although this view is against equality and diversity (BPS, 2010/2020), it is her reality and I had to present it in this study. To avoid assimilation due to out-marriage, the Armenian community became even more important to her, and she is making the most effort to sustain the existence of the community by organising fundraising events. In contrast, two other participants spoke about sharing the culture with others where one way can be out-marriage. Raffi added, “a good culture is not only for one country, it’s an international thing.” According to Mihai (2014), Armenians have a rich cultural heritage that is unique. It is neither European nor Asian but has elements from both. As revealed in the experience of all participants, they do not fully identify with any other dominant cultures, neither European nor Asian but a mixture of both.

One of the younger participants was confronted with some challenges within her family by choosing a boyfriend outside the Armenian community. The consequences that she faced were expressed *as* ‘traumatic’, saying “I was just being a teenager.” Jendian’s (2008) study in Central California showed a decrease in intermarriage between the years 1980-1990 among Armenian Americans whose parents were foreign-born. However, they found that a certain type of Armenian intermarries depending on the degree of assimilation in the American society. Mutarak and Heath (2010) found that the higher the education the more likely the individuals will out-marry. Such change is inevitable during acculturation, and one needs to come to an acceptance that after integration it is more likely that individuals choose to out-marry.

Facing the cross-generational barriers and difficulties of creating a new identity in London, the change appeared not to be an easy task for Anahit and Armineh. It appears to be an ongoing process that they had to work through. Yalom (1980) stated that if one does not take responsibility for facing such challenges and instead takes the position of hopelessness, it may lead to psychological challenges such as depression and anxiety. Such a state of mind

can have an impact on family members as human beings are contagious to the emotions of others (Perry & Winfrey, 2021).

### **Family Closeness**

Family connections were expressed as a big part of Armenian culture and five participants experienced emigration as loss of family. Loss of family and close cultural tapestry in the country of origin confronted these five participants with isolation and feeling of loneliness. As a result of this loss, they have faced some challenges under their social dimension of existence. One participant expressed that as “I miss the close cultural tapestry ... and we don’t have that in England... for example, uncles ... we went to their houses without telephoning them.” Such a sense of isolation also can provoke anxiety (Heidegger, 1927/2010) or existential crisis (Yalom, 1980), and a sense of safety (Mate, 2021; van Deurzen, 2021). van Deurzen (1998) stated that when one is not living within family surroundings and home “the basic animal instinct for security is tempered with, a continuous state of alarm is set off” (p. 55). She added, the experience of self-protection becomes more intense when one has fewer personal possessions and objects from home and loved ones to surround oneself with (see Section of Armenian Art).

All participants expressed a strong connection with their families. One said that regardless of the pain that one can go through due to losing a loved one, it is better to love even if you lose them one day, saying, “I am very careful not to belong 100%.” The fear of the death of others creates some barriers to fully love and fully belong, facing one with paradoxes between *Belonging/Isolation*. This is relevant to Heidegger’s (1927/2010) concept of human awareness of mortality and moving towards death, the awareness of our death and the death of others, which brings up the feeling of anxiety. To avoid such anxiety, one takes an inauthentic position and avoids this truth. The feeling of fear of the death of loved ones

and the experience of loss creates paradoxes in an individual's physical dimension (*Life/Death*).

Two other participants expressed the importance of family by ensuring they made a regular visit, one of the participants said, "I think Armenians, in general, are close to their families ... we stick together ... that's normal to me." They saw family connection and closeness as a gain in psychosocial dimensions. According to them this connection encourages mental stability and reduces isolation, one added, "if I didn't have family, I would feel very lonely for sure." The other participant who left her family in Iran expressed the experience of this separation as very painful, she said, "I was feeling very lonely." She faced paradoxes in her social dimension (*Belonging/Isolation*) due to loneliness and not being with the family. She felt the experience even more painful after having children, she said, "it was a big challenge to raise children in this country by myself." In general, as seen in the experience of all participants, some people find meaning in feeling socially connected to family, friends, and intimate relationships (Vos, 2018).

Another participant expressed gratitude towards her parents for making the huge sacrifice of leaving 'home' so she could have a bright future; she experienced this as a gain in her personal/psychological dimension. She became stronger and built stamina (see Table 5.1) with the opportunities provided in London to live a fuller life. Another participant started to search for her extended family and ancestors. Her roots were attached to a special meaning, and she was experiencing this passion in her spiritual dimension (*Meaning/Futility*).

Allport (1937, 1950) categorised three levels of traits of personality which are: Cardinal, Central, and Secondary. Cardinal traits usually develop later in life, they are dominant and difficult to change. Armenians with strong Cardinal traits tend to put their family needs as a priority to self-needs (supported by Bakalian, 1993; Bedikian, 2017; Ghazarian, 2007; Saroyan, 2019; Vartan, 1996), and seen in the experiences of all



participants. A practitioner who is working with an Armenian specifically in an individualistic society such as London with a possibly different cultural perspective, needs to be aware of such a core value.

Central traits are more general characteristics and Secondary traits are very much determined by circumstances. Allport (1937) believed that these traits are changeable, and personalities can change due to environmental changes; however, Cardinal traits are harder to change. Allport's theory of the possibility of change of traits could be seen in the experiences of all participants due to integration.

*Daseins* (a human who is here and there - see Appendix O) are thrown into the world and cannot be detached from culture or others such as family because *Dasein* is intertwined with other people (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Heidegger (2010) said, *being-with-others* distract humans from facing existential angst or anxiety. A human being is always with others, if they are not with others, they are thinking about them. He noted that humans tend to get lost and caught up in daily tasks or "everydayness" (p. 16) with *being-with-others*. He added, *Dasein* becomes predisposed by public opinion and the people around them. Heidegger wrote "givenness" is the characteristic of *Dasein*. For some Armenians, such connections and "givenness" with family, friends, and community can have a spiritual meaning and for some, it can just be a distraction from existential anxiety or facing an existential crisis (Yalom, 1980). Mate (2021; Perry & Winfrey, 2021) added that a sense of belonging and being with others is a powerful way to heal trauma and distressful feelings. All these paradoxes could be seen in the experiences of all participants in relation to others.

According to Heidegger (1927/2010), *Dasein* finds itself in what it does, needs, and expects, *Dasein*'s nature is to take care of its surroundings. In day-to-day life, *Dasein* becomes involved with people and pleases others. *Dasein* is open to two possible paths of decision-making, the choice between authenticity versus inauthenticity, and ignorance versus

wisdom. Heidegger claims that *Dasein* constantly becomes distanced from itself. The distraction in the social world moves a *Dasein* ‘there’ (away from itself). This is when one starts neglecting self and becomes inauthentic to be like others. This way *Dasein* is avoiding the existential anxiety, as being authentic confronts *Dasein* with anxiety. However, Escudero (2013) argued an authentic bond can be facilitated between people when the other is liberated to its freedom of Being. In an ontological sense, friendships are the possibilities of caring for the other but respecting their own space of freedom and autonomy. According to Escudero (2013) sustaining this bond is possible when individuals respect each other’s freedom of making choices (Sartre, 1943/2003). Sartre added human’s sense of community comes in the form of Us-object when we perceive ourselves along with others forming the object, being conscious of ourselves of the gaze of an “Other”, at the same time, seeing ourselves and others as objects, hence being judgmental towards others. Yalom (1980) referred to Buber’s concept of I-It and I-Thou. A mutual relationship can be created by involving a full experience of the other. Yalom added, if one truly relates to the other, stereotypes will be surrendered. Yalom also referred to Maslow’s theory of motivation and said, lack of safety, belongings, identification, and love can prevent growth.

All participants expressed some level of psychological challenges due to their relations with others such as family, friends, community, and wider circle of people in the society. This was presented throughout the findings. Such triggers may awaken one’s existential awareness and possible crisis (Yalom, 1980).

### ***Home is where family is***

Three participants who were born in London living with their families felt ‘at home’. For Armineh, ‘home’ was Iran where her parents live. Armineh was divided within herself regarding two countries and not living life to the fullest, which was a loss in her physical dimension: “I can’t go back because of my kids.” She was facing a conflict in her social

dimension (*Belonging/Isolation*). Loss of a relation which is meaning to her and so much value confronting her within the spiritual dimension. Furthermore, she expressed a feeling of sadness confronting her with paradoxes in her personal dimension. Living apart from the family impacted all her dimensions of existence. ‘Home’ for her is where parents and siblings are (Benning, 2013). Similar to Armineh, Raffi expressed ‘home’ is Iran where his family lives, however, he has been able to create roots in London and feel at home too.

### **The Armenian Language**

Six participants spoke about the importance of the Armenian language and passing it on to the next generation and all participants spoke the language fluently. Phinney (2000) in their study found that between the three ethnic groups which they have studied, Armenians valued their mother language the most. Phinney added, it is unquestionable that language is an important element of Armenian culture. It passes on many materials and spiritual elements that compose culture and provide continuity to other generations. For Heidegger (1927/2010), language is the nature of our embodiment in the world. Heidegger believed that our being is within the language and connected to our thoughts, and one cannot look at them separately. One of the participants expressed her gratitude to her family for teaching her the Armenian language. She said, “it has helped me learn other languages, like French.” By speaking each language one can be understood and understand another, van Deurzen (1998) identified this as a gain between two poles of passion and paradoxes under the social dimension of one’s existence. One of the younger participants could speak the language but also made the effort to attend lessons to learn reading and writing. The other one started learning the second dialect at an older age and three others made the effort to attend the Armenian weekend supplementary school for years. For one participant “Pure Armenian is, they can understand the language”, for other, “add to my ability to read more fluently Armenian books because what I read is basically in English.” Learning the language and sustaining it had a meaning for some of them

and such passion was present in their personal and spiritual dimensions (*Soul: Meaning/Futility*). One of the participants felt sorry for Armenians who lived in countries such as Turkey where speaking Armenian was forbidden (supported by Kalayjian & Weisberg, 2002). Heidegger (1927/2010) stated through language we interpret the world and make sense of it. The Armenian language has high importance for some Armenians as it is the language of intimacy (Pattie, 1997). The Armenian language creates some social ties between the individual, family, and Armenian friends (Pattie, 1997). The mother language can be a soothing emotional bond, connecting back to the initial attachment (Bowlby, 1969) between the caregiver and child.

### **The Armenian Sub-cultures**

Six participants stated that there was not one uniform Armenian culture. There were different sub-cultures depending on where people come from. For example, one of the participants stated that this was because Armenians “come from everywhere” and the paradox was whether they were being understood by all other Armenians. Following this, they may face some challenges in their social dimension (*Love/Hate or Acceptance/Rejection*). As a result of sub-cultures, all participants drew attention to the different dialects, way of living, the taste of food, and music, which cause them to feel that there are no standard definitions for what makes a unified Armenian culture. Seven participants revealed that diaspora Armenians including the ones who immigrated from Armenia do not resonate with *Hayastansis* way of being and sub-culture, as it is influenced by Soviet culture. Such a perspective of rejection created prejudice within the Armenian community, they may consider some have fewer qualities than others because of where they come from.

This tension of not being understood by ‘their own people’ confronts individuals with paradoxes in their social dimension (*Love/Hate or Acceptance/Rejection*). One participant

expressed it as “when I go to Armenia it’s kind of like I get conflicted”, “I feel like a tourist in Armenia.” As Madison (2010) found in his study, the concept of home can be as relational interaction rather than a place or location. Many of Madison’s participants confirmed that they never felt at home or felt understood in the society of their country of origin. He argued that home to individuals can be where they feel they are comfortable and belong, and this does not have to be the country of birth or ‘homeland.’

### **Higher Education**

The theme of higher education and its importance is revealed in the experience of seven participants, and this is an indicator of the value of higher education in the culture. For example, one participant said, “I will have better prospects and be able to have things that my parents didn’t have”, another said, “I probably wouldn’t have had the opportunities that I’d have here.” Descendants of the Armenian Genocide mentioned themes within their family system expressing the need and expectation of “super-achievement” to compensate for familial losses (Boyer, 2019).

Similarly, supporting the perspective of these seven participants, Guevrekian et. al. (2020) in their study of Armenian Americans living in Los Angeles found that 77.6% of the participants, and Bedikian (2017) who studied the second-generation Armenian migrants, found that 90% of the participants earned at least a bachelor’s degree as their higher degree. van Deurzen (2013) stated such stamina building is a gain in personal/psychological dimension. Three participants revealed that in addition to higher education, Armenians give importance to certain subjects of study leading to high expectations of their children. This may put some individuals in a vulnerable position and face them with challenges, conflicts, and paradoxes in their personal/psychological dimension (Identity/Freedom). Wei et al. (2019) undertook a study on language issues and prejudice experienced by different ethnic groups living in the USA. They concluded that ethnic groups speaking the English language

and having higher education are less likely to experience prejudice from anti-migrants than individuals with language issues.

Mate (2021) who is a physician and a trauma expert in Canada, argued that all types of addictions such as substances, food, sex, gambling, shopping, physical exercise, and work manifest from an underlying trauma and distress. If an Armenian's obsession towards high academia, career achievements, and overworking is out of balance or problematic there is a possibility that it may be as the result of underlying trauma/transgenerational trauma experiences which is being used as a coping mechanism to feel safe.

Supporting the findings of this research regarding higher education, Pattie (1997) identified that Armenian people come mostly from middle-class positions in society. For example, she stated that the majority of Armenians living in London have skilled jobs and are homeowners. As said earlier, with a higher socioeconomic position in society, one may receive less prejudice from anti-migrants. With buying a property one is more likely to create a route, stay longer in one place, and therefore create a 'home' and security. The familiarity may discourage the feeling of uncanny and angst which Heidegger (1927/2010) described as the feeling of 'unhomelike' being-in-the-world, facing disturbing phenomena, feelings of fear and restlessness. The importance of higher education and skilled work may be connected to being able to afford to buy a property and settle, as the result of feeling safer in the new society and facing less possible prejudice.

### ***Career development***

In addition to the importance of education and learning languages, the theme of a "respected" career was revealed in the experiences of seven participants. Allport (1955) stated, "a person having only one skill, knowing only one solution, has only one degree of freedom. A person who is widely experienced having wider skills has many more degrees of freedom" (p. 85). He added, broadly educated people may be freer than people with limited

training. Seven participants spoke about their gratitude for being given education or career opportunities in London. According to Allport (1955), this may give them more degrees of freedom. Regarding the socioeconomic position. Guevrekian et. al. (2020) in their research found that the level of income of Armenians living in Los Angeles was high with 59.8% of participants reporting that their annual household income was over \$100,000. Armenian American households presented to have a higher average income compared to the whole nation in general, this indicates the relatively high socioeconomic status that they have achieved. Yeganyan (2013) found a similar outcome regarding Armenians living in Moscow. In some cultures, one's identity is defined by what one does and one's productivity (Benning, 2013), this statement is supported by all participants of this study. Raffi said "as a nation, we cannot walk we must run." Guevrekian et. al. (2020) and Vartan (1996) stated that participants in higher socioeconomic positions expressed less issues with depression, anxiety, self-esteem and substance misuse.

### **The Armenian Art and Literature**

The artistic part of the culture such as music, painting, film, literature, food, and dance was present in all transcripts in one way or another. For example, three participants valued the artistic aspects of Armenian culture and practiced that in their lives. The comfortable connection with these elements, and turning suffering into art, encouraged happiness in their lives and harmony in their sense of identity, and this was experienced as a gain in their personal/psychological dimension. Introducing traditional Armenian art at home may encourage a feeling of 'at home' (van Deurzen, 1998). One participant experienced migration as a loss of art, he believed that Armenian art cannot be created in the Diaspora as it is influenced by other cultures. For example, the food is not the same because the ingredients are not the same, it is just the style of the original Armenian dish. One participant gave an example of world-famous Armenian singers and movie stars. They are Armenian but

their creation of art is in English or other languages. Is this called Armenian art? The answer remains ambivalent. Another participant mentioned *Duduk* (see Figure 12), an Armenian ancient instrument. *Duduk* means ‘apricot wood made wind instrument’. It is usually played in pairs with two instruments together creating a rich haunting sound. UNESCO announced the Armenian *Duduk* and its music as a Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO, 2005). *Duduk* has been played in several world-famous movies, for example, *Gladiator*. This example illustrates what two participants meant by valuable culture must be shared with others, it must be global. Such an art brings the traditional culture and memories of historical events back to life.



**Figure 12***Armenian Duduk*

*Note. © Samvel Amirkhanyan*

Furthermore, one participant mentioned the special skills of some Armenians, the creation of Khachkar or Cross-stones (see Figure 13) which can be seen in many places in the Diaspora and is purely Armenian art. Three participants expressed that such heritage needs to be preserved, being shared with the next generation and others.

**Figure 13***Armenian Khachkar*

*Note. © Alexanyan in Moscow*

### **The Armenian Friends and Community**

Similar to the theme of family and friends, all participants trans-generationally had some kind of connection with the Armenian community. Two participants expressed the feeling of sameness which leads to celebrating similar traditions and protects them from feeling isolated, so they experience it as gain in their social dimension (*Belonging/Isolation*). One participant expressed the community connection as, “it brings people together, so you never feel alone... you belong in that group.” Three older participants expressed their connection to the community by providing support, through fundraisings and keeping the culture alive. The involvement in the community and the sense of belonging might reduce

their sense of isolation, and the charitable work may have special meaning for them (Vos, 2018), bringing harmony or passion in their spiritual dimension (*Meaning/Futility*).

One of the younger participants supported his father to organise a film event; the other younger participant led the Armenian scouts for some years. One participant supported the newcomers with settlement in London, the other chaired the Armenian school for years, another participant is involved in organising events specifically for Armenian youths to bring them together. Saroyan (1936) meaningfully described the Armenian Diaspora and Armenian communities in the diaspora. He said that wherever Armenians move, they adapt to the new environment, try to keep their cultural identity, and at the same time, they create a new community and ‘home’. This sense of community and togetherness in the new environment brings feelings of “specialness” (Bolsajian, 2018) and safety (Allport, 1950; Mate, 2021, van Deurzen, 2021).

Furthermore, familiar objects (van Deurzen, 1998) such as Armenian food, music, dance and film presented in the community may bring the feeling of ‘home’ and security. Social gatherings and the support of the community can be stress-buffering; people retain more positive functions if they secure collaborative and reciprocal support (Guevrekian et al., 2020; Mate, 2021; Papadopoulos, 2018).

### **Challenges Faced in the London Armenian Community**

Participants have not always experienced engagement with the community as positive. As Benning (2013) stated “there was a sense that the participants experienced these relationships as a double-sword, benefitting from the support they brought, but also suffering from resulting claustrophobes” (p. 113). All participants have expressed facing some challenges in parallel with the advantages of the community. On one hand, receiving the support of the community and creating some meaning by sustaining the heritage and culture, but on the other hand, facing the dilemma of some judgements. Six participants raised the

issue of strong opinions and upfront common attitudes among the Armenian community members which put them in a vulnerable position. They expressed concern with how others view them within the community. One participant said, “I hope that people face less judgment in the community.” Another participant expressed that as “maybe they were jealous, or maybe they were just ... selfish.” Four participants expressed that London-Armenians do not work in collaboration and some are unjustly critical towards each other’s work. One participant said, “there is a lot of richness, but we don’t do collective work together.” Another participant felt discriminated in Armenia, and this is an obvious example of where one may not feel any sense of belonging to their birthplace and their people (Madison, 2010; 2022). He was disappointed with the society in Armenia and that left him with mistrust, which keeps him away from the London Armenian community now. He added, “it has dark sides of that mentality, homophobia, racism.” Another participant said, “trying to be very careful with what I do and what I say, how I dress.” Completely escaping inauthentic (Heidegger, 1927) or toxic behaviour (Benning, 2013) of others is impossible because we are always being-in-the-world-with-others (Spinelli, 2005). Sartre suggested that hell was other people (1943/2003); what he meant was that we do not need to create a picture of hell, because we live in a world where we make things difficult for each other, we all have conflicting purposes and get in each other’s way (van Deurzen, 1998). It is up to the individual how to face the challenges in relation to others and situations, and how to respond to them (Frankl, 1984).

Three participants expressed that being connected too closely to family and community stopped them from finding their individuality and core self. Van Deurzen (1997) used Laing’s (1961) example of families of patients who were suffering from schizophrenia. Families of these patients would make it impossible for them to function with an identity of their own. All these contradictory messages of “right” and “wrong” to the person amounted

to saying, “you will be damned if you do and damned if you don’t” (p. 164). This may have the effect of paralysing the person from achieving independence and a sense of self.

Four participants expressed curiosity about finding their individuality, or as Allport (1937) stated, their personal traits and characteristics. Therefore, they were seeking ways to find solutions to overcome some of their conflicts that they were facing in their social dimension due to sometimes not being understood; sometimes that closeness gets in the way of their gaining strength individually, creating confusion on their personal/psychological dimension. One of the participants said, “the community can make it quite difficult to figure out who you are.” Consequently, two participants moved away from London to study at university, temporarily moving away from their family and community to find themselves. Both these participants expressed some changes in their perspectives, their behaviour, and their approach to life. For example, one of the participants said that after moving out of London, she learned to question family restrictions and fight for what she thinks is right. The other participant said after moving away from London he became closer to his Armenian identity - something that he had lost during his teenage years. Such situations challenge one’s approach and leave the individual between being authentic or inauthentic with self and others (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Kalayjian and Weisberg’s (2002) participants expressed this sense of oppressive burden forced upon them, pushing them to act in-authentically. Therefore, they responded by either cutting their ties with the Armenian community, which they described as a sense of obligation; while forcing involvement, and others getting over-involved with their community.

With the taboo and stigma of mental health in the Armenian community (Guevrekian et. al., 2020; Saroyan, 2019; Yesayan, 2014), only one participant stated the issues within the community. She said, “anxiety wasn’t even a term that existed in their kind of culture.” This sense of not being understood if someone is suffering from mental health issues can put them

in a vulnerable position and then they feel rejected from the community, creating challenges in their psychosocial dimensions. Saroyan (2019), Guevrekian et. al. (2020) and Yesayan (2014) in their studies on Armenians in Los Angeles said that issues among family members are usually kept private due to the stigma of mental health. Some Armenians are hesitant in seeking mental health support. They added, Armenians do not accept psychotherapy until the problem is causing intense distress. One of the participants of this study opined that the acceptance of people with mental health issues within London Armenian organisations was poor.

### **Gratitude**

Despite the psychological challenges due to history, immigration, and acculturation stress, integration in London was presented in the experience of all participants due to the welcoming attitude of English people and the multi-cultural nature of London. Another element that made this process easier could have been the flexible nature of Armenians due to living in Diaspora and already adapted to one culture in addition to the Armenian (Vartan, 1996). Benning (2013) found that socialising with a wider community outside one's own community opens new paths to exploring a new culture and having new experiences. Her participants sometimes found their expatriate community unsatisfying and limiting and felt the need to make new friends with locals. This was seen as important for socialising and adjustment. Participants experienced positivity in their friendships with English people. For example, Nare said that with her English friends, it took her longer to become close to them, but it is a more long-term friendship. She also described her English friends' support during her illness as having no expectations in return. Aram indicated he had more fun with his English friends due to their sense of humour. A meta-analysis study of Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2012) across 83 studies showed that integration is highly associated with a better adaptation in the host society.

Five participants expressed their experience about liberal society in London and having freedom as well as safety, this was experienced as a gain under these participants' personal dimension of existence. Living in a liberal society one is more likely to be understood and live life to the fullest, which is a gain under social and physical dimensions. The theme of English people being polite and helpful in London is evident in the experience of four participants, this can be experienced as a gain under their social dimensions. All participants stated that they could freely express themselves in an English environment but not within the Armenian community. Some Armenian community members have certain ideas and expectations of how an Armenian should behave. One of the participants expressed going back 'home' to see her grandparents felt like: "I was a tourist". As a result of integration, she did not feel she belonged to that society facing a conflict under her social dimension. When some migrants visit their 'home' country, they discover that they are strangers there too. They may feel rootless, a sort of psychological "refugee" (Cohn, 2009).

Heidegger (1927/2010) described the feeling of uncanniness and the unsettled feeling, when one is not in tune with self, because of the anxiety one may not feel 'at home'. This can be geographical or as Heidegger and Madison (2010; 2022) stated can be relational. Anahit questioning herself "who actually am I?" created paradoxes in her personal dimension. On the other hand, it encouraged her to move towards independence and become stronger as an individual. Madison (2010) noted that uncanniness confronts individuals with the feeling of nothingness in the world but on the other hand, can push someone to fulfil themselves.

It seems that participants had a large amount of control and choice over their individuality personal dimension. Some participants expressed the wish to hold on to their Armenianness, and a theme of resistance to English culture and evolving seems to have emerged out of this part of the analysis. Saying that, participants expressed flexibility and adaptability regarding integration but there was still some resistance to fully adopt English

culture. For example, one of the younger participants stated that she prefers the parental strict control of some Armenians. On the other hand, she rejected the overprotectiveness when it comes to young people having relationships, in specific mixing with other nations.

### **Sense of Belonging to England**

Six participants expressed a sense of belonging to England/London one way or another. Six participants strongly felt that they belong to London and have a sense of ‘home’ and that was due to life satisfaction. They experienced a sense of belonging to London as a gain to live a fuller life in their physical dimension. Pattie (1999) confirmed that Armenians adapt and rebuild homes in their new environments in the diaspora, including London. In London, Armenians have created a new community to feel “at home” and belong. Van Deurzen (1998) stated, when underrepresented groups stay within their community of people from one’s home country, they build a home from home and hang on to their original identity. The importance of involvement in the communities in London was present in the experience of all participants, regardless of the challenges that some faced. As Pattie (1999) discussed, for centuries there has not been one clear centre, approved by all Armenians, as homeland and this is the nature of the diaspora. They created ‘homes’ wherever they have settled. Their sense of belonging was strongly influenced by the social attitudes of Londoners who made them feel welcomed and experienced this as gain under their social dimension (*Acceptance/Rejection – Belonging/Isolation*), as experienced by all the participants.

### **Emotional Connection with the Country of Origin**

All first-generation migrant participants expressed strong feelings towards their country of birth. These feelings were experienced either positively or negatively. For instance, one interviewee said that thinking about the good memories of living in Iran with their family “makes me happy.” However, it became clear that she was living with the paradoxes as she established a life in London and did not have much opportunity to visit them regularly or to go



back permanently. She said, “the only thing that makes me happy is that I go back to my birthplace.” One participant articulated the memories from their country of origin as ‘most pleasant’ and ‘extremely good.’ On the other hand, one participant stated a strong feeling of sorrow thinking about his birthplace currently in Eastern Turkey, where it was invaded by Turkey. Much like the existential emotional compass theory (van Durzen, 2014), the emotional connections experienced by participants were ones that had strong messages associated with the feelings and were connections which transformed and remained powerful along the span of the participants’ lives.

Both *Hayastansi* participants of this study expressed no emotional connection to Armenia, one regarded it as “a bad parent”. However, she could not fully separate herself and disconnect due to having an emotional connection to family and relatives who still live in Armenia. Her anger and frustration were due to the previous government who demolished some historical heritage. *Hayastansi* participants who left Armenia in the last few decades had a less emotional connection with Armenia as a country. Guevrekian (et. al., 2020) in their study found that Armenians who newly entered the USA due to wanting to fit in with the host country faster tend to separate themselves from the Armenian history, heritage, culture, and homeland and have more tendency to assimilate. However, they added individuals who moved to the USA earlier for instance over two decades tend to put more value on their Armenian identity, practice and sustain the language, culture, and traditions.

### **Integration within English Society**

The experience of integration within the English society brought some challenges with it for all participants. For example, supporting the first-generation immigrant parents with the English language. Furthermore, facing a language barrier for some by putting family needs and expectations first, presented a generational gap and lack of understanding,

experienced a need for being seen, and a sense of not belonging. These challenges which emerged from the findings will now be elaborated on below.

### ***Supporting parents with the English language***

One participant expressed that as a child she had to support her parents with the English language, translations, reading emails and letters which she said was “quite frustrating.” She felt not understood by her non-immigrant classmates, they said, “why do you have to do that?” and therefore she found it easier to fit in with other migrant children. Not being understood and feeling different may confront one with paradoxes in social dimension and the feeling of frustration may challenge her under the personal dimension. Children and adolescents who are fluent in English are expected to take on new roles within the household as translators (Saroyan, 2019).

### ***Issues due to the language barrier***

Two of the first-generation Armenian immigrants expressed the challenges they faced through not speaking the English language when they came to London. According to van Deurzen (1998) language is the tool with which we communicate with others and form bonds with them. Language attaches us to the world and nourishes us. One may find oneself babbling like a baby and unable to express complex thoughts. As a result, other people may judge the person’s mental ability as the words may come out incoherently. Speaking a different language, the expressions are different, the tones are different. Not being understood due to language can create paradoxes in one’s social dimension.

### ***Putting family wishes first***

Ghazarian et. al. (2007) discussed the strong conformity to parents’ wishes and respect for parental authority in their study. This was present in the experiences of three of the participants of my study. For example, one of the participants referred to her adult

children as “*angels*” because of their obedient attitude. The other participant said that he attended the family ceremonies at church with his parents against his own wishes.

### ***Generational gap***

In addition to migration challenges experienced by all participants, four participants have experienced challenges in the process of acculturation. For example, gender inequality was faced by one of the participants. This conflict was created due to the acculturation of this young participant. She learned equality and diversity at school and in society, and her values have changed concerning her parents when facing the generational gap. Additionally, she became stronger and built stamina in her personal dimension (*Identity/Freedom*). A similar experience was expressed by two other participants. Another participant, a mother of three children, expressed acculturation stress as a loss of control on her children. Some of her children’s values differ from her own, putting her in constant fear and a vulnerable position in her psychosocial dimensions. She expressed the fear as “when they become teenagers, that’s it, you can’t control them.” This is another example of a generational gap due to the acculturation of children, perhaps quicker than their parents with rigid cultural values. Other participants expressed this as “Armenian parents I would say are usually a lot stricter.” Barber (et al., 2006) found that participants who either directly or trans-generationally experienced trauma can be overprotective towards their children.

### ***The need for being seen***

In the process of acculturation, two participants expressed dissatisfaction for not being identified by others as Armenian, calling some people ‘ignorant’. For the other two participants who have fairer facial complexion, sometimes they were called ‘English’ (before their accent appeared) but they did not mind that. This represents that some individuals may be overly concerned about how they are viewed by others whereas for others that is not an issue. Sartre (1943/2003) describes a structure of being which he called ‘being-for-others’.

This is one's being as it occurs in the consciousness of another. One is responsible for the 'being-for-others', but we are not the basis of it. I believe Sartre is saying that we are responsible for our behaviour and how we appear in the awareness of the other; however, the other creates and interprets (Heidegger, 1927/2010). Therefore, we cannot have control over one's construction of us in their consciousness. Acculturation is a complex phenomenon that may challenge migrants socially and psychologically. Gradual integration is a successful strategy for acculturation, and it supports psychological wellbeing (Berry, 2019).

### ***Not belonging anywhere***

One of the participants said that although he was highly curious about English culture, all his friends were English when he was younger and he felt welcomed, he is still carrying the feeling of not belonging anywhere. Minas illustrated this beautifully by saying "I feel like a fish out of water." Heidegger (1927/2010) argued that humans are looking for familiarity in the world to feel safe and secure; loss of familiarity creates 'not-feeling-at-home' and existential anxiety gets triggered. Papadopoulos (2018) added migration can create a sense of stress, confusion, and disorientation. This sense of loneliness and the feeling of vulnerability is a challenge in this participant's psychosocial dimensions. Living in different worlds presents as a temporary 'home', a sense of belonging is a delusion (Ortega, 2016). For some this feeling of not belonging may appear as isolation or rejecting and confronts the person in the social dimension or one may accept the sense of not fully belonging anywhere (van Deurzen, 1998). Minas expressed, "I feel I don't belong anywhere." Already we can consider psychological approaches to some of these challenges. For example, van Deurzen (2021) said, such feelings of disconnection can be worked on by creating new meanings and new connections, either with people and/or nature and/or the universe.

## **Limitations of the Study**

This study had some limitations, for example, the sampling of the study, method of analysis, my experience and skills, and the potential participant and/or researcher bias due to my affiliation with the community which will be explored below.

### ***Sampling***

IPA was a suitable method for this research as I aimed to explore in-depth subjective experiences to produce knowledge for social support and change. Additionally, adding another layer of analysis to identify the paradoxes, difficulties, challenges, conflicts, and struggles that these individual participants faced provided additional knowledge and found the complexity of Armenians' way of being and how they relate to the world.

However, the method of IPA brought some limitations. To keep the sample homogenous as part of this research and IPA requirement, I only included volunteer immigrants (if they were first-generation). Additionally, only Armenians who were competent in the English language were included. I also narrowed it down to Armenians who live in London. This decision may have missed some valuable data which could have been collected from a newcomer with a language barrier who may experience life very differently from individuals who speak the English language. Therefore, further research on other sub-cultures, refugees, and non-English speakers is needed.

### ***Method of analysis***

IPA (Smith et al., 2009) focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the experience and this is gained through active listening, engaging with the text, and following the non-verbal cues, therefore the competency of my own English language may have had an impact on data analysis; similarly, the language used by the participants when they are trying to describe their lived experiences, especially if English is not their first language. The process depends on the participants' ability to articulate properly complex feelings and thoughts.

Smith et. al. (2009) argued that “our interpretations of experience are always shaped, limited, and enabled by language” (p. 194). Jaeger and Rosnow (1988) stated that language may create boundaries in communication to fully understand each other. Furthermore, Willig (2013) stated that, through language, researchers can only understand how people share their experiences and make sense of it rather than the lived experience. To minimise the bias concerning the English language of participants I have tried to elaborate and open up further if I felt a point was not clear or they moved from the question. Concerning my shortfalls with the English language when it came to analysing the data, I was open to hearing suggestions from my two supervisors if I misunderstood a point.

### ***My experience and skills***

My assumptions and bias could have had an impact. Furthermore, my inexperience in qualitative research during the process. To try to minimise this I carefully and without any resistance followed the suggestions of my supervisors and other peers when I presented the pilot study. I also engaged in extensive research and extracurricular training to enhance my competency with qualitative research during the development of this study.

### ***My affiliation with the community***

Being an active member of the London Armenian community may have influenced the engagement of potential participants and may have contributed towards bias or pre-assumed understandings from both participants and I about the study. To overcome this potential limitation, the participants were informed before the interview that I no longer work at the CAIA, so there would be less chance of participants meeting me in the future. I also kept a reflexive journal to monitor and assess any bias which may have arisen at any stage of the study. The role of reflexivity will be explored in more detail below.

## **Researcher Reflexivity**

The following section will outline the reflexive processes which were involved in developing this research project.

Before undertaking this research, I had a strong belief that most Armenian Iranians had traumatic experiences due to the war and revolution in Iran. This was not only my assumption but also based on speaking with my friends and family. Interestingly it revealed during the interview and analysis that neither of the two Armenian Iranian participants had that lived experience or at least awareness of it and that brought me to the realisation that it is my bias. As Papadopoulos (2002) said, migrated individuals might share a characteristic of 'loss of home' but not necessarily 'trauma'. The literature reviews also taught me the fact of resilience and that individuals may experience the same event differently. I have realised that my narratives have changed in the process of interviewing, transcribing, analysing, and writing up. The trauma that I have experienced is mine and now I am more aware of it.

Living away from my family is a sad realisation that I live with on a day-to-day basis. The fact that my life passes without their involvement in my daily life is a painful feature of my own existence. I miss celebrating important occasions together like birthdays, school assemblies, graduations, etc. I must contend with these ongoing sad emotions although I miss my family greatly. It was therefore necessary within the context of this research project that I was fully reflective and aware of this and through dedicated reflexive journaling and supervisory support I was able to separate and bracket my feelings from what participants themselves were experiencing.

When I was interviewing the participant who expressed her strong view against out-marriage I was feeling anxious about what she would reveal and how I would respond, if not verbally but through my expression or tone as I reflect that we do not share the same view on this topic. That could have put me and more importantly, my participant, in an uncomfortable

position. For instance, any prejudiced comment. Furthermore, when I was interpreting and constructing narratives under the Analysis Chapter, I was sceptical to include her strong view about out-marriages. During this process, as recorded in my reflexive journal, the feeling of shame and slight anger was building within me as I am representing my people. However, I have decided to include it as excluding would have been unethical and inauthentic. I reflected on my values as a researcher and noted that I had to present honestly my participants' realities, and this was her reality. I have tried my best to stay objective and present all details professionally. I reminded myself and the readers that this is only the subjective experience of eight people, and it does not represent the whole Armenian population, either in London or globally.

This experience was also a healing opportunity for me while I was engaging with the data, taking out the intensity of my strong emotions. Constant reflection and a professional way of bracketing minimised my personal experience to influence the analysis and the write-up. As explained under the Reflexivity section (Methodology Chapter), any other strong feelings or memories that came up during analysis and write up, I noted in my journal and explored in personal therapy, peer support group, with clinical and research supervisors.



## Conclusion

The present study set out to investigate how life is experienced by Armenians who live in London. From my own life experience, I have learned that an individual's lived experience does not reside within their own story, it is interwoven with complicated narratives of family, culture, ancestors/history, community members, and people connected in the wider society. This concept has been articulated in philosophical literature, for example it is popularly described as *being-with-the-others-in-the-world* by Heidegger (1927/2010).

Based on my search of existing literature, I believe that one of the most important novel and original contribution that this study provided is that it is the first interpretive existential-phenomenological study on Armenians who are living in London. This research is therefore perfectly positioned to contribute to existing knowledge and provide new understandings about how the deeper knowledge about Armenian lived experiences that has been gained by this study can be applied in relation to creating psychosocial change and psychological interventions.

The study found four superordinate themes: '1- The Armenian History and Heritage', '2- The Armenian Culture', '3- Armenian Community', and '4- The Experiences of Adaptation.' Within each of these themes it became clear that the life journey of participants affected their perspective of self, social relationships, sense of belonging, and openness to possibilities and changes in respect of acculturation and adaptation. All these themes have relevance in the field of psychology and existential philosophical literature, and the novel application of these is outlined clearly in the discussion and later in the conclusion. For some of the participants, the feeling of insecurity and fear affected their values and beliefs, and their expectations were challenged.

These findings also show that all participants identified as the Armenian identity, language, and culture yet importantly a novel contribution of this study highlights the nature

of how this identification is a unique and complex experience. The original insights gained from this study which demonstrates the complexity and uniqueness of the Armenian experience are further understood in relation to a number of other significant phenomena. For example, six participants had some level of connection and experience with the historical event of the Armenian Genocide. For five participants, higher education had a high value in ensuring safety and security which corresponded with their values about their careers.

Armenian culture was a theme which arose across all participant transcripts, themes, and subthemes. However, an important revelation that this study clarifies is that there was not a specific standard definition of what Armenian culture is. The meaning of Armenian culture which quite unique and personal for each participant. The diaspora common factor was that all participants were influenced by their acculturation in their birthplace and London.

Armenian identity also had a different meaning to each participant, and identity was found to be influenced by numerous different lived experiences and social phenomena. Two of the younger participants expressed the feeling of unease for not being seen as an Armenian and being put under some dominant identities such as Arabs, Iranians, Russians, or generalised as white (HEAR Network, 2019).

With specific original contributions to the field of counselling psychology, this research reveals that the experience of direct or transgenerational trauma and the experiences of psychological challenges caused by migration confronted all participants. It is also important for the public and professionals to consider that individuals related to the experience of trauma and transgenerational trauma should be addressed differently as some struggling with unprocessed feelings of grief and sadness, or seeing this matter as a resilience-building tool. Considering this novel understanding in relation to therapeutic approaches, it is notable that while the lived experiences and realities constructed from past events cannot be changed, how individuals make sense of these stories, and their daily lives

can make a difference. This is supported in detail by meaning-focused practitioners and models, notably in the work of Victor Frankl (1984). Individuals can reconstruct their life stories and create new meanings out of their suffering, which some participants in this study demonstrated.

Other challenges born in the past were revealed in relation to fears about past traumatic events occurring again. For example, two of the younger participants were carrying mistrust and fear believing that to prevent future wars, there is a need for reconciliation with Turkey and Azerbaijan on an international political platform.

As previously outlined, one of the novel contributions of this study is its clear connection between how Armenian lived experiences are abundant with existential themes. There were clear findings from all participants which showed that they are experiencing paradoxes in their four dimensions of existence (van Deurzen, 2009a; 2014). Armenian identity, religious beliefs, and cultural values are constantly changing, evolving, reconstructing, and 'becoming'. Experiencing these changes brings confusion and paradoxes for individuals trans-generationally. The ontological perspective of 'thrownness' (Heidegger, 1927/2010) becomes present in the lives of participants. These participants were thrown into their Armenian families and culture at a specific place and time. They were confronted with limitations, for example, the language barrier, or some limitations from certain activities and choices to please family and community due to cultural values, or facing the culture shock after entering London. All participants through their personal dimension of freedom of choice and taking personal responsibility for their new identity (Sartre, 2011), had the option to change and presented the change. The process of adaptation is happening in their new world (London) due to integration. In multicultural London (Perry, 2018; Trust, 2016), Armenians are engaging with the British and other ethnic groups; and are open to integration. The historical event of the Armenian Genocide is a constant reminder of uncertainty for some

Armenians. Individuals become aware of their mortality and find themselves "face to face" with nothingness and anguish (Sartre, 2011).

To summarise this chapter and the overall conclusions of this research, the feeling of the Republic of Armenia being an 'Armenian motherland' remains ambivalent for diaspora Armenians. Many individuals within the worldwide Armenian diaspora do not identify or have any affiliation to the 'Armenian motherland'. These include vast differences in approaches to life perspectives and subcultural differences between the diaspora Armenians and Armenians who currently reside in the Republic of Armenia.

Each wave of migration enforced changes to the dynamics of Armenian communities in the diaspora, including multicultural London. This created confusion and paradoxes for individuals, as shown by the participants of this study. They demonstrated turning the direct experience of trauma, transgenerational trauma, and the memory of the Armenian Genocide to strengthen 'their being' and to keep the 'Armenianness' alive regardless of challenges. They created meaning out of their traumatic experiences by reconstructing their lost heritage, history, and culture.

Armenians' way of being is complex due to the diaspora around the world and the many subcultural values. These values were found to differ when it comes to the lived experiences of the diaspora Armenians acculturated into their host countries. This anchoring to 'Armenianness' was evident in the lived experiences of all participants. The Armenian community in London retained their culture and connection with their families and communities in London and overseas, whilst simultaneously making London their 'home.' They expressed that although they are adopting new identities due to relocation, they hold onto their core Armenian identity.

This was a significant novel finding of this research, with clear examples of how Armenians have a strong belief in holding on to their culture, language, and heritage to

sustain an Armenian ethnic identity and the need to pass these beliefs on to future generations. As part of their lived experience in London, all participants expressed experiencing some prejudice and judgments from other Armenians in their community. These judgments were based on the differences in agreeing to the criteria of what ‘makes’ and ‘sustains’ being an ‘Armenian.’ Their frank and bold expressions of their opinions within their community at times appear to be perceived as ‘opinionated judgments.’

The Armenian Apostolic Church is interwoven through culture, history, and heritage. It is still an integral facet to ‘being Armenian’ even though Armenians at present are not that strongly attached to religion.

The feeling of ‘home’ and safety is a complex phenomenon for Armenians. Some may feel that their host country and where they live is ‘home’. Some may feel ‘home’ is their birthplace, ancestral historical lands, or the Republic of Armenia. Yet, no matter where Armenians are living, this research suggests that the link to being Armenian through language, food, music, and family values remains a strong psychological bond.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

This research project has provided several significant original contributions to the field of counselling psychology, to the general public, and to Armenians living in London. However, it has also identified several gaps in knowledge which future research would benefit from exploring. These have been presented below in relation to current research:

#### **1. Transgenerational Trauma**

The current study has provided novel understandings into not only the existence of the phenomenon of transgenerational trauma, but into how transgenerational trauma can manifest in individuals and can be triggered by current events. As was evidenced by the huge demonstrations in central London, the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war between

Azerbaijan supported by Turkey and the Republic of Artsakh supported by Armenia has opened unhealed emotional wounds from the Armenian Genocide for some Armenians. As a result, some of the Armenians coming from Armenia and Artsakh may carry an experience of trauma, fear, anger, resentment, shame, guilt, and sadness. Therefore, I strongly recommend both quantitative and qualitative into how to support people who are suffering from transgenerational trauma. Furthermore, this research project highlights the need for more research into cross-cultural complexities and the experience of psychological challenges prior and post migration of Armenian people.

2. **Generational Differences.** Studies on generational differences with a focus on the needs of Armenian youth concerning parents' understanding regarding high traditional expectations, for example on academic achievements, gender identity, and sexuality is recommended based on the challenges identified within this research project which were experienced due to generational differences.
3. **Diaspora-specific Mental Health.** The current study provides original contributions into understanding the psychological and emotional experiences of Armenians from and within different sub-cultures. Most importantly, it highlights the extreme lack of diaspora-specific mental health understandings and resources. Future research is recommended to expand the knowledge on mental health issues and treatments within different Armenian sub-cultures.
4. **Holistic Wellbeing.** The current study provided deep and novel insights into the connection between emotions, mind, and body and understood existentially as 'across the personal, social, spiritual, and physical dimensions.' It highlighted that there is a need for research into Armenian British awareness and their acceptance of mental health services and what they can offer. Furthermore, the Armenian field of

Counselling Psychology and more general wellness fields would benefit from an increased understanding of the available holistic wellness services and the impacts, such as mindfulness, yoga, healthy diet, and social connections, etc.

5. **Coping Mechanisms.** The current study clearly outlines the long-term implications of migration and identifies several helpful and unhelpful coping mechanisms which individuals adopt to cope with the migration challenges. I, therefore, recommended that there is a need for studies looking into the long-term effect of emotional distress of Armenian British and their adopted coping mechanisms, for instance, use of substances and/or behavioral addictions such as gambling, sex, shopping, work, and more.
6. **Gender Differences.** The current study outlines the discrepancy between how gender is understood and accepted between different cultures, comparisons being made both within different Armenian cultures and with external cultures. The significance of gender differences within Armenian British and how this relates to acculturation and adaptation should be studied to provide more up-to-date lived experience understandings and to promote and raise awareness of this complex, often-stigmatised phenomenon.
7. This research clearly highlighted the numerous strong impacts that community, society, and group dynamics have on many Armenian people. When considering psychological therapies, it is therefore recommended that more research on psychological/therapeutic and psychoeducational group work for Armenians is conducted.

The above recommended future directions for research will increase the awareness and understanding for health service providers, education, local authorities, and policymakers

to be able to support Armenian people to rebuild their lives in the UK. Furthermore, the findings gained from such research directions will provide culturally sensitive psychological and educational services to them.

### **Implications to practice in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy**

A number of specific implications to the field of Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy were identified in the current research project. These implications are presented below.

The analysis and findings of this study will not only support a deeper understanding of 20,000 Armenians living in the UK, specifically in the context of clinical services, but parts of the research may also apply to other ethnic minority groups clustered as BAME within the context of the UK.

This study has implications for the Armenian population in relation to raising the awareness about the importance of how to understand themselves and find ways of self-care and improving their lives. The theme of self-awareness is a key feature of existential philosophy. It is therefore hoped that this study has provided a novel and original contribution to counselling psychology by providing the first Armenian-specific piece of work that outlines self-awareness, identity, trauma, and acculturation through the lens of existential psychotherapy. This contribution to the field is therefore also able to provide implications for the development of an empirically supported, culturally sensitive, psychological, and educational service for Armenian and ethnic minority populations.

To consider this contribution more deeply, it is recommended that clients and practitioners need to realise that the Armenian identity and challenges which may come with it, is not a term that is fixed. It is fluid and individuals have a choice to change as revealed in the findings. For example, participants spoke about identifying with multiple identities differently. Some identified with being Armenian British and resonated with the Armenian



and English culture. Others identified with Armenian heritage/culture and country of birth and English culture. A clear implication of this is that every individual Armenian relates to identities and cultures differently, identifies with themselves differently, and feels differently about culture and identity. Benning (2013) stated, “an accent or appearance may not be an accurate indicator of an individual’s cultural worldview” (p. 128). This research project highlights clearly that educators, practitioners, and the general public need to be aware of these individual differences.

All participants spoke about the uniqueness of Armenian history, culture, and community in London which has been explored in relation to the field of Counselling Psychology. A clear implication from this research is that practitioners should not disregard the uniqueness (van Deurzen, 2009b) of an Armenian client and should try to work in a culturally sensitive way. For example, referring to the theme of ‘family closeness’ and ‘community closeness’, a therapist whose working modality is on individuality (Western lens) may miss the importance of family; however, they will need to put the family as a priority for Armenian clients. Furthermore, it is fundamental that practitioners should be give space for clients to make sense of why the history, culture, community and language has a high value for some Armenians and why therefore they may be holding on to it which can prevent them from feeling complete ‘at home’ in their new location. Regarding feeling at ‘home’ or ‘not-feeling-at-home’ Armenian clients may demonstrate this in a variety of settings. Practitioners need to therefore be aware that Armenian clients can feel a sense of belonging and ‘at home’ to people, family, the Armenian community, and wider society viewing this sense of belonging as relational (Madison, 2010; 2022). In contrast, Armenians may seek therapeutic support as they are challenged with the feeling of isolation and disconnection.

The current research project also revealed that therapists need to have an awareness of and understand the differences within and between the Armenian sub-cultures, including the possible biases and prejudices between them. As revealed in the experience of some participants, Armenian culture cannot be simplified with a single overarching Armenian culture. Armenian people hold sub-cultural values due to coming from the diaspora, different countries, and even different regions. No two Armenians can be looked at as the same and assume they are holding the same religious beliefs or cultural values. As revealed in the findings it is vital to be aware that an Armenian may carry Armenian traditional cultural values, some values from their birthplace, English values, and all with different degrees. Practitioners need to be aware that culturally an Armenian Iranian, is very different from an Armenian Cypriot, a *Hayastansi*, and so on.

Participants presented that they are on a journey of constantly reconstructing their cultural identity due to integration and adaptation in the host country. Regardless of resistance and rigidity towards assimilation, most of the participants adopted the integration strategy. They kept parts of the Armenian culture, the culture of birthplace, and picked parts of English culture which resonated with them. This research therefore showed clear implications to the field of Counselling Psychology that the phenomenon of culture exists with a sense of fluidity and that culture and cultural identity is not fixed but rather it can be actively and passively changed. This can occur organically and can also be influenced by purposeful therapeutic interventions.

When working with Armenians, this research provides clear implications that clinicians will benefit from understanding the complexity of the Armenian way of being regarding mental health stigmas. This raises an awareness that Armenians may not open up easily to practitioners due to the stigma of mental health, expressed for example by one of the participants and as evidenced by my own experience working as a practitioner within the

London-based Armenian population. Armenians have been identified to have sensitivities towards the loss of history and heritage, the possible experience of trans-generational trauma, and anchoring to their cultural values (sustaining the heritage and language, family, supporting the community, social status) as a means of survival.

In summary, several significant implications for the field of Counselling Psychology, other professions working with Armenians, and the general public have been provided by this study. Most notable of all are the implications of the clear understanding on how complex and unique the experience of Armenians living in London is. From a therapeutic perspective, it is therefore fundamental to promote an awareness that Armenian clients are likely to bring specific issues into the therapy room which are not necessarily similar to other populations of clients and that practitioners need to be aware of how to work sensitively with this.

### **Dissemination**

My goal is to share the research findings with mental health organisations and Armenian organisations to help these organisations have a better understanding of Armenians and to support them with adjustments. Moreover, to support the organisations to strengthen their counselling services and relevant programmes. I will attempt to engage the counselling psychology and psychotherapy professional bodies, such as the BPS, BACP, UKCP, and their respective academic and other professional journals. The dissemination will be via publications as well as presentations. Sommer (2006) stated public speaking regarding research is as important as journal articles. Disseminating psychological research in non-journal articles such as newspapers, magazines, and newsletters brings the knowledge to the attention of people who do not read research journals. Policymakers may be unaware of the many fields in which psychologists work. Disseminating widely will reach a diverse audience who can then provide different feedbacks on the research. This may also lead to new research questions.

## **Final Reflection & Reflexivity**

As explained in the Methodology Chapter the concepts of reflexivity and bias awareness refers to allowing the researcher to engage themselves in multiple layers of meaning by manoeuvring between engagement with the experience and their awareness (Finlay, 2003; Wharne, 2019). The following section will provide some final reflections about my experience conducting this research project.

The five years of Doctoral training have changed me enormously as a person and have improved my engagement with the world by enabling me to navigate situations in a more self-reflective way. I have learned that life challenges can break us, but we can choose to pick up the broken pieces and rebuild ourselves again. Before starting the training, my challenges and traumatic life experiences from before and after my relocation from Iran to London, were not allowing me to live my life to the fullest. I was caught up in my negative memories which I feel lead me to inauthentic and superficial engagement with others. From an existential perspective, I understand this as the fact that there were struggles in all my four dimensions of existence. By the time I reached the interview stage of this study, I had over 100 hours of personal existential therapy sessions which allowed me to process the traumatic memories and challenges that I have experienced and as outlined in previous sections enabled me to revise some of the research questions. Of course, one should not forget that therapeutic engagement is a life journey but by the time of meeting participants for interviews I had enough awareness to be able to bracket the experiences which were mine from the participants' lived experiences. I have tried my best to stay objective, not to guide the participants during the interview, and stay with phenomenological questions.

At the stage of completing this research project, I have engaged in over 450 hours of personal therapy and over 500 hours of clinical supervision which has enabled me to

continually process my own experiences and explore how these may impact my research project's development. This has been a fundamental part of the research validation process.

One of the challenges that I have faced during this research where personal therapy was crucial was during the writing up and constructing narratives stage which took place in September 2020. During this time, 44 days of war between Azerbaijan and Artsakh (Armenia) happened. The horrifying images were all over the news and social media which awakened the pain of the Armenian Genocide for some Armenians including myself. I noticed that governments were occupied with the Covid-19 pandemic situation, and I felt that they were ignoring what was happening in that region. Armenians worldwide including Armenians in London and myself were attending demonstrations to raise awareness and seek governments' support. Staying objective when writing about the genocide was challenging during this time because I allowed myself to be authentically moved by the reality my people were experiencing. However, I had several meetings with my supervisors to process it and make it a dedicated use of my therapeutic journal to prevent this becoming interwoven or confusion with my participants' experiences. This is also known as 'bracketing' which I will elaborate on below.

Undertaking this research and engaging with the data allowed me to reflect even more on what was going on for me and the participants' experience. The research provided me with the opportunity to recognise even more the capability of 'bracketing' my emotions and experiences – holding them separately from those of my client or participant. However, as Heidegger (1927, cited in Smith et al., 2009) stated one cannot fully separate from what one observes and interprets. Our interpretations are connected to our past experiences and worldviews.

Another example of important reflexivity and bracketing is illustrated in my therapeutic work. As part of my placement alongside the development of this research, I was providing one-to-one counselling and group psychotherapy to Armenians and other BAME community members who were struggling with domestic violence, trauma, and substance misuse issues. Most of my clients brought the experiences of trauma and complex cross-cultural issues into the room and as I have been in a similar situation, my lived experiences and academic training helped me to guide (Yalom, 1980) some of them. This intense experience supported me to understand myself and my clients better and heal with them. I was careful to make anonymised notes that enabled me to distinguish between what my clients brought, what I brought, and what my participants brought so as not to pollute the data.

The experience of gender inequality of another participant provoked some difficult memories in my own experiences of gender inequality and suppression in Iran. However, I have reflected upon this, and it has been explored both in therapy and supervision. While I cannot change that gender-based prejudices that exist within cultures, I can make an effort to contribute to raising awareness that these prejudices exist and how to support people who have suffered as a result of them. This is something that my thesis aspires to provide, and this reflexive process led to the development of recommendations for future study in this research.

I have also reflected deeply on the theme of loss. Suffering and pain of losing a loved one is a familiar pain to me as I lost my father in a traumatic way in a car accident when I was thirteen years old. The painful feelings come up to me when I encounter others who have had a similar experience of losing someone close to them. The intensity of the pain is less now after undergoing years of personal therapy. I reflect that my heightened awareness of what the pain of loss can feel like has enabled me to sit with my participants more deeply as

they shared their lived experiences during the interviews with an interviewer who may not have had such an experience as they have gone through.

As I come towards the end of this thesis, I will reflect on some of the most important and valuable original contributions that this research has provided and my hopes for what this thesis will achieve.

With producing this research, I am hoping that the findings provide some knowledge for practitioners to have a better understanding of Armenian people when they work with them. It is clear from this research and my own experience that Armenian individuals may be experiencing trauma/transgenerational trauma due to coming from troubled parts of the world. As supported in existing research such as the work of Gabor Maté (2019) which was introduced in detail throughout this thesis, not healing from trauma can increase the possibility of impacting the next generation. I consider it the responsibility of myself, and my fellow practitioners, to support individuals experiencing inherited trauma to prevent this cycle continue for generations to come.

The findings of this study showed that Armenian identity (history, heritage, culture and language) is vital for Armenians to sustain and hold on to it as they desire to survive, they wish to be seen as an ethnic group and be heard. I reflect that this may have been a personal motivation to conduct this research in the first place.

Holding onto identity and the feeling of being part of this ethnic group was found to provide a feeling of safety and security. I reflect that I can relate to this experience myself and feel passionately that practitioners need to be mindful of their clients' cultures and sub-cultures as Armenians come from different parts of the world.

I also reflect that practitioners who follow Western individualistic models of working need to be aware on the importance of family and community for Armenian people. I feel passionate about encouraging a more holistic understanding of human existence, which can

be empirically understood through the lens of the existential dimensions as introduced in the discussion section of this study.

I feel grateful for this training and research. I have a sense that I was ‘thrown into’ the existential psychotherapy and philosophy field for a reason. This journey and process has helped me to transform into who I am today. I found deeper meaning regarding my identities as they became clearer to me and I found that ‘home’ to me is not geographical, it is the experience of moments, with myself, family, other people, objects, nature, and more. I reflect that this now influences how I work with my clients. This also allows me to meet them where they give meaning and purpose to my practice. The space that we meet is a sense of a temporary ‘home’, where ‘home’ is a safe, valued, relational space.

I feel grateful for the opportunity to work with participants who shared their stories so openly with me as part of this research, and hope that interviewing my participants and creating an opportunity for them to voice out their experiences allowed them to experience some transformation if that is what they wanted. I also wish that all those who may read this work will gain the chance to experience a change of perspective by gaining some new knowledge about the Armenian community and perhaps most importantly, about their unique, complex, ever-changing selves.



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## Appendices

### Appendix A. AMSTAR Checklist

11/2/2020 AMSTAR - Assessing the Methodological Quality of Systematic Reviews You are viewing as a guest Login



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**AMSTAR 2 Results** [Printer Friendly Version](#)

**Article Name:** A Bridge between Being and Becoming: Generational Lived Experiences of i

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[Log On](#)

**A Bridge between Being and Becoming: Generational Lived Experiences of Arme is a Low quality review**

<b>1. Did the research questions and inclusion criteria for the review include the components of PICO?</b>	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
<b>2. Did the report of the review contain an explicit statement that the review methods were established prior to the conduct of the review and did the report justify any significant deviations from the protocol?</b>	Partial Yes Yes Yes Yes
<b>3. Did the review authors explain their selection of the study designs for inclusion in the review?</b>	Yes Yes
<b>4. Did the review authors use a comprehensive literature search strategy?</b>	Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes
<b>5. Did the review authors perform study selection in duplicate?</b>	
<b>6. Did the review authors perform data extraction in duplicate?</b>	No

[https://amstar.ca/manuscripts/Calc\\_Checklist.php](https://amstar.ca/manuscripts/Calc_Checklist.php) 1/3

11/2/2020

AMSTAR - Assessing the Methodological Quality of Systematic Reviews

7. Did the review authors provide a list of excluded studies and justify the exclusions?

Yes  
Yes  
Yes

8. Did the review authors describe the included studies in adequate detail?

No  
  
Yes

9. Did the review authors use a satisfactory technique for assessing the risk of bias (RoB) in individual studies that were included in the review?

RCT

NRSI

No

10. Did the review authors report on the sources of funding for the studies included in the review?

Yes  
Yes

11. If meta-analysis was performed did the review authors use appropriate methods for statistical combination of results?

RCT

NRSI

0  
0

12. If meta-analysis was performed, did the review authors assess the potential impact of RoB in individual studies on the results of the meta-analysis or other evidence synthesis?

0

13. Did the review authors account for RoB in individual studies when interpreting/ discussing the results of the review?

Yes  
Yes

14. Did the review authors provide a satisfactory explanation for, and discussion of, any heterogeneity observed in the results of the review?

Yes  
Yes

15. If they performed quantitative synthesis did the review authors carry out an adequate investigation of publication bias (small study bias) and discuss its likely impact on the results of the review?

Yes  
0  
Yes

16. Did the review authors report any potential sources of conflict of interest,

Yes

**Appendix B. Interview questions***Physical*

What is it like to be an Armenian living in London?

What is your lived experience as Diaspora Armenian (or Armenian from Armenia)?

*Personal*

How would you describe your self-identity?

*Social.*

What does Armenian culture mean to you?

How would you describe your sense of belonging?

What is it like to be (or not to be) part of the Armenian community in London?

What is it like to adapt (or not to adapt) to the English culture?

*Spiritual.*

What does the Armenian Apostolic Church mean to you?

What are your hopes for the future of the Armenians in the UK?

## Appendix C. Application for Ethical Clearance



MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY ETHICS COMMITTEE

### Application for Ethical Approval and Risk Assessment

**No study may proceed until approval has been granted by an authorised person.** For collaborative research with another institution, ethical approval must be obtained from all institutions involved. If you are involved in a project that has already received ethical approval from another committee or that will be seeking approval from another ethics committee, please complete form '**Application for Approval of Proposals Previously Approved by another Ethics Committee or to be Approved by another Ethics Committee**'

**UG and MSc STUDENTS:** Please email the completed form to your supervisor from your University email account (...@live.mdx.ac.uk). Your supervisor will then send your application to the Ethics Committee ([Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk)). You should NOT email the ethics committee directly.

**PhD Students and STAFF:** Please email the completed form to [Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk](mailto:Psy.Ethics@mdx.ac.uk) from your University email account (...@mdx.ac.uk)

This form consists of 8 sections:

1. Summary of Application and Declaration
2. Ethical questions
3. Research proposal
4. Information sheet
5. Informed consent
6. Debriefing
7. Risk assessment (required if research is to be conducted away from Middlesex University property, otherwise leave this blank. Institutions/locations listed for data collection must match original letters of acceptance)
8. Reviewer's decision and feedback

Once your file including proposal, information sheet, consent form, debriefing and (if necessary) materials and Risk Assessment form is ready, please check the size. For files exceeding 3MB, please email your application to your supervisor using WeTransfer: <https://www.wetransfer.com/> this will place your application in cloud storage rather than sending it directly to a specific email account. If you/ your supervisor has confidentiality concerns, please submit a paper copy of your application to the Psychology Office instead of proceeding with the electronic submission.

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

<b>Application No.:</b>	Click here to enter text.	<b>Decision:</b>	Click here to enter text.	<b>Date:</b>	Click here to enter a date.
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**RISK ASSESSMENT** *(complete relevant boxes):*

<b>Required:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<b>Signed by:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Programme Leader
<b>Date:</b>	Click here to enter a date.		

**LETTER/S OF ACCEPTANCE/PERMISSION MATCHING FRA1 (RISK ASSESSMENT) RECEIVED (SPECIFY):**

	Date	From	Checked by
All	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin
Part	Click here to enter a date.	Click here to enter text.	<input type="checkbox"/> Supervisor <input type="checkbox"/> Ethics Admin

**DBS Certificate(s) Required?** *(Complete the relevant boxes):*

<b>DBS certificate required?</b>	<b>Y e s</b>	<b>Seen By:</b>	Choose an item.
<b>DBS Certificate Number:</b>	<b>001580437025</b>	<b>Date DBS Issued:</b>	<b>13/07/17</b>

**1. Summary of application (researcher to complete)**

<b>Title of Proposal:</b>	An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of the Armenians in London		
<b>Name of Principal Investigator/Supervisor</b>	Prof. Ho Law		
<b>Name of Student Researcher(s) and student number(s)</b>	Scarlet Sarksan		
<i>Please click one of the following:</i>			
<input type="radio"/> UG Student <input checked="" type="radio"/> PHD/MPHIL Student      DCPsych <input type="radio"/> MSc Student <input type="radio"/> Staff			
<b>Proposed start date</b>	November 2018	<b>Proposed end date</b>	April 2020
<b>Details of any co-investigators</b> N/A			
1. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	
2. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	
3. Name: Click here to enter text.	Organisation: Click here to enter text.	Email: Click here to enter text.	

2.



<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Psychosocial	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupational	<input type="checkbox"/> Forensic
<input type="checkbox"/> Developmental	<input type="checkbox"/> Sport & Exercise	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cognition & Emotion	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychoanalysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Clinical
<input type="checkbox"/> Health	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Psychophysiological	

**Topic/Research Area (tick as many as apply)**

**Methodology (tick as many as apply)**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Qualitative	<input type="checkbox"/> Experimental	<input type="checkbox"/> Field Experiments
<input type="checkbox"/> Questionnaire		
<input type="checkbox"/> Observation (humans and non-humans)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Analysis of Existing Data Source/Secondary Data Analysis		

<b>1.1</b>	Are there any sensitive elements to this study (delete as appropriate)? <i>If you are unclear about what this means in relation to your research please discuss with your Supervisor first</i>	Please refer to ethical issues section.
<b>1.2</b>	If the study involves any of the first three groups above, the researcher may need a DBS certificate (Criminal Records Check). PG students are expected to have DBS clearance. Does the current project require DBS clearance? <i>Discuss this matter with your supervisor if you unsure</i>	DBS number is indicated above.

1.3	<p>Does the study involve ANY of the following?</p> <p><i>Clinical populations; Children (under 16 years); Vulnerable adults such as individuals with mental or physical health problems, prisoners, vulnerable elderly, young offenders; Political, ethnic or religious groups/minorities; Sexually explicit material / issues relating to sexuality; Mood induction; Deception</i></p>	Yes (Ethnic minorities)
1.4	<p>Is this a resubmission / amended application?</p> <p><i>If so, you must attach the original application with the review decision and comments (you do not need to re-attach materials etc. if the resubmission does not concern alterations to these). Please note that in the case of complex and voluminous applications, it is the responsibility of the applicant to identify the amended parts of the resubmission.</i></p>	No

**By submitting this form you confirm that:**

- you are aware that any modifications to the design or method of the proposal will require resubmission;
- students will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until completion of your studies at Middlesex, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and your supervisor will be able to access the data);
- staff will keep all materials, documents and data relating to this proposal until the appropriate time after completion of the project, in compliance with confidentiality guidelines (i.e., only you and other members of your team will be able to access the data);
- students will provide all original paper and electronic data to the supervisor named on this form on completion of the research / dissertation submission;
- you have read and understood the British Psychological Society's *Code of Ethics and Conduct*, and *Code of Human Research Ethics*.

**Ethical questions – all questions must be answered**

2.1	Will you inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, without penalty?	Yes
2.2	Will you provide a full debriefing at the end of the data collection phase?	Yes
2.3	Will you be available to discuss the study with participants, if necessary, to monitor any negative effects or misconceptions?	Yes
2.4	Under the Data Protection Act, participant information is confidential unless otherwise agreed in advance. Will participant anonymity be guaranteed?	Yes
2.5	Is this research or part of it going to be conducted in a language other than English? <i>Note, full translations of all non-English materials must be provided and attached to this document</i>	No
2.6	Is this research to be conducted only at Middlesex University? <i>If not, a completed Risk Assessment form - see Section 8 – must be completed, and permission from any hosting or collaborative institution must be obtained by letter or email, and appended to this document, before data collection can commence. If you are conducting an online survey or interviews via skype or telephone whilst you are at Middlesex University you do not need to fill in the risk assessment form.</i>	No, Risk Assessment form completed (See Section 7)

**If you have answered ‘No’ to questions 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 above, please justify/discuss this below, outlining the measures you have taken to ensure participants are being dealt with in an ethical way.**

The interviews will take place at the Centre for Armenian Information & Advice (105A Mill Hill Road, Acton W3 8LX), (Please view Risk Assessment form completed in Section 7).

Participants will be informed that the interview questions may bring up upsetting or traumatic memories which may affect their feelings or cause bodily reactions/discomfort.

The topic may be sensitive for some participants, they have experienced immigration (first or second generation) which has challenges and for some the possibly of the experience of trauma (or generational trauma). This experience may have occurred during, prior to, or after immigration.

I am aware of the sensitivity of the topic; therefore, I will make sure participants are informed that they can withdraw at any time if they feel disturbed. I will also communicate this in the beginning and end of each interview. Additionally a list of therapists, mental health support organisations and helplines will be provided.

**Are there any ethical issues that concern you about this particular piece of research, not covered elsewhere on this form? If so please outline them below. No**

## **2. Research proposal**

The research aim is 'to explore the lived experiences of Armenians in London'.

The objectives of the study are:

1. To understand the challenges faced by Armenian immigrants.
2. To understand the meaning of being an Armenian in London, their sense of belonging, culture, beliefs, values, and self-identity.
3. To understand any differences between the younger and older generations in terms of the above.

An Armenian is a person of Armenian descent. They are an ethnic group native to the *Armenian* Highlands surrounding the mountains of Ararat. Armenians are ancient people with roots in Eastern Anatolia going back 2500 years (Patti, 1997). Armenia is a landlocked country in the Transcaucasia region, between the Black and Caspian Seas, bordered on the north and east by Georgia and Azerbaijan and on the south and west by Iran and Turkey.

Armenians have their language, which is an Indo-European language of Armenia, spoken by around 10 million people and written in a distinctive alphabet of thirty-eight letters. Today 18,000 Armenians live in England. They have two Armenian Apostolic churches in London and one in Manchester.

Most Armenians in London are first-generation immigrants, originating from Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Cyprus, Armenia, and some more countries (Talai 1989). They have therefore had various experiences as Armenian emigres before arriving in London. This diversity of background is reflected in the differences occurring between London Armenians. According to the country of origin, Armenians have subcultures. The food, music, dance, art, and thought processes of any Armenian is influenced by the country of birth.

I was born in Iran and as far as I am aware my ancestors immigrated to Iran around the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Armenians in Iran kept their Armenian culture, language, heritage, and Christian religion 5 generations after generations. I speak Armenian fluently and I taught my daughter who was born in Britain to speak too. I like to celebrate Armenian events, which connects me to my community and heritage. However, I am aware that there are Armenians in London who are even first-generation but do not identify themselves with the Armenian culture, language, and heritage for a number of reasons.

After the subcultural level appears the unique individual being. Every individual Armenian differs in this level according to genetic factors, environmental impacts, and experiences in their life journey. I see myself partially influenced by Iranian culture, as I enjoy Iranian food, music, and dance. I kept parts of that culture by choice and rejected other parts. I like the non-religious festivals and events and the hospitality of Iranians, although it can be too extreme. Yet I am highly influenced by the Western culture and way of living. I see myself as more individualistic than collectivistic. I am very much goal-oriented and valuing of individual success. I prefer British theatre, visiting museums, travelling and simply walking in nature, whereas most Armenians and Iranians highly value expensive brands and materialistic things.

The initial literature review started with the general well-being of the people who migrated which includes physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects. Following that the gap in the literature review was identified that there is no current literature about Armenians' in London. In 1989 Talai studied Armenians in London. He wrote about Armenian political parties and how that divided Armenians who live in London. I don't identify myself with any of the political parties as I have no interest. Talai wrote about the strong impact that Armenian political parties had on the social well-being of the individuals and the unity of the community as a whole. Additionally, he/she researched Armenian cultural, religious beliefs,

values, way of living, stereotype, and prejudice outlook. Similarly, Patti (1997) wrote about Armenians in Cyprus and Cypriot-Armenians in London. Both books will be used as the main sources in the literature review section of this research. The main attention of this particular study will be narrowed down in the timeline of the last twenty years, as there is no literature for that period. Furthermore, the research will be focused on young adult Armenians in contrast with middle-aged and older.

I have worked with the Armenian community for ten years in outreach and support work capacity. I have been closely involved in the lives of hundreds of them during these years. Moreover, six months ago I have started group therapy in which the programme consists of art therapy and psycho-education. Therefore, it's an opportunity for me to know and understand them even more.

In the meantime, six months ago I have started seeing three Armenian young clients on a one-to-one basis. They refused to join the group highlighting that Armenians are closed-minded people with strong cultural views and they resist sharing their experiences with them. They will be judged and they don't feel safe. One of them is homosexual which is taboo in the Armenian culture and the other two are young mothers who struggle with a number of different issues, partially cultural. Interestingly, they all speak fluent English but made a decision to work with me rather than to go to other service providers outside the Armenian community. This grasped my attention, as I would like to know more about this age group. My knowledge is not deep with their way of being, I also have strong cultural beliefs which are deeply embedded in me. I am curious to understand the lived experience of young Armenians. Furthermore, to find a way to support this age group in the community. In contrast, I would like to have middle-aged and older participants to be able to make a comparison.

The research will allow me to understand my own daughter better and get closer to her. She is 18 years old and the more she is growing the more she is reminding me about my judgements, prejudices, and strong cultural blind spots. Undertaking this research, self-reflection, and writing about my bias will help me grow.

During this six-months period of working with these three clients, I realised that I am more curious to understand young Armenians compared to middle-aged or older. I have worked with Armenian elders (60+) and their carers and I know more about their way of being compared to a younger age group.

Working with young adult Armenians will help me stay mindful of their perspectives towards life. I will understand their cultural struggles (if there are any). I also can provide this information to the wider community such as other therapists. Understanding young Armenians may help bridge gaps between themselves and the older Armenian adults such as family and community members. By understanding them better I may be able to involve them more in the community work as we don't have any activities and involvements from this age group.

Apart from the individuals' lived experiences at the personal level (Physical and psychological dimension), the evolved community impacted individuals' lives at the social level (social dimension) which will be looked at in the study. Above all, if the Armenian Apostolic Church had an impact on the lives of Armenians in London, will be explored. Structured religion such as the Armenian Apostolic Church is an area which I will be reflecting on throughout the research as I have strong views in regards to this.

I am mindful that I am a volunteer immigrant and I have realised that my lived experience is very different from that of many other Armenians, despite our similarities. *Reflexivity* will be written in my journal and thesis. I will ensure that my research is balanced by reflecting on the possible sources of bias and taking any necessary steps to reduce them along each step. I shall try to put aside my personal views and make sure they do not influence the collection of data and its interpretation. This will also gain the trust of the readers and together with supervision, obtain inter-subjectivity when interpreting data.

Binswanger's and van Deurzen's framework was chosen to structure my interpretation of the data. The specific existential perspective would be on the sense of belonging and construction of meaning, which merges with cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and self-identity.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, **IPA protocol** was adopted as a suitable method to use for research (Smith, et al. 2009). The four dimensions described by van Deurzen (2014) were used to help with the structuring of the interview questions in addition to the IPA. Data were collected using semi-structured interview approach. (please see page 17 - section 4.2 Research Method on Research Proposal)

The interviews will be recorded and transcribed, plus my notes in each interview will be used for analyses.

Drafted interview questions are as below:

- What is it like to be an Armenian living in the UK?
- What is your lived experience as Diaspora Armenian (or Armenian from Armenia)?
- How would you describe your self-identity?
- What does Armenian culture mean to you?
- What is it like to adapt (or not to adapt) to the Western culture?
- What is it like to be (or not to be) part of the Armenian community in London?
- How would you describe your sense of belonging?
- What does the Armenian Apostolic Church mean to you?
- What are your hopes for the future of the Armenians in London?

### **Inclusion Criteria**

Participants who have satisfied the following '*inclusion criteria*' will be included in the study:

- Ethnicity: Armenian
- Place of birth: Either Armenia or Diaspora

- Immigration type (if not born in the UK): Volunteer
- Duration in the UK a minimum of two years
- Age: (18-25), (45-66)
- Gender: Any gender
- Language: English

*'Exclusion criteria'* there will be no discrimination in recruiting candidates.

The research population will include eight Armenians, four from each age group. The birthplace of the participants may differ as I am keen to understand the effect of subculture and tradition on the lived experiences of each participant. Only individuals who migrated voluntarily will be included in the study if they were born outside the UK, as I am interested to explore the existential theme of choice/responsibility and how participants feel around that. Participants should be based in the UK for a minimum of two years, this duration has been chosen for the study because it is important that a sufficient time period has elapsed. The age range would be (18-25) & (45-66), as I would like to explore the way of living of the young adult Armenians. Being involved closely with different age group programmes of the Armenian community, I have realised that the younger generation who integrated more into the British society live very differently compared to the older generation.

Moreover, I am aware of the limitation that such a small number of participants may not provide sufficient data to explore different aspects on a deeper level. I would like to explore up to what age they are able to take in a new culture, teenagers and early 20s may find it easier to adapt to a new culture through the years as we tend to be more flexible at this time, whereas those who have reached their 40s may have already settled deeply into the original culture and way of living, finding it more difficult to accept a new culture.

The research will be advertised on social media (FB) on the CAIA page. Armenians who would be interested to participate in the research, and have met the criteria, will be contacted. If I don't receive enough responses I will turn to snowball sampling in order to gain more stakeholders if necessary, as the participants are likely to know others who share the characteristics that make them eligible for inclusion in this study.

I propose to undertake a pilot study after the first interview and to transcribe it as I may find that an idea develops or I may decide to make some changes. Furthermore, the pilot study may assist me in identifying issues or barriers related to recruiting participants. I will also undertake an interview with myself as the participant, and my supervisor or personal therapist playing the role of me as the researcher. This will allow me to identify themes/bias which will be reflected throughout the study. Interviewing myself would help me understand if the questions are structured well and bring out the most. This will allow future interviews and data analysis to be at the minimum bias for participants and myself.

## **7 INDEPENDENT FIELD/LOCATION WORK RISK ASSESSMENT**

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*This proforma is applicable to, and must be completed in advance for, the following field/location work situations:*



1. All field/location work undertaken independently by individual students, either in the UK or overseas, including in connection with proposition module or dissertations. Supervisor to complete with student(s).
2. All field/location work undertaken by postgraduate students. Supervisors to complete with student(s).
3. Field/location work undertaken by research students. Student to complete with supervisor.
4. Field/location work/visits by research staff. Researcher to complete with Research Centre Head.
5. Essential information for students travelling abroad can be found on [www.fco.gov.uk](http://www.fco.gov.uk)

#### FIELD/LOCATION WORK DETAILS

<b>Name:</b>	Scarlet Sarksan	<b>Student No</b> <b>Research Centre:(staff only)</b>	M00618405
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Prof. Ho Law	<b>Degree course</b>	DCPsych

<b>NEXT OF KIN</b> Telephone numbers and name of next of kin who may be contacted in the event of an accident	<b>Name:</b> Raymond Abrahamian <b>Phone:</b> 079 7311 6557
<b>Physical or psychological limitations to carrying out the proposed field/location work</b>	N/A
<b>Any health problems (full details)</b> Which may be relevant to proposed field/location work activity in case of emergencies.	N/A
<b>Locality (Country and Region)</b>	Local
<b>Travel Arrangements</b> NB: Comprehensive travel and health insurance must always be obtained for independent overseas field/location work.	N/A

<b>Dates of Travel and Field/location work</b>	Click here to enter text.
--	---------------------------

**Hazard Identification an Risk Assessment**

List the localities to be visited or specify routes to be followed **(Col. 1)**. For each locality, enter the potential hazards that may be identified beyond those accepted in everyday life. Add details giving cause for concern **(Col. 2)**.

**Examples of Potential Hazards: LOW**

Adverse weather: exposure (heat, sunburn, lightening, wind, hypothermia)

Terrain: rugged, unstable, fall, slip, trip, debris, and remoteness. Traffic: pollution.

Demolition/building sites, assault, getting lost, animals, disease.

Working on/near water: drowning, swept away, disease (weils disease, hepatitis, malaria, etc), parasites', flooding, tides and range.

Lone working: difficult to summon help, alone or in isolation, lone interviews.

Dealing with the public: personal attack, causing offence/intrusion, misinterpreted, political, ethnic, cultural, socio-economic differences/problems. Known or suspected criminal offenders.

Safety Standards (other work organisations, transport, hotels, etc), working at night, areas of high crime.

Ill health: personal considerations or vulnerabilities, pre-determined medical conditions (asthma, allergies, fitting) general fitness, disabilities, persons suited to task.

Articles and equipment: inappropriate type and/or use, failure of equipment, insufficient training for use and repair, injury.

Substances (chemicals, plants, bio- hazards, waste): ill health - poisoning, infection, irritation, burns, cuts, eye-damage.

Manual handling: lifting, carrying, moving large or heavy items, physical unsuitability for task

**If no hazard can be identified beyond those of everyday life, enter 'NONE'.**

<b>1. LOCALITY/ROUTE</b> <b>(specify here the exact name and address of each locality/organization)</b>	<b>2. POTENTIAL HAZARDS</b>
--	-----------------------------

<p>Centre for Armenian Information &amp; Advice (CAIA), 105 A Mill Hill Road, Acton, London, W3 8JF</p>	<p>Location: Acton, Ealing Borough</p> <p>Transport: Acton Town Station is a 2-minute walk from the CAIA which makes the venue easily accessible.</p> <p>Building: The building is 30 years old and has been recently renovated, the safety standard is high, and it has many fire alarms, fire exits and trained first aiders with full updated first aid kits. Health &amp; Safety procedures are in place as the centre is used on a weekly basis by community members, the elderly, children, and youth. It is wheelchair accessible and has disabled toilets.</p> <p>Confidentiality: There are 3 interview rooms in the centre, on the ground floor, first floor, and second floor which are all secure and safe, and have windows, fans/heating/lighting. The second-floor room is a large size in case any participant feels claustrophobic. Participants can choose any room they prefer.</p> <p>The interviews will take place within office hours from 10:00am to 15:00pm.</p>
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The University Field/Location work code of Practice booklet provides practical advice that should be followed in planning and conducting field/location work.

Risk Minimisation/Control Measures                      Please Read Very Carefully

For each hazard identified (**Col 2**), list the precautions/control measures in place or that will be taken (**Col 3**) to "**reduce the risk to acceptable levels**", and the safety equipment (**Col 5**) that will be employed.

Assuming the safety precautions/control methods that will be adopted (**Col. 3**), categorise the field/location work risk for each location/route as negligible, low, moderate or high (**Col. 4**).

**Risk increases with both the increasing likelihood of an accident and the increasing severity of the consequences of an accident.**

**An acceptable level of risk is:** a risk which can be safely controlled by person taking part in the activity using the precautions and control measures noted including the necessary instructions, information and training relevant to that risk. The resultant risk should not be significantly higher than that encountered in everyday life.

**Examples of control measures/precautions:**

Providing adequate training, information & instructions on field/location work tasks and the safe and correct use of any equipment, substances and personal protective equipment. Inspection and safety check of any equipment prior to use. Assessing individual's fitness and suitability to environment and tasks involved. Appropriate clothing, environmental information consulted and advice followed (weather conditions, tide times etc.). Seek advice on harmful plants, animals & substances that may be encountered, including information and instruction on safe procedures for handling hazardous substances. First aid provisions, inoculations, individual medical requirements, logging of location, route and expected return times of lone workers. Establish emergency procedures (means of raising an alarm, back up arrangements). Working with colleagues (pairs). **Lone working is not permitted where the risk of physical or verbal violence is a realistic possibility.** Training in interview techniques and avoiding /defusing conflict, following advice from local organisations, wearing of clothing unlikely to cause offence or unwanted attention. Interviews in neutral locations. Checks on Health and Safety standards & welfare facilities of travel, accommodation and outside organisations. Seek information on social/cultural/political status of field/location work area.

**Examples of Safety Equipment:** Hardhats, goggles, gloves, harness, waders, whistles, boots, mobile phone, ear protectors, bright fluorescent clothing (for roadside work), dust mask, etc. If a proposed locality has not been visited previously, give your authority for the risk assessment stated or indicate that your visit will be preceded by a thorough risk assessment.

<b>3. PRECAUTIONS/CONTROL MEASURES</b>	<b>4. RISK ASSESSMENT</b> (low, moderate, high)	<b>5. SAFETY/EQUIPMENT</b>
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<p>Ealing borough has a medium crime rate, according to the police recorded crime figures per 1000 population. (<a href="https://www.getwestlondon.co.uk">https://www.getwestlondon.co.uk</a>),</p> <p>To prevent any danger and to reduce the risk I will be carrying a personal alarm as a protection during the journey. I am completely familiar with the traveling route as I have been living in this area for 23 years. However, I have never felt or witnessed any dangerous situations. The local police station is a 3-minute walk from the centre in the case of an emergency. The centre's door is always locked and secured with a CCTV camera, unauthorised individuals are not allowed to enter the building.</p> <p>Interviews will be carried out during office hours at the Centre for Armenian Information &amp; Advice. Confidentiality will be maintained in the premises.</p> <p>I (the researcher) am already familiar with the venue (CAIA), the environment, the layout of the building, and all of the fire exits/ health and safety procedures, as I have worked at the venue for 10 years.</p> <p>It is unlikely that the research will involve any risk to the researcher. The primary supervisor (Professor Ho Law) and the next of kin will be aware of the timing and location of the interviews. There will be office staff that the researcher will be able to liaise with at the Centre (CAIA). The researcher will inform the supervisor and the next of kin after she has completed the interview and left the premises.</p>	Low	N/A
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There will be a procedure for interviewing one-to-one. This will involve the following areas being adhered to:

- The researcher will terminate the interview should she feel unsafe at any point.
- The researcher will be in contact with the supervisor on completion of each interview.
- If during the interview, it becomes apparent that there is the potential for anyone to be at risk, the researcher will adhere to the health & safety procedure of the Centre. This will be discussed with the appropriate staff member of the Centre.

**PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AND SIGN AS APPROPRIATE**

**DECLARATION:** The undersigned have assessed the activity and the associated risks and declare that there is no significant risk or that the risk will be controlled by the method(s) listed above/over. Those participating in the work have read the assessment and will put in place precautions/control measures identified.

***NB: Risk should be constantly reassessed during the field/location work period and additional precautions taken or field/location work discontinued if the risk is seen to be unacceptable.***

<b>Signature of Field/location worker (Student/Staff)</b>	Scarlet Sarksan	<b>Date:</b>	12 April 2019
<b>Signature of Student Supervisor</b>	HC Law	<b>Date:</b>	12 April 2019
<b>APPROVAL: (ONE ONLY)</b> <b>Signature of Director of Programmes (undergraduate students only)</b>	Click here to enter text.	<b>Date:</b>	Click here to enter a date.
<b>Signature of Research Degree Co-ordinator or Director of Programmes (Postgraduate)</b>	Click here to enter text.	<b>Date:</b>	Click here to enter a date.
<b>Signature of Research Centre Head (for staff field/location workers)</b>	Click here to enter text.	<b>Date:</b>	Click here to enter a date.

**FIELD/LOCATION WORK CHECK LIST**

1. Ensure that **all members** of the field party possess the following attributes (where relevant) at a level appropriate to the proposed activity and likely field conditions:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Safety Knowledge & Training?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Awareness of cultural, social & political differences?
--	--

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Personal clothing & safety equipment?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suitability of field/location workers to proposed tasks?
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Physical & psychological fitness & disease immunity, protection & awareness?	

2. Have all the necessary arrangements been made and information/instruction gained, and have the relevant authorities been consulted or informed with regard to. Yes

<input type="checkbox"/> Visa, permits?	<input type="checkbox"/> Weather conditions, tide times and ranges?
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal access to sites and/or persons?	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitability of field/location workers to proposed tasks?
<input type="checkbox"/> Vaccinations and other health precautions?	<input type="checkbox"/> Safety equipment and protective clothing?
<input type="checkbox"/> Financial and insurance implications?	<input type="checkbox"/> Travel and accommodation arrangements?
<input type="checkbox"/> Health insurance arrangements?	<input type="checkbox"/> Arrival times after journeys?
<input type="checkbox"/> Civil unrest and terrorism?	<input type="checkbox"/> Emergency procedures?
<input type="checkbox"/> Crime risk?	<input type="checkbox"/> Transport use?
<input type="checkbox"/> Political or military sensitivity of the proposed topic, its method or location?	

**Important information for retaining evidence of completed risk assessments:**

Once the risk assessment is completed and approval gained the **supervisor** should retain this form and issue a copy of it to the field/location worker participating on the field course/work. In addition, the **approver** must keep a copy of this risk assessment in an appropriate Health and Safety file.

RP/cc Sept 2010

**8 1<sup>st</sup> Reviewer's decision**

**For Revise and Resubmit decisions, particular attention should be paid to the following:**

- |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Section 1 details incomplete  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Clarity of Research Proposal | <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism and presentation of participant documentation (information sheet, informed consent, debriefing) |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completeness of ethical approval form (individual questions requiring clarification may be identified here)     |  |  |

**Additional comments from Reviewer 1:**

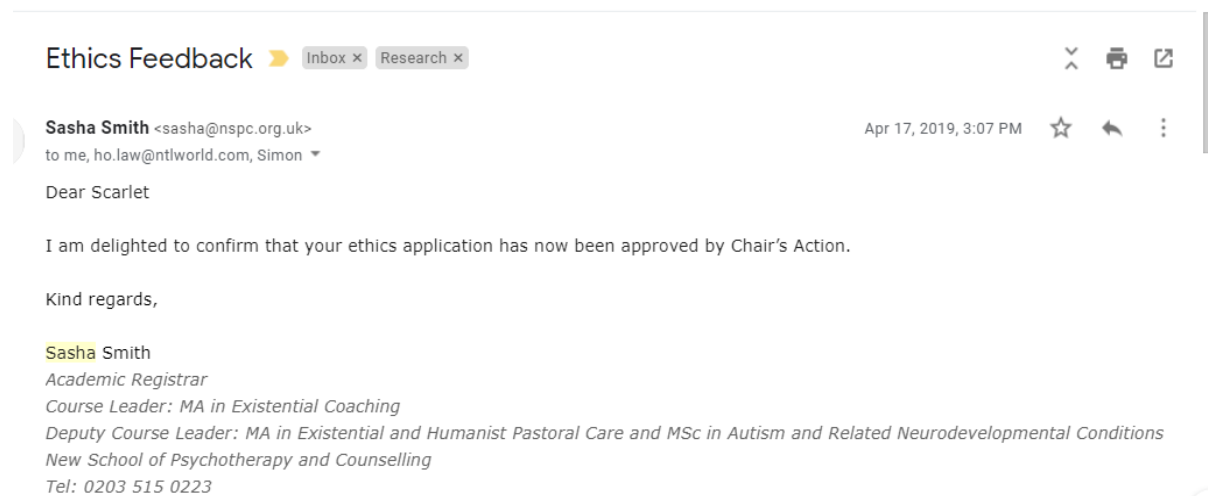
**FOR DOUBLE REVIEW ONLY – Reviewer 2**

**For Revise and Resubmit decisions, particular attention should be paid to the following:**

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Section 1 details incomplete  | <input type="checkbox"/> Clarity of Research Proposal | <input type="checkbox"/> Risk Assessment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professionalism and presentation of participant documentation (information sheet, informed consent, debriefing) |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Completeness of ethical approval form (individual questions requiring clarification may be identified here)     |   |  |

**Additional comments from Reviewer 2:**

## Appendix D. Confirmation of Ethical Approval



## Appendix E. Participant Information Sheet



### Title:

An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of the Armenians in London

### Invitation paragraph

You are invited to take part in a Doctoral research study about the lived experiences of Armenians in London. If you choose to participate as a co-researcher, please read the information below. If you are still interested to take part in this particular study or have further questions, please contact me on: [armenianresearch@gmail.com](mailto:armenianresearch@gmail.com)

### What is the purpose of the research?

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of Armenians in London; their cultural/religious beliefs, values, self-identity, and sense of belonging. Armenians live in London with a unique culture and subcultures within them as they arrived as part of the diaspora. Additionally, every individual Armenian is different in their unique way of being.

### Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you meet this particular research criteria: Your ethnicity is Armenian, you've been living in London for more than two years, you are between the age of 18-65 and I am interested in your cultural values, spiritual beliefs, and self-identity.

### Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage before the analysis of data starts. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You will be given a written document explaining confidentiality and anonymity in order to protect your data. Any kind of identifiable clue would be changed, for example, the name of a place.

### What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be invited to attend an interview at the CAIA, 105A Mill Hill Road, Acton, W3 8JF. I shall ask you a few questions about your experience of living in London. If you are not at ease with any of the questions you are entitled to pass without answering or giving any explanation for not responding.

The description of your experience will help me to understand your lived experience in London. What you bring has a high value to the research and the possible recommendations for interventions to improve the quality of life and experience of Armenians in London in the future. I may contact you for a second time to provide you with the transcript, to check for accuracy and opportunity for you to amend or describe anything further if you wish.

### What are the possible disadvantages to taking part?

The topic may be sensitive for you and might be anxiety-provoking, as I will be asking you to talk about possibly difficult memories or experiences which can be upsetting. Therefore, please feel free to communicate that with me during the interview or perhaps consider stopping the interview without obligation or need to give explanation. After the interview if you still feel disturbed don't hesitate to contact me, also see a list of therapists and helpline in the Annex of this letter which you might find helpful.

### What are the possible advantages of taking part?

People tend to feel better when they talk about their lived experience with someone who they could trust in a safe environment and find the experience itself empowering. This may be used for further research or mental/physical/social support. This research will increase the understanding of mental health practitioners in regard to Armenians, so they may help to contribute a higher quality service. The research outcome may support the mental health services to offer more culturally sensitive services, for example, in different languages. Furthermore, it may influence the policy makers' decisions in regard to the underrepresented groups.

### Consent

You will be given a copy of the above information and asked to sign a consent form prior to taking part. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw any time from the study before the submission of the research.

### Confidentiality

The data is recorded so that the information is not immediately identified with the subject who supplied it. In my research each of the transcripts will have a code identifier (ID) for future reference if I need to come back to them. The personal information of the participants' matching ID will be kept separate from transcripts in a locked cabinet to ensure security. Records in Dictaphone will also be kept locked in my office at home. All the personal information of the participants will be destroyed six months after the publication of the thesis. The transcripts (with no identifiable personal information) will be kept for ten years to facilitate future research and validation. What will be done with the provided information will be put in writing and the participants will have a copy.

As the research will be published, all identifying information about participants will be changed.

### Who is organising and funding the research?

This doctoral research is self-funded.

### Who has reviewed the study?

Two research supervisors and NSPC Ethics Committee.

**Annex**

Directory of Existential Therapists

London <http://existentialanalysis.org.uk/find-a-therapist/existential-therapists-london/>

<https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us> Telephone: 116 123 (UK)

<https://www.mind.org.uk>

[https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-\(IAPT\)/LocationSearch/10008](https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological-therapies-(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008)

<http://www.eachcounselling.org.uk/>

Telephone: 020 8577 6059

<http://www.mind-eh.org.uk/>

Telephone: 020 8571 7454

<http://www.metanoia.ac.uk/>

Telephone: 020 8579 2505

Researcher:

**Scarlet Sarksan**

Supervisor:

**Prof. Ho Law**



## Appendix F. Informed Consent



Title: An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of the Armenians in London

Researcher: Scarlet Sarksan

Supervisor: Prof. Ho Law

- I have understood the details of the research as explained to me by the researcher, and confirm that I have consented to act as a participant.
- I have been given contact details for the researcher in the information sheet.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, the data collected during the research will not be identifiable, and I have the right to withdraw from the project at any time before submission of the research without any obligation to explain my reasons for doing so.
- I understand that the data I provide may be used for analysis and subsequent publication, and I provide my consent that this may occur.

\_\_\_\_\_

Print name

\_\_\_\_\_

Sign Name

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**To the participant:** Data may be inspected by the Chair of the Psychology Ethics panel and the Chair of the School of Health and Education Ethics committee of Middlesex University if required by institutional audits about the correctness of procedures. Although this would happen in strict confidentiality, please tick here if you do not wish your data to be included in audits: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G. Debriefing



**Title:** An Exploration of the Lived Experiences of the Armenians in London

**Researcher:** Scarlet Sarksan (email: [armenianresearch@gmail.com](mailto:armenianresearch@gmail.com))

**Supervisor:** Prof. Ho Law

Thank you for participating as a research participant in the present study on sharing your lived experience as a young adult Armenian in London. The present study explores your lived experience in London; your cultural/religious beliefs, values, self-identity, and sense of belonging.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to ask.

If you feel psychologically distressed, during or after the participation in this study, we encourage you to communicate with the researcher. The researcher will give you the information of organisations which will support you further.

If you are feeling disturbed and are unable to contact the researcher or if you have any complaints, please contact the research supervisor Prof. Ho Law.

Telephone: +44(0)1733 760005

Mobile (UK): 07982967243

Mobile (roaming): +44(0) 7401353010

email: [drholaw@gmail.com](mailto:drholaw@gmail.com)

Thanks again for your participation.

## Appendix H. Participants Recruitment Advertisement

### Attention for Research Recruitment



Are you:

- An Armenian descent?
- Migrated from: Iran, Cyprus, or Armenia?
- Migrated voluntarily?
- Duration in the UK: a minimum of two years?
- Age: 18 to 65?
- Fluent in English

### We need you!

Your participation is needed in a psychological study on 'Lived Experiences of Armenians in London'.

Call CAIA office on 020 8992 4621

Email: [armenianresearch@gmail.com](mailto:armenianresearch@gmail.com)

Your support will be much appreciated.

**Appendix I. Proforma of Identification of Research Participants**

Researcher: Scarlet Sarksan

Address:

105A Mill Hill Road

Acton W3 8JF

Email: [armenianresearch@gmail.com](mailto:armenianresearch@gmail.com)

Participant's Name:	Date:
---------------------	-------

<b>Identification</b>
Ethnicity:
Place of birth:
Immigration type (volunteer or in-volunteer):
Duration in the UK:
Age:
Gender:
Language:

## Appendix J. A Sample of Transcripts

### What is it like to be an Armenian living in London?

Eh I think in London it's such a diverse community but it's very easy to blend with anything, I think being an Armenian to an outsider is no different from being anything really. Especially to people who are a little more ignorant to the facts, they probably look at everyone as the same, oh like some Arab or Indian or whatever. So from an outsiders' point of view probably were all the same. For me like I say I feel like I blend in with everyone, eh encountering other Armenians is not a day to day sort of thing, it is only family or friends who you see regularly, of course, you don't just bump into Armenians on the street, so yeah you are what you are in this mesh that is London and em yeah I guess it's just the same as anyone else really, no different, em at least for me. My upbringing was very integrated anyway so it's not like a lot of people they stick to their ghetto or whatever, but my family was always like integrated, be both, Armenian as much as you can, but also British as much as you can. I think Charles Aznavour once said, something like, I am 100% French and 100% Armenian, that's kind of the way I would view it as well, I am very much British in culture but I am also very much Armenian.

### What does Armenian culture mean to you?

Well ethnically I am pretty much 100% Armenian, I am a very small percentage Austro-Hungarian from my dad's side, dad's mum was half Austro-Hungarian, I say that because she is literally half Austrian, half Hungarian back from the time of the Austro-Hungarian empire, so that was kind of an interesting little mix, but we are not really connected to any of that. I think percentage-wise I'm 80/85% Armenian, something like that. As far as we know, sorry I'm getting carried away. What was the question?

### What does the culture mean to you, when you said Armenian culture and the British culture?

So like I said before I am Western-Armenian, I feel like I'm not very at root, I'm not a very nationalistic or patriotic person, I mean I don't agree with the idea of nationalism, on the whole, patriotism I think is okay, but I don't really see myself in that mindset. I feel like it wasn't for the fact that em my culture was isolated and dying, if that was not the case I probably wouldn't care, but it is and I think that's the case with a lot of Armenians. That sense of responsibility to hold onto what you have and preserve it. And especially as I really like history and politics I look into all of these things and up realise the magnitude of it, and realise the state that it is in, and you can't help but be a little passionate about that, even if you wouldn't want to be. So like I said I'm not really a nationalistic or a patriotic person, but I care about the culture and the people and the preservation of it. it's not a sense of flag-waving or nationhood, it's more of a case of not having thousands of years of history be lost in a few years.

### So what would it mean to you, if you lose that?

Well, obviously the people that it would mean the most to is ourselves, the Armenians. I mean I can't speak for all Armenians, as you said before, there are so many different aspects.

Armenians come from everywhere, people simplify it nowadays as to just Eastern and Western, but it's so much more than that, even in small regions there was literally, every village had its own dialect. And obviously, after the genocide there was what is Armenia today, that was taken by the Soviets, many Armenians escaped there, and they became their own thing and that became what is nowadays Eastern Armenia with the Eastern Armenian language, and their own culture and obviously most of the diaspora was Western Armenia, from Turkey the Ottoman empire, and they developed the standardised form of Western Armenian which is what we generally know today, but everyone has their own separate language, culture, traditions, clothing... sorry I keep going off on tangents, don't I? the question was what would it mean if we lost it right?

**Mhm, what would it mean to you?**

It would be sad, sad for me. from a historical point of view, it would be a huge loss to global history and culture, it's something that a historian would definitely recognise and go hang on this is bad, we've lost that, in the same way, you might say nobody speaks the ancient Egyptian language, or ancient Greek or whatever. Armenian is an ancient language and of ancient people, and losing that would be a huge historical loss, and it would be sad for all of us. personally, because it's like we are sort of lost, and that's it, fizzle out and die into the world, I guess. You know, I think Armenia as a nation, as it is a nation, it has that long-term stability. And the same can't be said for the diaspora, we have our centres, we have places where the diaspora is stronger, and even historic places that have even been for many hundreds or even thousands of years, mostly in the Middle East. I think especially now, ever since Armenia got independence a lot of focus has been put there and a lot of the diaspora has been forgotten. There's a lot of other factors to this, for instance, Lebanon during the cold war era up until Armenia got the independence has sort of been seen as like the centre of the Armenian world, particularly in the 1960s and 70s before the civil war started. The civil war started and a lot of Armenians there left, they kind of spread out to many other parts of the diaspora, and then obviously the civil war, and then that ended, then Armenia got independent, Lebanon got destroyed and people kind of forgot about it, then all the focus went to Armenia, sending money there, that's the only thing that matters and a lot of not just Lebanon, but pretty much any other diaspora community, historic ones got forgotten. As a result of that, we are kind of in a position at the moment where all these historic communities as kind of dwindling. The people there are either moving abroad or moving to Armenia, and they're not getting any funding and as a result, they're kind of dying which is a shame.

**Have you been to Armenia?** Yeah I've been to Armenia twice

**How do you feel about it?**

Okay, so, I don't think I would ever... you know, you always go where your family is, my family is literally all over the world, as I think most diaspora Armenians are. I think my first holiday, the first place I went to when I was 1 year old in 1997, not even 1 as I was born in 1997, my family went to Lebanon, the civil war had stopped there. So my grandmother on my mum's side, she's born in Lebanon but she moved to Cyprus later on in life. She has a very long and complex story, she has a book and everything is very interesting.

**And your mother was born in Cyprus?** No both my parents are born here; they are both born in the UK so they're quite British as well as you would imagine.

So it's my grandparents, 3 of my grandparents were born in Cyprus, one was born in Lebanon. It's just that the family in Lebanon is very big and kind of prominent, so my grandma's family, they're on Lebanon, my granddad on my mum's side, his family mainly moved to... they were in Lebanon and Cyprus as well but they're mainly in LA now, LA and Canada. I don't know about my grandma's, on that side, or how family kind of is. em But my dad's family, they are all in Cyprus, and a lot of them are still in Cyprus, other places as well, you know you literally have hundreds and thousands of cousins all over the world. But that's sort of the main bases, so America, Canada, Lebanon, and Cyprus. *(Cont'd)*



### Appendix K. IPA Matrix of Themes (Participant 1)

Emergent Themes	Original Transcript	Lines	Exploratory Comments
Against control & force, critique cultural norms	<p><u>Being forced from a very young age</u>. I don't know what is happening in those minds of young kids and may be they do start to seriously believe in those things and that's what happens and then passes on generation by generations.</p>	79-81	<p>His worry is that parents and society enforce ideas and believes up on children. He is expressing rejection towards enforcing traditional believes on children. Children should have the opportunity of questioning the parents' beliefs and values. He expresses that Armenia may not be modernise, as these traditional views are being forced upon children, meaning the generations are passing on these same views and beliefs. He is seeking for justice for the next generation. These feelings for other children is perhaps the projection and reminder of his childhood which the memory may be still raw.</p>
Against control & force, critique cultural norms	<p>It has dark sides of that mentality, <u>homophobia, racism</u> and thinking one way. You know, if you are in a group talking, if you want to avoid any conflict you <u>better agree</u> with everyone else...specially in Armenia</p>	123-124	<p>Expressing that if you want to fit in society in Armenia you must follow the rest, otherwise you will fall into conflict. Criticising the prejudice perspective of the society.</p>



<p>Against discrimination, Humanitarian perspective, need of conformity, fear of judgement</p>	<p>If there is conversation going on and I don't know about, let's say Russians, it's a trend, like recently everyone hating Russians and if you <u>don't agree</u> with them then they starting joking like, ye maybe your wife is Russian</p>	<p>126-128</p>	<p>Sly remarks will be made if one does not conform. He felt his being different and even having a different opinion hasn't been accepted. There is no such thing as mixed opinion. People would make fun of others with different opinion, perhaps he has experienced that. Feeling annoyed.</p>
<p>Armenian Genocide, against prejudice</p>	<p><u>I feel it's not fair</u> (raised the voice slightly) When they say things about Turkish people in general, that's just pure racism and <u>discrimination</u> about the whole nation.</p>	<p>47-48</p>	<p>He is rejecting generalisation about the Turkish nation and hatred towards them. There was a bit emotion in his voice - he came across defending Turkish people - he seems seeking peace within two nations. Although he didn't see himself a spiritual person but he is emphasising good and bad and what is moral.</p>
<p>Armenian Genocide</p>	<p>let's say about Turkish people, you know generalising it and being very ignorant about it</p>	<p>44-45</p>	<p>He is looking into the matter of the Armenian genocide with an open mind. He objects holding a grudge towards Turkish people. He has expectation from other Armenians to open their minds, looking from different perspectives.</p>

Armenian Genocide	For instance, <u>24 April is a huge day for Armenians</u> and what they do? they burn Turkish flag. That's just scary because that is provoking for another war. Why do you want your kids to be in a battlefield? Why are you saying to your children that it's okay to die if you are dying for your nation?	216-219	He disagrees with hatred towards any nation, he is expressing shame that his people are so naïve to behave so violent, only to promote anger and hate, passing these feelings onto the next generation.
Artistic side of the Armenian culture	A lot of things came out of that culture which I <u>absolutely adore, such as the music, art, films</u> , you know all those individuals who happened to be Armenian. That's what I associate with	104-106	He agrees that the culture has some positive aspects that he associates with. He appreciates the artistic part of the culture and rejects some of the behavioural part.
British values	I totally associate myself more with this country than Armenia, the way of thinking, the mentality. (pause) Because I guess <u>in Armenia they are all about being very inclusive em, and here it is kind of the opposite and being very open minded.</u>	155-158	Brexit result created confusion for him, however he still feels that he belongs more to the UK than Armenia. He relates more with British mentality and way of living.

British values	The more interesting you are ... the more different you are, the better you fit in this society.	34-35	London is so diverse, he sees positive to stand out, to not follow the 'norms' otherwise one may be judged as not interesting. Unlike Armenia where when he stood out, he felt judged. He feels in the British society he can express himself more and be who he wants to be.
Career opportunities in the UK, opportunities for growing professionally, hope for a bright future	Also the career opportunities here. You know <u>at least at the time</u> (smark) it looked like that they would give me a <u>bright future</u> .	13-14	The smark indicated that he came to London with a positive perspective about having career opportunities but the reality was different. Although he views that he will have a brighter future in England/London but it was not as easy as he thought. This is indicating by the use of 'at least at the time.'
Challenge of acculturation	When you move here you realise that it's not as easy as it might feel like. <b>What was the challenges?</b> <u>The challenge was to adapt. To learn the language.</u>	15-16	He witnessed the reality when he moved from the phase of imagining to reality. He was unaware and had lack of enough knowledge about the reality, he has found learning the language challenging. He also found adapting to the new environment challenging.  <i>(Cont'd)</i>

## Appendix L. Table of Superordinate Themes and Themes from one Participant

Themes	Line	Keywords
<i>Armenian history &amp; cultural values</i>		
Armenian Genocide	216	24 April is a huge day for Armenians.
Critiquing the Armenian Church	170	Armenian Church makes it even worse.
Having respect for the Armenian culture/traditions	70	I definitely respect the tradition.
Critiquing some cultural norms	41	I say again “yes” and “no”.
Against control and imposing the religious/cultural values	79	being forced from a very young age.
Family closeness	187	my sense of belonging in the family.
Seeing Armenians as creative	109	pushed the boundaries - who were creative.
Armenian art	104	I absolutely adore, such as music, art.
<i>The experience of migration &amp; acculturation</i>		
Feeling of association with England	155	I associate with this country than Armenia.
Feeling of being accepted	34	the more different you are, the better you fit in.
Appreciating English values	137	English people are extremely super polite.
Career opportunities in the UK	13	career opportunities - bright future.
Against segregation	229	its disrespectful not to integrate.
Challenge of learning English	15	challenge was to adapt -to learn the language.
Brexit shaking perspective towards the English people/Gov.	149	disappointed with Brexit – disrespectful.
Fear of London-Armenian community	201	fear that it may be like back in Armenia.
<i>The experience before migration</i>		
Not fitting in the society in Armenia	123	it has dark sides of that mentality.
Feeling intimidated by the society in Armenia	127	if you don’t agree they starting joking.
<i>Humanitarian wish</i>		
Against prejudice towards Turkish people	47	not fair - pure racism and discrimination
Hopes for the future of the community	203	my hope for the community is to be happy.
Rejecting patriotism perspectives	98	I am not a patriot.
Wishing freedom of movement for people	190	again borders, countries, divisions.
Worrying for the future generation Armenians	94	I am still worried for the future generation.

(Cont'd)

## Appendix M. NVivo – 12 – Presenting Themes of Transcripts Individually

Level 4 - thematic analysis.nvp - NVivo 12 Pro

Open Memo Link Item Add To Set Create As Code Create As Cases Query Visualize Code Auto Code Range Code Uncode Case Classification File Classification Detail View Sort By Undock Navigation View List View Find Workspace

**Files** Search Project

Name	Codes	References	Modified On	Modified By	Classification
A-transcript		26	63 23/11/2020 19:35	SS	
MO-transcript		43	67 14/12/2020 12:45	SS	
M-transcript		44	62 18/12/2020 08:27	SS	
N - Transcript		50	67 18/12/2020 13:10	SS	
R's - transcript H. reviewed V1		36	52 21/11/2020 18:03	SS	
SE-transcript		40	99 23/11/2020 13:44	SS	
SH-transcript		46	69 23/11/2020 13:45	SS	
TA-transcript		39	86 23/11/2020 13:46	SS	

## Appendix N. Merged Themes of Eight Transcripts

Level 4 - thematic analysis.rmp - NVivo 12 Pro

Create Explore Share

Open Memo Link Add To Set Create As Code Create As Cases

Query Visualize Code Auto Code Range Code Uncode

Case Classification File Classification

Detail View Sort By Undock Navigation View List View Find

Workspace

Search Project

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Acculturated in London		8	23/11/2020 15:05	SS	30/12/2020 18:51	SS
Acculturation-mental health		2	29/12/2020 13:19	SS	30/12/2020 11:10	SS
Adapted British identity		2	18/12/2020 09:29	SS	20/12/2020 07:01	SS
Against intermarriage		2	29/12/2020 16:19	SS	30/12/2020 10:06	SS
Alienation from Armenian roots		1	14/12/2020 10:43	SS	14/12/2020 10:45	SS
Anxiety & fear of British society & acculturation		3	23/11/2020 15:03	SS	30/12/2020 10:04	SS
Anxiety of loss		2	19/12/2020 13:58	SS	30/12/2020 10:03	SS
Appreciating dual identity		4	18/12/2020 11:57	SS	20/12/2020 07:36	SS
Armenian language		6	29/12/2020 11:49	SS	30/12/2020 18:27	SS
Armenians are unseen in London		2	18/12/2020 13:39	SS	29/12/2020 16:56	SS
Armenians giving importance to certain subjects at university		2	18/12/2020 13:03	SS	30/12/2020 09:56	SS
Armenians having strict parenting style comparing to British		2	18/12/2020 12:02	SS	30/12/2020 10:03	SS
Armenians should have knowledge about their history & culture		3	19/12/2020 14:18	SS	30/12/2020 18:01	SS
Armenians to share their culture with others		2	23/11/2020 15:07	SS	19/12/2020 13:21	SS
Assimilation		2	14/12/2020 10:47	SS	19/12/2020 13:33	SS
Be good & Do good		1	19/12/2020 13:16	SS	19/12/2020 13:16	SS
Being London-Armenian an interesting experience		1	18/12/2020 11:55	SS	18/12/2020 11:55	SS
Being representative of 3 cultures		1	19/12/2020 13:14	SS	19/12/2020 13:14	SS
Believer of God and spirituality but not religious		2	19/12/2020 09:16	SS	20/12/2020 09:07	SS
Britain giving opportunities & safety		6	14/12/2020 11:43	SS	30/12/2020 18:36	SS
Britain having liberal society		1	14/12/2020 11:41	SS	14/12/2020 11:43	SS
Britain providing career and education opportunities		3	23/11/2020 15:04	SS	29/12/2020 16:09	SS

## Appendix O. Terminology

*Acculturation:* The process of cultural and psychological changes that occur within a person when cultural exchange occurs as a result of extended contact between people living in cultures different from their home (Powell, 2004).

*Diaspora:* The involuntary scattering of other populations, in specific Armenians and people of African descent. (Kenny, 2013).

*Bracketing:* Identifying and suspending one's judgments and assumptions, allowing the other's experiences to be understood as their reality (Moustakas, 1994).

*Culture:* Everything including elite artistic activities, the values, styles, and ideology of day-to-day conduct (Swidler, 1986).

*Dasein:* Meaning 'Being-there' (Heidegger, 1962).

*Eastern and Western Armenians:* The term Western Armenian is used for Armenians who come from Turkey, Cyprus, Lebanon, Syria, and Sudan and they have one dialect. Eastern Armenians are Iranian Armenians and Armenians coming from Armenia (*Hayastansis*) and speak the Eastern Armenian dialect (Bolsajian, 2018).

*Ethnic:* Those who do not belong to the majority of a community i.e., "the other" (Hutnik, 1991; Cornell & Hartmann, 1998).

*First, second, third, and fourth-generation:* First-generations are born in their home country but live in a different country and the second generation consists of the children of these people in the host country. The third generation is individuals with at least one parent born in the host country. And the fourth generation are those who are with their parents and at least one grandparent is also born in the host country (Bakalian, 1993; 2017).

*Genocide:* The word "genocide" was introduced by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish-Jewish lawyer, He used the word for the Turkish massacre of Armenians in WWI and later to describe Nazi crimes against European Jews during WWII. He introduced the term into the world of international law in the hopes of preventing and receiving justice for such horrifying crimes against humanity. He created the term by merging the Greek word *genos* (race or tribe), with the Latin word *cide* (to kill) (Balakian, 2013).

*Post Traumatic Growth:* The concept is often referred to as a positive psychological outcome after a traumatic event (Yalom & Lieberman, 1991).

*Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*: is a psychiatric disorder that may occur in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as a natural disaster, a serious accident, a terrorist act, war/combat, or rape or who have been threatened with death, sexual violence or serious injury (American Psychiatric Association. 2013. Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5).

*Psychological home*: Can be defined as a sense of belonging in which self-identity is tied to that particular place (Amit & Bar-Lev, 2015).



### Appendix P. Excluded Studies from the Literature Review

Title of the Study	Author	Year	Country	Excluded
The Armenian diaspora and repatriates: a story of genocide, conflict and influence	Bomert, Bert	2020	Armenia	Political focus - history of 20th century - collapse of Soviet Union - Conflict of Karabakh
Effects of labour migration on social change in the country of origin	Nersisyan, Sona	2020	USA	Anthropological focus -Labour migration and social changes
The role of the newspaper Parekordzagani Tzain and its related institutions in the preservation of language and identity in the Armenian community of Plovdiv	Selvelli, Giustina	2018	Bulgaria	Political focus – linguistic changes
The Armenian Church of Famagusta and the Complexity of Cypriot Heritage: Prayers Long Silent (Mediterranean Perspectives)	Walsh, Michael J.K.	2017	Cyprus	Political, historical, anthropological - seven centuries of change in Cyprus
Quiet Voices, Faded Photographs: Remembering the Armenian Genocide in Varujan Vosganian's 'The Book of Whispers'	Mironescu, Andreea	2017	Romania	Memory of Romanian-Armenian writer - Armenian genocide
Coming to Terms with Home and Homeland	Bertram, Carel	2016	USA	Armenia discrepancy; ethnography
The art of Allusion: The usage of symbolism in recollections of the forgotten	Ohanian, Vasken Aristakes	2016	USA	Political, art

Language in Armenian American communities: Western Armenian and efforts for preservation	Chahinian, Talar; Bakalian, Anny	2016	USA	Western Armenian language in Armenian day schools within the United States
Migrants, Revolutionaries, and Spies: Surveillance, Politics, and Ottoman Identity in the United States	Gutman, David	2016	USA	Political, Ottoman Armenian identity
Playwriting in Armenian diaspora: Melancholia and survival	Dalyanoğlu Altındış, Duygu	2016	USA	Art, Armenian theatre in north American
Alphabet and Writing in the Armenian Diaspora of Plovdiv: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives	Selvelli, Giustina	2015	Bulgaria	Anthropological Perspectives, Armenian alphabet as a symbolic cultivation
The 'Others' Within: The Armenian Community in Cyprus	Kasbarian, Sossie	2015	Cyprus	Nationalisms of the Greek Cypriot and Turkish
"How do I teach my kids my broken Armenian?": A study of Eastern Armenian heritage language speakers in Los Angeles	Karapetian, Shushan	2014	USA	Sociolinguistic
Gender and Migration: Armenian Women's Experiences 1990 to 2010	Karapetian Giori, Carina	2013	USA	Conventional gender relations within Armenia
Traumatic Memory Contestation and Preservation in Transnational Post-Genocide Communities: A Case Study of Diasporic Istanbul Armenians in Los Angeles, California	Matossian, Anahid M.	2013	USA	Ethnography - Armenian American lobbying on Istanbul Armenian community in Los Angeles

From idea to reality: The development of Armenian Studies in the U.S. from the 1890s to 1969	Mamigonian, Marc A.	2013	USA	Political - History of Armenian studies in USA
Armenians in Poland in the period of communism and in the Third Polish Republic	Pelczynski, Grzegorz	2012	Poland	Ethnography, history of Armenians in 20th century Poland
Search for roots in contemporary Armenian-American literature	Danişmant, Can	2012	USA	Literature
Diaspora Activism and the Politics of Locality: The Armenians of France	Al-Rustom, Hakem	2011	France	Political, Nagorno-Karabakh conflict
The Armenian diaspora in Romania: Roots, routes, recreations	Siekierski, Konrad	2011	Romania	History of Armenian community in Romania; current situation; relations with Armenia
The Armenian diaspora in Romania: Roots, routes, recreations	Siekierski, Konrad	2011	Romania	High school performance
The Armenians of Cyprus	Hadjilyra, Michael	2009	Cyprus	History - Ancient and modern history of Armenians in Cyprus
Art and Diasporic Identity in Los Angeles	Gigorian Abbamontian, Ramela	2009	USA	Art, Community of Armenian School in LA
On the Boundary of White: The Cartozian Naturalization Case and the Armenians, 1923-1925	Craver, Earlene	2009	USA	History, Politics

Hemshin, Homshetsi, or Hemshinli: Armenian speaking Muslim people of the Black Sea region	Shahnazaryan, Nona	2008	Russia & Georgia	Linguistics
Constructing identities, perceiving lives: Armenian high school students' perceptions of identity and education	Samkian, Artineh	2007	USA	Performance at school
Searching for identity: An exploration of narrative, behaviour, material culture, and curriculum as representations of identity	Mehranian, Yeprem	2007	USA	School's curriculum of Armenian day school in the United States
Contested memories. Divided Diaspora: Armenian Americans, the Thousand-Day Republic and the polarized response to an Archbishop's murder	Alexander, Benjamin F.	2007	USA	Political, Murder of Archbishop Levon Tourian
Almost home: perceptions of home and homeland among the Armenian diaspora in Lebanon	Krikorian, Marina	2007	Lebanon	Perceptions of homeland for Lebanese Armenians
Integration of Armenian Immigrants in Poland through Culture	Marciniak, Tomasz	2005	Poland	Linguistics - Western Armenian
Armenian and American: The changing face of ethnic identity and diasporic nationalism, 1915-1955	Alexander, Benjamin F.	2005	USA	Political
Armenians of Athens and Istanbul: the Armenian diaspora and the 'transnational' nation	Björklund, Ulf	2003	Greece & Turkey	History - Political
Becoming White: Contested History, Armenian American Women, and Racialized Bodies	Okoomian, Janice	2002	USA	History – Armenian Genocide

The Armenian Immigrant Community of California: 1880-1935	Kooshian, George B.	2002	USA	Community building in NY
The role of diasporas in conflict Perpetuation or Resolution	Shain, Yossi	2002	USA	History; economy; religion; politics of early Armenian community in California
The Armenians and the Maronites of Cyprus : comparative considerations concerning ethnic assimilation	Mavratsas, Caesar	2001	Cyprus	Comparative analysis; Armenian and communities
Preparing leaders for ethnic communities: The case of Armenian American summer internship programs	Bakalian, Anny	2001	USA	Summer internships for Armenian American youth
Armenian Identity and Greek Nationalism in Cyprus	Mavratsas, Caesar	2000	Cyprus	Nationalist Greek ideology compared to Cypriotism.
Institutions and their Agents in Diaspora: A Comparison of Armenians in Athens and Alevis in Germany	Sökefeld, Martin & Schwalgin, Susanne	2000	Greece	Armenian communities in Greece and Germany

## Appendix Q. Sample of Included Studies from the Literature Review

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	Reviewed Papers in Relation to Armenian Studies						
2	<b>Title of the Study</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Abstract/findings</b>	<b>Inclusion Criteria</b>	
3	Acculturative Influences on Psychological Well-Being and Health Risk Behaviors	Guevrekian et al.,	2020	USA	The acculturative process is often stressful	Acculturation	
4	The Role of Stigma on Mental Health Service Seeking Among Armenian-Americans	Saroyan	2019	USA	1. stigma originating from the Armenian community	Identity/acculturation	
5	Trauma Stories as Resilience: Armenian and Irish National Identity in a Context of Migration	Beukian	2018	UK	This paper explores the intersection of trauma and identity	Psychology - politics	
6	The Armenian Diaspora: Migration and its Influence on Identity and Political Engagement	Bolsajian	2018	USA	The diasporan occupies a liminal space as a result of migration	Psychology	
7	Ethnic Identity and Empathy: A Study of Second-Generation Armenian-Americans	Bedikian	2017	USA	Ethnic identity provides both affective and cognitive components	Identity/acculturation	
8	Armenian American Beliefs and Attitudes Toward Seeking Psychological Services	Yesayan	2014	USA	Findings: 70% spoke Armenian at home	Psychology/identity/a	
9	Integration of migrants: Armenian realities	Yeganyan	2013	Italy	defines notions of "old Armenian diaspora"	Psychology/identity/a	
10	Boundary, Diffusion and Transculture in the Everyday Life of Armenians in the Diaspora	Tadevosyan, Aghas	2012	Switzerland	In some cases transculturation is manifested	Identity/acculturation	
11	Armenian-Americans: From Being to Feeling American	Bakalian, Anny	2011	USA	Identity maintenance among Armenians in the diaspora	Psychology/identity/a	
12	Collective Trauma Transmission and Traumatic Reaction Among Second-Generation Armenians	Karenian et al.,	2011	Greece & USA	Background: It has been suggested, mainly in the context of the Armenian genocide	Identity/acculturation	
13	Familism as a Predictor of Parent-Adolescent Relationships and Developmental Outcomes	Ghazarian	2008	USA	We investigated associations between familism and psychological adjustment	Psychology/identity/a	
14	Acculturation, ethnic orientation and psychological adjustment in Armenian-Americans	Shirikian	2006	USA	Positive correlation between number of peers and acculturation	Psychology/identity/a	
15	Acculturation of Armenian Americans and its effects on family cohesion	Keshishzadeh, Ham	2006	USA	Level of acculturation among Armenian families	Identity/acculturation	
16	Acculturation, acculturative stress, and self-worth in first-generation Armenian-Americans	Tahmassian, Harmil	2003	USA	Psychology, acculturation, self-worth, questionnaire	Identity/acculturation	
17	Generational Impact of Mass Trauma: The Post-Ottoman Turkish Genocide and Armenian-Americans	Kalayjian & Weisberg	2002	USA	The attempted destruction of the Armenian population	Psychology/identity/a	
18	Assimilation and ethnicity: Adaptation patterns and ethnic identity of Armenian-Americans	Jendian	2001	USA	Demographic snapshot of Armenians in California	Psychology/identity/a	
19	The Role of Language, Parents, and Peers in Ethnic Identity Among Adolescent Armenian-Americans	Phinney et al.,	2001	USA	To construct a model of the influences on ethnic identity	Psychology/identity/a	
20	Psychological impact of acculturation of Armenians living in the US	Vartan, Diane	1996	USA	1. individuals who are moderately to highly acculturated	Identity/acculturation	

(Cont'd)