Visitor in a Foreign Land: Reflections on Intercultural Adjustment in the Republic of Armenia

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VISITOR IN A FOREIGN LAND: REFLECTIONS ON INTERCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

by

Jerry L. Johnson

A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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Western Michigan University
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VISITOR IN A FOREIGN LAND: REFLECTIONS ON INTERCULTURAL ADJUSTMENT IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA

Jerry L. Johnson, Ph.D.
Western Michigan University, 1998

This first person, autobiographical account of one American citizen's nine-week experience covering two years in the Republic of Armenia answers the question, "Is it possible to become resocialized in a foreign culture?" Employing the experimental writing method called personal experience narrative, the author uses personal journal accounts and autobiographical stories as primary data to demonstrate his movement from "modern tourist" (MacCannell, 1976; 1992) to resocialized individual and provide a rich and detailed description of the Armenian homeland undergoing significant social changes after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

This study offers a model of socialization called "life-learning" to account for the constraining and enabling role of social structure and the importance of reflexivity in lifelong social development. Included is the concept "life.lesson", defined as any critical situation causing an individual to change their accumulated life-learning through praxis (Friere, 1970/1993). This two-part model is used to assess the impact of anticommunist and anti-Soviet Union childhood socialization combined with prior learning about Armenia on a priori normative expectancies.

This study traces the author's intercultural adjustment as a
life-lesson through two stages (psychic emergency and regressive behavior) leading to resocialization (Giddens, 1984). The degree of success in resocialization is evaluated through lived experience across three elements: (1) development of interpersonal relationships in the host culture; (2) gaining a sense of well-being; and, (3) performance of daily tasks of living (Moghaddam, Taylor & Wright, 1993).

As such, this study is one example of successful intercultural adjustment, specifically in the Republic of Armenia. The author further speculates about the relevance these findings have for sociologists and social workers working and living in intercultural settings, in or outside the United States.
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I first wish to express my gratitude to my committee chair and mentor on this project, Dr. Jerry Markle, for his guidance, comments and critique. But mostly, I want to thank him for his interest in seeing this project, in this format, come to life. Right away he sensed how important this was to me. In addition, I also wish to thank the rest of my committee: Dr. Subhash Sonnad, Dr. Doug Davidson and Dr. Don Cooney for their assistance in this process.

This project could not have happened without the patience and support of my wife Cheryl. Her willingness to basically live alone during the time I was writing can never be repaid.

Of course, this project would not have happened if it were not for my many friends and colleagues in Yerevan, Armenia who had the time and energy to help this novice American tourist find his bearings in their country. Our friendships remain strong, and I will see you all again very soon.

In the end, my parents knew I could finish this project and this degree. Their encouragement and unqualified love and support makes me realize how lucky I am to have them in my life.

Jerry L. Johnson
### Table of Contents

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS** ................................................................. 11

**CHAPTER**

I. OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION.................................................... 1

- The Surreal Tourist--Soviet Memories, Part One............................. 1
- The Soviet Threat........................................................................... 1
- The Movies.................................................................................... 2
- Children’s Cartoons...................................................................... 2

II. METHODS OF INQUIRY................................................................. 26

- Introduction.................................................................................. 26
- Stories........................................................................................... 29
- From Stories to Research............................................................... 31
- Autobiography as a Narrative of the Self........................................ 33
- Whither Objectivity?.................................................................... 40

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Statement About the Knowledge in This Study</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive Writing</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive Writing in This Project</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Journal as Research Text</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts About Method</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. LIFE-LEARNING</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Surreal Tourist - Soviet Memories, Part II</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Olympics</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening News</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television Commercials</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for Travel</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization: A Review</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Models</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toward a More Active Individual</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-Learning: Active Development of a World View</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical Statement #1</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War Propaganda: American Nationalism Through One Person's Eyes</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold War Propaganda as &quot;Othering&quot;</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical Statement #2</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP: The Official Assignment</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Republic of Armenia (Winter, 1995)</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports From the &quot;Front&quot;</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter of Reference: UNDP, 16.9.94</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographical Statement #3</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. VISITOR IN A FOREIGN LAND - 1995</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Daily Experience in a Foreign Culture</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amsterdam to Yerevan: A Bellwether of Things to Come</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Modern Tourist</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Quest to Locate Self: The Journey of the Modern American</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation in Armenia: 1995</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Culture</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Identify, Part I</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancient History</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ararat</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Identity, Part II</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genocide</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish Atrocities</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table of Contents--Continued

CHAPTER

Commemoration, 1995........................................... 163
Nagorno-Karabakh War and Blockade....................... 170
Earthquake.................................................. 176
Armenian Life................................................ 182
Armenian Time............................................... 183
Electricity................................................... 188
Creative Solutions........................................... 190
Nuclear Power................................................ 192
Physical Environment in Yerevan......................... 196
Lake Sevan................................................... 199
Streets and Sidewalks....................................... 202
Armenian Winter............................................. 207
My Impressions............................................... 215
The Economy.................................................. 216
Longing for Communism..................................... 218
People Watching............................................. 221
New Money................................................... 224
Social Environment......................................... 232
Social Order.................................................. 233
Alcohol and Drugs.......................................... 237
Communication and Language............................... 245
Making Comparisons......................................... 249
Translators.................................................... 255
### Table of Contents--Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semiotic of Tourism</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Remarks</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings About Armenia</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day One</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Week One</td>
<td>269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Week Three</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of Week Five</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Getaway Day&quot; Reflections</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts About 1995</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What’s Next?</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. RESOCIALIZATION - 1997</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Across a Lifetime</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Critical Situations.</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...to Life-Lessons</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Armenia--1997</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Experiences</td>
<td>288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dialectic: Tourism and Revolution</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes</td>
<td>295</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genocide and War: Historical Connection</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Future</td>
<td>306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Life</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table of Contents--Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drugs........................................</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education.................................</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Women.........................</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Instability..............</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy...................................</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts on Conditions.....</td>
<td>327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Changes.......................</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships.................. ..........</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparisons to Home.................</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving Personal Satisfaction..</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time....................................</td>
<td>338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No More Utopia.........................</td>
<td>340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and Language.....</td>
<td>344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment and Resocialization: Final Thoughts....</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VI. WHAT WAS I DOING IN THE ARMENIAN CULTURE?.......... 354

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Armenian Memories, Part I</th>
<th>354</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sharing.....................</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Without Books.......</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:Jerry@Arminco.com">Jerry@Arminco.com</a>..........</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Different Kind of Culture Shock</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordering Food.............</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenian Airlines, 1997...</td>
<td>355</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table of Contents—Continued

## CHAPTER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture-Learning</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Answers</td>
<td>358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resocialized in Armenia?</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychic Emergency</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life-Learning</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP Documents</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Conditions</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and Culture</td>
<td>371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regressive Behavior</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resocialization</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Personal Well-Being</td>
<td>386</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Achievement in Armenia</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Thoughts on Resocialization</td>
<td>390</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Was I Doing in the Armenian Culture?</td>
<td>394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENDNOTES</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDICES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Approval Letter from HSIRB</td>
<td>406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION

The Surreal Tourist--Soviet Memories, Part One

What are we doing in other people's culture? (J. I. Prattis, 1985, p. 277)

When we discover that there are several cultures instead of just one and consequently at the time when we acknowledge the end of a sort of cultural monopoly, be it illusory or real, we are threatened with the destruction of our own discovery. Suddenly it becomes possible that there are just others, that we ourselves are an 'other' among others. All meaning and every goal having disappeared, it becomes possible to wander through civilizations as if through vestiges and ruins. The whole of mankind becomes an imaginary museum: where shall we go this weekend - visit the Angkor ruins or take a stroll in Tivoli of Copenhagen? (Paul Ricoeur, 1965, p. 179)

The Soviet Threat

I remember being a child in public elementary school. The siren sounds. My second grade teacher, Mrs. Sutton, lined us up for the calm and orderly walk to the bomb shelter. This was an atom bomb exercise. Once every month we participated in this farce, keeping constant vigilance on the Communist threat to our country's freedom. It is ludicrous to think we were convinced our lives were in immediate danger by the Soviet Union. What were they doing, trying to build a nation of frightened and insecure children?
The Movies

Crowds flocked to the silver screen to watch Rocky Balboa beat up the big, bad, steroid-enhanced Soviet Boxer named, of course, DRAGO, the unbeatable Soviet fighting machine. After winning the fight, Rocky—the quintessential American pick yourself up by your boot straps hero—pleaded with an angry Soviet crowd for world peace. Naturally, as if scripted by God, Rocky won over the hearts and minds of the stone-faced and serious Soviet people. Even the Gor-bachev look-a-like stood and applauded Rocky’s heroics. Once again I could feel secure knowing that Good triumphed over Evil, Democracy won out over Communism, and Right over Wrong. In a survival of the fittest world, America was the chosen one. Was I really supposed to believe this blatant propaganda and become misty-eyed?

Children's Cartoons

One of my favorite cartoons as a child was Bullwinkle the Moose, whose arch-enemy was none other than the evil Boris Badinov and his sidekick Natasha. Even Bullwinkle and Rocket J Squirrel fought the Soviets! Is “Toon Town” not even safe from the Soviet menace? I think United States Information Agency (USIA) had too much time on their hands and too much money to spend.

Introduction

Zvartnots International Airport - Yerevan, Republic of Armenia.
April 1, 1995 (4 am): At the airport, Russian soldiers in their familiar green and red trimmed uniforms, carrying automatic weapons with banana clips, are all around me. A sober looking Russian soldier takes my papers at customs—looks me over, hesitates (am I going to be arrested as a spy?), and stamps my passport. He (the Russian soldier) was all business, looking me over like I was about to steal state secrets. When he was done I walked out quickly before he could change his mind and have me arrested. I am an Imperialist, after all (Johnson, 1995, p. 9).

This is how I recorded the beginning of my odyssey in the Republic of Armenia on April 1, 1995. It was the middle of the night—actually, very early in the morning—when I realized I had been transported into a fantasy world of foreign languages, customs, and practices. I left the comfort and familiarity of home for Yerevan, Republic of Armenia one sunny spring Friday afternoon in March armed with American social work knowledge and 15 years of professional experience hoping to impress my hosts with American ingenuity. I arrived at 4 o’clock Sunday morning ready to tackle a drug problem in a foreign land using American definitions, ideas, and practice methods. As I stepped off the plane, I realized my accumulated experience and knowledge was not going to be as useful as I thought. A little later in my journal it is apparent this realization began to hit me, along with a surreal sense I was an extra in a Cold War-era spy movie. According to Johnson (1995),

within one minute of stepping off the plane at Zvartnots International Airport I knew I was in trouble. It’s like I stepped from the comfort of my living room straight through my television screen into a 1970’s anti-Soviet spy movie. The experience is surreal indeed. People scurrying all around, our plane and the tarmac bathed in roving flood lights with armed Russian soldiers leading me to a gate different from the one where other passengers are headed. I don’t understand a single word being spoken—how do I get through customs? I’m
handed a form to fill out for customs and it's in Armenian. What do I write? What if I just don't fill it out? Can I leave the country? Will they confiscate my computer? My only thought right now is, 'hat in the world am I doing here? (p. 11)

"Nobody prepared me for this," is what I recall repeating over and over in my mind as I somehow found my way through customs and the crush of people—men, women, and children—all trying to find a way to earn money by helping me. The problem was they were speaking Armenian or Russian while I needed to hear English. You see, I did not speak a language other than my own. I had one semester of French 20 years earlier but it was no help.

As I literally pushed and shoved my way through the throng I saw a glorious site standing at the other end of the big, cold brick room that was the airport lobby: a man holding a placard with MY NAME ON IT! Gagik (later to become a friend) had arrived on time to pick me up and save me from the bewildering situation in which I found myself. "Now," I thought, "things will settle down and become familiar to me."

After a short ride in the darkness of a city without electricity we arrived at the hotel where I knew I would find the comforts of home. What I found instead was not familiar nor comforting. The Hotel Dvin is a large and cold building. The lobby is like a big stone cavern with a cathedral ceiling opening to the fourth floor. Every footfall and sound echoed loudly from floor to ceiling and back again. It reminded me of a mausoleum. The only decorative display was a pile of dirt, probably 24 inches high, with fake snow
painted on top. It is the image of Mount Ararat, or "Masis," as it is called in Armenia. Of course, the real Masis is the presumed resting place of Noah's Arc. There were three rather large stuffed birds towering over the fake Masis. It looked quite odd indeed, like a set for a movie entitled "Attack of the Giant Swans," instead of a monument to their cherished Ararat. My first impression was the hotel had all the warmth and comfort of a cell block. Yet, there were lights. Everything electric in the hotel appeared to work except the elevator. So, I had to carry my overstuffed luggage up eight long flight of stairs. This was quite a chore after 36 hours of travel and no sleep.

After checking in I found my eighth floor room. Almost as if it was triggered by the sound of the door closing, I was immediately overcome by the crushing realization I was 8,000 miles from everything familiar and comfortable--stuck in the former Soviet Union for goodness sakes. Perhaps a partial reading from my journal about my initial reaction to the hotel is enlightening. Johnson (1995) states the following:

(The hotel is) A real pit of a place, but clean. I arrived about 4 am local time and took my bags to the 8th floor. I later discovered all Americans and other foreign visitors get rooms on the 8th floor. They are very tiny, with 2 single cots and old wooden furniture. The air is stale and dirty. . . . the bathroom filthy. The toilets are unique, hard to describe so I won't. Rusting pipes, leaky ceiling, and missing floor tiles makes me wish I had rubber thongs. Six weeks in this place. What have I gotten myself into this time? (p. 12)

Then, from what must have been the darkest regions of my mind, anticommunist paranoia began to surface. This was the exact moment
when I learned the truth about myself. There was an anti-communist (Johnson, 1995) lurking in my psyche:

We are told the hotel has 24 hour electricity because of its relationship with the government and the VIP Hospital located across the street. In fact, the VIP hospital is/was the KGB Hospital. That makes the Hotel Dvin, in all likelihood, the KGB hotel. There are little rooms (doorways) between every room. I think they are for observation. There can't be closets between every room on the floor—can there? That would explain the surveillance rumors, why the hotel staff took my passport overnight for registration with the government and all of us [Americans and other English speaking people] on the 8th floor. Or, maybe I've been watching too many spy movies. (pp. 12-13).

So, there I was feeling stranded in a mysterious foreign country in the middle of the night, alone and afraid of what lay ahead over the next six weeks. It was so dark outside I was unable to get a glimpse of the city from the hotel balcony. It is an indescribably eerie feeling to sense a city yet be unable to see anything because of stifling darkness. Where in the world was I?

At least I could take comfort in knowing I was in Armenia to work. Work was my lone source of familiarity at that moment. I knew how to accomplish the assignment, or did I? While it seemed simple enough, my problem was I had to take myself along on the assignment. At that moment in my experience I was a product of my personal socialization—my life-learning as a white, male, middle-class American citizen born during the Cold War—and a professional social worker. I was trained in American academic institutions and communities to solve American social problems. Literally overnight, I found myself in a country that does not privilege the same political ideology, knowledge, definition of social problems, or cul-
tural forms as the United States.

What was I going to do?

What would you do?

Purpose

This project explores an important contemporary topic: the intercultural contact between foreign peoples. In this case the contact was between the Armenian people in Armenia and myself. Specifically, I address whether it was possible for me, a Caucasian-American male socialized in the United States during the height of the Cold War, to become resocialized in the Armenian culture. I was in Yerevan as a consultant from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) from March to May 1995 and in August 1997, chosen through an application process by the City Commission in Yerevan. I was assigned to develop a substance abuse prevention program for the region including Yerevan, Armenia's capital city of 1.5 million people.

This study addresses five specific research questions. I develop each question separately while integrating the chapters into a comprehensive treatise about intercultural adjustment in the Republic of Armenia. After specifying my specific research questions, I provide an introduction to the historical context in which this project is embedded. I conclude this chapter with an overview of each chapter.
Research Questions

Specifically, this project addresses the following questions:

1. What is the impact of American socialization on a priori expectations about life in the Republic of Armenia?

2. To what extent do everyday living conditions in the host country affect intercultural adjustment?

3. How does the interaction between a modern American perspective and the Armenian historical and cultural memory affect intercultural adjustment?

4. Is it possible to become resocialized in a foreign culture?

5. What are the ramifications of this study for individuals working or living in an intercultural setting?

Intercultural Interaction in a Rapidly Changing World

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of China as a global economic power the meaning of the term globalization has widened in significance. No longer does global imply only the United States, Western Europe, and Japan. These developments signal the beginning of a new global society, made so primarily by changing governments, worldwide telecommunications and increasing access to regions never before open to Western corporations, investment, tourism, and assistance. The radical changes in political and economic systems worldwide has left many affected countries desperately poor, often without the bare necessities for living. In
addition, many of these countries are physically dangerous because of unresolved centuries-old regional conflicts and increasing street and organized crime.

As a result, Western countries and international organizations send community development workers, consultants, and other experts into these countries—including those once part of the former Soviet Union—to assist with social problems and facilitate the process of Westernization. In turn, a plethora of international charity organizations and private foundations deliver humanitarian aid for victims of natural and human-made disasters as well as assistance for newly developing or recognized social problems. Into these difficult circumstances thousands of workers enter intent on performing competent professional tasks while ignoring the problems associated with intercultural adjustment. Because of this narrow-minded approach, I believe most are destined to fail.

As the distance between countries shrinks theories about intercultural adjustment must account for what Dean MacCannell (1992) calls global "composite communities" (p. 2). A composite community is created by the "double movement" (p. 1) of peoples to and from regions around the world. This is especially true in the West where reverse migration of peoples from remote regions to Western cities creates an environment where "every major city in the West has been transformed into a living version of the fictional compression of cultures as represented at Disney World" (p. 2).

However, these new communities are not "sanitized..."
. . . de-humanized as occurs at Disney World* (MacCannell, 1992, p. 1). They are real, comprised of living and breathing humans in all of their cultural and ideological diversity trying to find a way to live and work together in everyday life. In other words, an international context is now as likely to occur domestically as across foreign borders. An individual no longer must travel thousands of miles to encounter peoples and cultures foreign to themselves. Therefore, this project recognizes that because of new globalization, the domestic-international continuum is no longer relevant (Giddens, 1986). As such, it requires more inquiry into the potential problems related to intercultural adjustment in a global context.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, perhaps no other former satellite country faced the daily hardship and struggle like the Armenians. Poverty, lack of production and jobs, cold, darkness, daily hardship and the remnants of war were the Armenian way of life by 1995. Also, it was my opinion at the time—and remains so today—the Armenia people are perhaps better able to survive these times because of their long history and deeply held cultural mores. They were once part of the monolith known as the Soviet Union. They were safe, prosperous, and protected from many problems. Their citizens sat in the Duma, were among the most prolific writers and scientists of the Soviet era, and their athletes reigned on Olympic sports fields of all kinds. For more than 70 years they were in the cradle of Soviet protectionism. Yes, deeply held animosities with Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh were stifled and the Armenia...
people struggled against the Supreme Soviet for religious, environmental, and language rights but for the most part Armenia was a comfortable republic in which to live.

Armenia was part of the Soviet Union. To an American born in the 1950's and educated in public schools, this means they were the enemy. After all, the Soviet Union and the United States waged war throughout the world since the end of World War Two. The constant and violent--physically, politically, and ideologically--Cold War raged between the world's two super powers. Until late 1989, who would be the ultimate victor in this struggle was an open question, at least to the general public. With the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and subsequent claims of independence by satellite countries, the world changed forever.

A Post-Cold War World

This project has ramifications extending beyond my personal lived experience in Armenia. At the ideological and political level it is about the interaction between two real, yet mythical enemies: the United States and former Soviet Union. For over 40 years governments of the two world powers were cultural and ideological opposites, competing to capture the hearts and minds of the world. In the United States, preventing the spread of communism was the central organizing principle for the nation between 1945 and 1991. Every aspect of daily life from education to mass media concerned itself with this international mission. The Soviet Union (or, Russia
as most Americans mistakenly believed) was portrayed as an evil and oppressive regime where people were forced to become automatons in an off-limits and thus, mysterious land.

Therefore, the possibility of a former Communist country openly asking the West for help with social problems was inconceivable after growing up in the shadow of the Cold War. I never imagined I--born in the paradoxical year Sputnik was launched and Senator Joseph McCarthy died--would ever travel and work in the former Soviet Union. My knowledge of two well-chronicled historical events—the Soviet threat and American Communist paranoia—were enough to make me wary about my impending experience. As you read earlier, my initial reaction at the airport demonstrates my sense of uncertainty at the time.

This study forces me to confront the ghosts of the United States' Cold War past; our history, beliefs, and stereotypes developed over the course of more than 40 years of culturally-saturating anticommunist propaganda. Plainly speaking, the main task for Americans in the Post-Cold War era is to come to terms with ourselves as people and as a nation by confronting the alter ego of our national self-identity: the former Soviet Union. I believe until we, as a country, own up to our past misdeeds as part of the Cold War effort the United States cannot assume an honest position of moral leadership in the New World Order.

Chapter Overview

This project builds upon the general foundation I discussed
earlier by retracing my nine week journey over two years in the Republic of Armenia. Following this chapter, which serves as a general introduction to the project, I present my actions and experiences in Armenia along with my reflections on these actions and experiences over the course of five additional chapters. Each chapter is constructed as an individual paper with a distinct subject matter, interpretation, and meaning. Simultaneously, individual chapters build upon work in preceding chapter(s) so that in the end the overall process I experienced in my struggle for resocialization emerges clearly and meaningfully as a holistic treatise on intercultural adjustment.

While the focus of this study is on my particular efforts at intercultural adjustment in the Republic of Armenia, I also provide a thick description of the Armenian people, their culture and history, and their living conditions following the collapse of the Soviet Union. This depth of description is needed to bring the story of intercultural adjustment to life. As such, the project actually runs on dual tracks; one is a description of my struggles and triumphs and the second describes the Armenian people and society I came to admire and respect over the two year period of this study. In order to make the story complete both areas of content and analysis are necessary.

In the second chapter, Methods of Inquiry, I offer an in-depth discussion of and rationale for utilizing a self-reflexive form of experimental writing—personal experience narrative—as my chosen
method for this study. My primary data source is information contained in my personal journals where I recorded my daily activities as well as any personal thoughts and reactions I experienced as a result. I use journal entries from the 1995 and 1997 trips along with a targeted literature review and critique to explore this topic. As such, this is an autobiographical study conducted by myself about my lived experience in the Republic of Armenia. As part of this chapter I address the strengths and possible pitfalls of such a method of inquiry.

In Chapter III entitled, Life-Learning, I use autobiographical statements and other personal stories as the basis for demonstrating the impact American socialization had on my a priori expectations about Armenia. Using these stories in combination with official documents from UNDP I analyze and discuss my assumptions and expectations about Armenia and the Armenian people.

Although I watched the Berlin Wall fall in 1989, the Communist Party dissolve in 1991, and the Soviet Union collapse thereafter my socialized Cold War mindset prevailed despite the New World Order of the 1990's. In this chapter I show the connection between these events--political and personal--and the propaganda, false reports, and negative stereotypic assumptions I learned growing up and during preparations for my Armenian experience in 1995.

Also in Chapter III I introduce a model of socialization privileging what Anthony Giddens (1986) calls the enabling and constraining nature of the social environment. Called Life-Learning,
this model privileges the dominance of the social environment on an individual’s accumulated knowledge and routine social behavior. In this study I focus on the impact the Cold War and my unique immediate social environment had on the content of my life-learning. This model also recognizes the ability of a self-reflexive individual facing a critical life situation to change the content and meaning of their life-learning via personal agency. I introduce the change aspect of the life-learning model in Chapter III but discuss it thoroughly in relation to my lived experience in Armenia in Chapter V.

Chapter IV, Visitor in a Foreign Land: 1995, is an analysis of my first international experience in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia. It addresses two fundamental questions in intercultural adjustment: my reaction to the Armenian historical and cultural memory and daily living conditions in the aftermath of two wars, one hot and one cold. As a guiding theoretical model I use MacCannell’s (1976, 1992) interesting work about modern tourists to frame my intercultural experiences in the Armenian culture.

Chapter IV begins with a consideration of the depth and breadth of the Armenian people’s historical and cultural memory. Being from America my historical memory is relatively short and quite different from the Armenians. Growing up I was taught history was important, but less so than planning for a future filled with positive progress. According to this American modernist ideology the future holds promise for all people. Therefore, I believe we learn history not to
understand ourselves and our culture but to see how far we have progressed. The Armenians are quite different in all respects.

For example, I had no point of reference to understand the suffering caused by the Genocide in 1915 perpetrated by the Ottoman Turks against Armenians in Eastern Anatolia. I cannot know what it is like to live in a country which has been conquered for most of the previous 3000 years. Like many small countries, Armenia’s very existence could change—or end—any day depending on political, economic or other global circumstances beyond their immediate control. This way of life—having no predictable future—is opposite the American experience. Because of the doctrine of "American Exceptionalism" (Ross, 1992 p. xiv) Americans believe our reign as the mightiest world power is destined to last forever. Armenians know better.

Americans believe they can afford a short historical memory while Armenians cannot. The United States has never been conquered nor do their geographical neighbors threaten their safety and way of life. Since the aftermath of the Revolutionary War, no United States land has been captured by force or taken away by geopolitical land-trading deals between foreign powers. The loss of land via treaty to foreign countries is a hallmark of Armenian history.

For example, Armenians view Mount Ararat as a symbol of the genocide and loss of land. It stands majestically on the immediate southwestern horizon providing a daily reminder about the horrors of the past. Mount Ararat was annexed by Turkey in a treaty with Rus-
sia in the nineteenth century, although it is part of historical Armenia. Therefore, while Armenians must never forget the past lest they be conquered again, Americans believe there is no need to remember. Armenians live day-to-day with hope for the future while holding on to their history, tradition, and culture because these memories, traditions and practices will always be Armenian, no matter what happens tomorrow.

As a visitor in Armenia I was forced to learn new cultural and social norms, rules and traditions. This became a minute-to-minute conscious chore throughout the entire 1995 trip. At home in the United States, dealing with the mundane issues of everyday social interaction is mostly a function of unconsciously stored mutual knowledge and social routines. Because of the unconscious aspect of daily life my conscious mind is free to act on novel or complex activities. The day-to-day is accounted for because I am in familiar surroundings handling mundane social tasks.

In Armenia I quickly discovered the mundane is unusual and the routine novel. Activities I normally took for granted demanded my immediate and constant attention; tasks ranging from ordering food, to finding the correct bathroom in a public building, and paying for a taxi in a country where English is not the second or third language spoken. In Armenia these activities were obstacles to overcome instead of a routine part of everyday life. In Chapter IV I explore these problems in the context of MacCannell's work to bring understanding and meaning to my everyday lived experience in Armenia.
Chapter V, Resocialization: 1997, follows the same format as Chapter IV in order to analyze my return to Armenia in August 1997. Once again my journal is used as primary data to determine the extent of my intercultural adjustment on this second trip. I review important aspects of Armenian life by looking at changes which occurred in their country between 1995 and 1997. I also, like Chapter IV, interpret and critically analyze my reaction to Armenian life through the eyes of my journal. On this trip I convinced several Armenian colleagues and friends to participate in three focus groups to discuss the impact of the Armenian Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh War on their daily life. I use this data in Chapter V to reveal several unique characteristics of the Armenian cultural identity I misunderstood in 1995.

Additionally, in Chapter V I complete my explanation of the life-learning model of socialization by introducing life-lessons. The concept of life-lesson demonstrates the importance of lived experience and the reflexive monitoring of behavior (Giddens, 1984) during and after critical life situations. These situations, called life-lessons, provide the impetus for an individual to change the content of his or her accumulated life-learning. Life-lessons, as part of life-learning recognizes significant changes which occur in an individual's life-learning through lived experience over the course of their lifetime. This model privileges the growing, developing and changing nature of life-learning over time instead of a static conception of socialization, so prominent in the professional...
literature.

In Chapter VI entitled appropriately, *Summary and Conclusions*, I respond specifically to the five research questions which frame this study. In this chapter I address the most important question in this study; whether it is possible for an individual socialized in American culture to become resocialized as a result of life-lessons gained in an intercultural environment. To evaluate the extent of my resocialization in Armenia I employ a model of resocialization offered by Giddens (1984; 1986), and one used to evaluate the degree of intercultural adjustment by Moghaddam et al., (1993) and Bochner (1982).

The first model proposes that resocialization occurs as the third stage in a three stage process. As part of this process an individual experiences a state of heightened anxiety, followed by a period of regressive child-like behavior. These two stages can, but do not always result in the individual becoming resocialized in the host culture. I utilize this overall framework to determine whether I was in fact in a context where resocialization was possible.

Once this important decision is made, I use the second model to evaluate the extent of intercultural adjustment. This model consists of demonstrated mastery of three distinct tasks in an intercultural context which are indicative of successful intercultural adjustment (Moghaddam, et al., 1993). These include the development of interpersonal relationships in the host culture, gaining a sense of well-being in that culture, and demonstrating the ability to perform
daily routine tasks of living.

Specifically, I analyze my 1995 and 1997 Armenian experiences within the framework of these models to determine first, if I was indeed resocialized and second, to what degree I achieved this goal. I provide a critical review of my behavior, as documented in Chapters IV and V, covering each step in the resocialization process in order to provide a comprehensive answer to the central research question in this study (see above). As part of this discussion I respond directly to each research question to allow readers an opportunity to discover clearly my conclusions.

I conclude Chapter VI, and this study, by responding to the question "Just what was I doing in the Armenian culture?" (Prattis, 1985). I introduced this question at the beginning of this chapter and return to it in the final chapter because I believe it provides an appropriate framework by which to speculate beyond the limitations of this data to larger, more penetrating issues raised by this topic.

Like I stated earlier, the topic of intercultural adjustment is an important area of study as we move into the twenty-first century. As governments change, world economies become more interdependent, and people travel to work and live in foreign lands, issues related to intercultural interaction and adjustment should gain prominence in the social sciences.

Likewise, schools of sociology and social work train students to work in intercultural contexts within the United States. There-
fore, I believe it is appropriate to speculate on these issues as a means of drawing tentative conclusions based on my lived experience that could transfer to other settings and experiences or to stimulate the interest of other professionals in performing their own analyses of intercultural adjustment.

My Hope for This Project

I wish to make a few comments before proceeding. While researching this study I was amazed at what appears to be a lack of professional interest in Eastern and Central Europe by American sociologists and social workers since the end of the Cold War. My general searches of the professional literature located few published articles pertaining to former Soviet Countries. It appears to me, based on my informal and partial content analysis of the literature, that sociology's international interest is with Western Europe or Third World Latin American countries. Second World countries are rarely addressed (Sklair, 1995).

I could not help but wonder after all the years of intense focus on the Soviet Union and communism by sociologists and Americans in general, have we grown weary of the subject? Now that the Soviet Union no longer exists as an ominous threat to our existence have we simply forgotten them? I offer below two possible interpretations of this apparent lack of interest. Perhaps readers have their own theories to add to the discussion.

First, I wonder how many social researchers during the Cold
War produced ideological work designed to serve and promote the Master Narrative of American anti-communism? As such, these theorists helped spread the dominant ideology of our anti-communist propaganda and assisted with the invention of the Absolute Other by serving as quasi-agents of the United States Information Agency (USIA). From this perspective, perhaps since they helped win the "War" these researchers decided to move on—mission accomplished, as it were. To this group our country's Cold War ideology was correct: there are no people in Eastern Europe, only communists.

Second, could it be some factions within the social sciences adopted a pro-Soviet or pro-communist stance during those years and since the system has collapsed, they are too embarrassed to redress the subject? I suppose it could be embarrassing to wake up one day and find the system one has supported over the years abolished—gone. This is, of course, about how fast it actually happened. The Soviet worker's utopia did not survive longer than the capitalist systems of the West.

In response to this perspective I believe it is important to remember the fall of the Soviet Union was not so much a failure of Marxist theory as it was caused by the Soviet's use of Marxist doctrine as an instrument of state terror. I still believe, with the exception of his utopian claims about a classless system, Marx was a genius whose predictive skills about the conflictual nature of capitalism were remarkable given his location in history5.

Whatever the reason for this inattention, I hope this project
opens the eyes of a few American sociologists to the potential for study existing in countries once part of the Soviet Bloc. I also hope it makes a practical contribution to international studies in sociology, culture studies, social work, and community development. My ultimate dream is for some kernel of information to transfer to someone else’s experience and provide a basis for dialogue related to research on intercultural adjustment in foreign cultures.

Limitations

The model I use to describe the resocialization process in Armenia also applies to other specific circumstances where individuals or groups face life-changing critical situations. For example, the three step process I described earlier could be used to analyze family disruption, recovery from alcohol and drug abuse or mental illness, or a sudden change in economic fortunes, either when one becomes suddenly rich or poor. This model also aptly describes, in my opinion, the daily social circumstances of the poor, women, gays and lesbians and other minority groups in their efforts to deal with discrimination, prejudice, and racism.

However, exploring the relevance of this model in these and other areas of interest is not within the purview of this project. I apply this model only to my lived experience in the Republic of Armenia in 1995 and 1997. This is a personal experience narrative that, by design, only informs an interpretation and theory of action in the specific context where my data was collected. In this case,
where I wrote my journal. Therefore, I do mean to imply anywhere in this text that my experience represents or is intended to represent the situated lived experiences of any other individual, especially those who may be presently working, living, or studying the Republic of Armenia or another intercultural context. The meaning and interpretation—the knowledge—contained in this study is based on my personal interpretative perspective. I make no claims to the contrary.

I encourage readers and interested others to utilize any information contained in the following chapters to either verify, disprove, or improve on my findings in their specific social contexts. I believe a body of knowledge derived through a multitude of personal experience narratives in various intercultural settings would enhance the social sciences and perhaps, provide the professional and lay publics with useful and usable practical knowledge for application in daily lived experience.

As I explain in Chapter II, because of the autobiographical nature of the data used in this study, I cannot nor do I want to generalize my findings beyond their implications about my lived experience in the Republic of Armenia. However, this should not preclude readers from testing my theories in their personal intercultural experiences—hopefully in the former Soviet Union—to begin building a body of knowledge in the social science literature related to the issues, problems, and rewards of intercultural adjustment. I am allowed to dream, aren't I?
What's Next?

Chapter II describes in detail the autobiographical methods I used to produce this study. In this chapter, I review many of the current methodological debates and settle on one that I believe provides the best vehicle by which to respond to the research questions posed above for this study. Additionally, throughout Chapter II I describe honestly and forthrightly the strengths and limitations of this form of method in social science research.
CHAPTER II

METHODS OF INQUIRY

Biography, like history, is the organization of human memory. Assembled and hoarded papers are bits and pieces of the memory. (Edel, 1984, p. 67)

People, by nature lead storied lives and tell stories of those lives. (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 417)

Introduction

In order to tell this story--my story--in the most appropriate manner, I first confront what Eisner (1988) called the politics of methodology. My goal is to find a methodological approach to capture the spirit of this project and contribute something new and useful to sociology. At the same time my approach must be mainstream enough to have this project approved by my committee as a scholarly product worthy of dissertation status. In a comment relevant to this project, Marcus (1994) points out that the "most intense polemics about reflexivity...occurs within academic departments," primarily related to dissertations (p. 568). The issue Marcus raises but fails to resolve is the same concern I had for my project: is reflexivity, used in a personal experience narrative, a "self-indulgence" (p. 568) or legitimate method for social science inquiry? I hope to satisfactorily answer this question in the remainder of this chapter.

In fact, because of methodological questions this project almost did not come to fruition. As I began doctoral studies in soc-
iology in the fall of 1995, just three months after I returned from my trip, I knew I wanted to study Armenia in some manner. But at the time I was only aware of the more traditional quantitative and qualitative research methodologies. For my project to be considered research I thought I needed a large sample size, high internal validity, a null hypothesis, numerical data coding, and statistical analyses. I never conceived I could use an autobiographical approach, based on my personal journal, to write a first person account of my experiences in Armenia. In my naiveté as a new graduate student I assumed this was not "real research." While there is some disagreement on the topic, fortunately there is enough consensus for me to confidently pursue this methodological option (see Goetting & Fenstermaker, 1995; Marcus, 1994, Richardson, 1994; Atkinson, 1991; Denzin, 1997).

Actually, this began as a study of the Armenian Genocide. I was amazed and perplexed by the conviction in which the Armenian people spoke about their Genocide despite the fact it occurred 80 years ago. I was struck by how most Armenian people spoke in the present tense as if genocide was still occurring today. Perhaps it was my American perspective where historical memory is quite short, or touristic innocence causing my amazement but I simply did not understand it. My attitude changed after I participated in their national holiday commemorating the eightieth anniversary of the Genocide as well as a three day international conference addressing the same topic. To Armenians the Genocide is still occurring as part of
the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan. I address the Genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh question in Chapter IV.

Alas, I allowed my a priori assumptions about what constituted appropriate research methodology to convince me that a study of Armenia was impossible. Mostly because I did not think I could return to Yerevan to collect the original data I assumed was needed to complete the study. Armenia was the topic I wanted to explore in greater depth, yet the apparent barriers to the study's completion seemed too great to overcome.

And yet, all I could think and talk about was Armenia. Returning home, I experienced something akin to what R. Ruth Linden, in her book *Making Stories. Making Selves: Feminist Reflections on the Holocaust* (1993) called "culture shock" (p. 4). I, like Linden, believe I never actually left "the field." My heart and mind remained in Yerevan long after my body returned home. In many ways I am still there. In the early days, weeks, and months following my return home my boundaries and sense of the here-and-now were blurred. I found myself comparing the people and conditions at home to my friends, colleagues, and the living conditions in Armenia. I thought about the people and their lives. I talked endlessly about my impressions, the hardships, surprises and embarrassments—all part of the struggle to make sense of what I experienced in Yerevan. In fact, this project is yet another stage in my effort to integrate these experiences. By using self-reflexive writing I hope to make sense of the Armenian culture and its people while trying to deter-
mine whether this experience changed me. I suspect the reexamination of my life story in the context of these experiences will not end until I die (Olney, 1980).

Stories

I spent the immediate months after returning home coming to terms with my Armenian experience by "living a life story, telling a life story, retelling a life story, and reliving a life story" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994 p. 418). Storytelling is the way I locate my experience and is a vehicle for understanding what I actually know about myself and my experience in Armenia. These stories are my psychotherapy as it were, allowing me to gain insight into my knowledge, life, and humanity. I am practicing a "personal experience method" (p. 419) of social inquiry by constructing oral narratives—stories—to describe my experiences as I remember them.

From this perspective, "experience...is the stories people live" and "in the telling of them (people) reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones" (p. 415).

As part of the sense-making process I told stories to anyone who dared ask about my trip. I worried I was becoming the dreaded, boorish relative or friend who, after dinner, insists on showing his Grand Canyon slides to everyone despite the fact the show invariably puts everybody except the storyteller, to sleep. Yet, I received an entirely different reaction. Either my audiences were being polite or they were really interested.
In the United States, many people have their pictures taken standing in front of the Magic Kingdom at Disney World. This type of tourist experience is such a mundane part of the American middle class life that stories about it usually bore rather than interest its audience. My experience in Armenia is unusual in this regard. As a novel event, one that is outside the average American citizen's personal experience, these stories generate interest and personal involvement. As a cultural form, "stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell of our experience. . . (because) a story has the sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, p. 415).

By telling these stories--my tales of the field (Van Maanen, 1988)--not only do I communicate my version of these experiences to others but I allow listeners to interpret them in their own subjective manner. Listeners place themselves in their personally constructed Armenian context as imaginary tourists. While participating in the stories they are not in my shoes as such, but creating their own vicarious Armenian experience based on their biography, history, and social perspectives. The meaning I intend is secondary to the meaning they personally attribute to the narrative. For each story I tell there are as many interpreted and constructed realities as listeners and tellers. Like Carl Sagan said about the cosmos, these stories become the ship of the imagination for the people who listen and participate.

Over time, telling stories had a profound personal effect. I
understand myself and my experience more fully. Every retelling transforms the stories and in turn, I am transformed by the act of retelling. Each version reinterprets my lived experience. I omit, change, add detail, or emphasize different parts of a story with each retelling. This process consistently triggers new memories and changes the meaning I attach to the old stories making them, in essence, new stories every time I tell them (Smith, 1994). Similar to Giddens' (1984) concept of the "double hermeneutic" (p. xxxv), this phenomenon highlights both the subjective nature of stories--and history--while demonstrating their power to influence and change people's perceptions and memory in everyday life by forcing a re-interpretation of the narrative by the storyteller and the listener.

From Stories to Research

How did storytelling become the basis for this project? Three separate events occurred over a relatively short period of time, each conspiring to shape this project into its current form. These events shape the content of this project which in turn, determines the method I use to tell stories in this forum.

The first event occurred when a colleague suggested my stories were not about the Armenian people but my reactions to the Armenian people and their culture. She observed that these stories normally begin as tales of Armenia and the Armenians but always slide into tales of how I reacted to the culture and people. She said most listeners appreciated the stories about my sometimes odd and funny
reactions to Armenian social customs in everyday life. They seemed more interested in my walking, by accident, into a women's public bathroom (the marking on the door looked like an English M, how was I supposed to know?) than in whether my professional assignment was successfully completed (it was).

The second event was an essay I wrote for the local newspaper. It is about my impressions of the affect American anti-communist propaganda had on my perception of the Armenian people. In this reflexive article I described how my initial perceptions of the Armenians-as-Communists changed as I got to know them. In short, I came to believe the Cold War was waged between a small number of elites in both countries whose main goal in "fighting" the war was to maintain their elite status. I found everyday people in Armenia as interested in me as I was in them, yet very disinterested in Cold War rhetoric. As citizens, we did not want to hurt each other, we wanted to become peaceful and understanding citizens of the world (Johnson, 1995). In the days and weeks after this essay was published, I received a number of complimentary cards, letters, and comments about the content of the essay and personal style I used to express my opinions.

The final act occurred when I read Gerald Markle's, Meditations of a Holocaust Traveler (1995). Markle wrote a first person account of his trip to several sites in the former Nazi Germany and of the Holocaust. Markle's project captivated me with both its content and style. While reading his compelling account of this experi-
ience I was immediately transported to Europe in my imagination, seeing the sites and feeling the paradoxical emotions of an amazed tourist and horrified citizen of the world. I knew then I wanted to write about my Armenian experience in a similar way.

Markle's work, along with other similarly written projects (see, Linden, 1993; Miller & Miller, 1993; Smith, 1990; Denzin, 1989b) demonstrate several variations of the method I believe is the most effective way to represent my Armenian experience. As a result of reading these texts I discovered I could write an autobiographical account of my experience to allow readers and myself the opportunity to discover what greater meanings might be encapsulated in this project. And the best news to me, a new graduate student, was I could use this method to produce a legitimate scholarly dissertation.

Autobiography as a Narrative of the Self

Amongst all the possible methods appropriate for this study, I chose a form of experimental writing (see, Marcus & Fischer, 1986; Denzin, 1997; Atkinson, 1991) called "narrative of the self" (Richardson, 1994, p. 520). Also referred to as a personal experience narrative, this form of writing is a "highly personalized, revealing text in which the author tells stories about his or her own lived experience" (p. 521).

A personal experience narrative is autobiographical. As such, it attempts to "recreate the experiential integrity" of personal
experience while providing "privileged access" to the subject's thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and ideas as they are expressed during the experience being recounted (Goetting, 1995, p. 7). In this project I tell stories that recall my attempts to grapple with personal and social adjustment to the Armenian culture and to understand Armenian history and the genocide. This type of text is, according to Goetting (1995), the most effective way to "locate and make sense of life" (p. 8).

As a form of social science research and a method of intellectual, personal, and social engagement autobiography offers a unique insight into lived experience. Autobiography as a method privileging subjectivity has a long heritage in sociology beginning with the pioneering work of Max Weber (1947), W.I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki (1918-1920/1927), Clifford Shaw (1930) and C. Wright Mills (1959; Scimecca, 1977). These pioneers in sociology were the earliest supporters of autobiography as a primary method to understand social processes and social structures. Mills (1959) argued the promise of the "sociological imagination" was that knowledge of their social context leads people to understand their own experiences and gauge their "own fates" (p. 5). Autobiography helps the author and reader accomplish this goal.

In the mid-twentieth century autobiography's acceptance as a method of social inquiry subsided as empirical methods and statistical modeling became fashionable (Sjoberg & Kuhn, 1989). However, the foundation for autobiography had been cast, especially by the
prominence of the Chicago School of sociology which emphasized the use of personal documents and life stories in the study of modern urban life.

For example, George Herbert Mead (1934) while laying the foundation for Symbolic Interactionism, focused on understanding the subjective meaning of experience from the person’s perspective and the perspective of the person’s significant others in the community as they socially interact. Meaning is achieved by recognizing the social nature of the self occurring through interaction between the impulsive "I" and the reflexive "me" (Mead, 1934). From this perspective the researcher must "take the role of the other" to understand and interpret a person’s intentions and meaning (p. 161).

In the late 1960’s and 1970’s autobiography resurfaced as a favored method of social inquiry, mostly because of the radical sociopolitical climate in the United States during that period. However, its use was limited to the study of "deviant and marginalized populations" (Goetting, 1995, p. 5). In the context of civil rights and liberation from oppression, social constructionists borrowed from older sociological, literary, and ethnographic traditions to reactivate the subjective model (Johnson, 1993). During this period, (Goetting, 1995) said that

narrative was elicited from people of oppressed, silenced, and marginalized cultures in an effort to know their experiences. Biography emerged as a central component of this new politi
cized way of knowing. Biography was viewed by these modern constructionists as the story of a distinct culture written in individual characters and, from within, a story offered privilegeed access to their worlds. (pp. 5-6).
Presently, autobiography is considered part of the larger genre of experimental writing. Although still used as a vehicle to give voice to people's experience living on and in the margins, autobiographical methods now approach "mainstream" status as a method used to explore a wide range of social science topics and as a way to "raise and display postmodernist issues" (Richardson, 1994, p. 520).

Also known as "life writing," Louis Smith (1994) labels autobiography as a "special case" and is "one of the most rapidly developing...most controversial forms" (p. 288) of social inquiry. Autobiography is "special" because it suggests the "power of agency in social and literary affairs" by giving "voice to people long denied access" (p. 288) and by describing and recounting experiences where people, as active agents in their own lives, are the hero of their own story.

Similarly, Goetting (1995) claims that in autobiography "human 'truths' are revealed through lived experience in social structure, process, and interaction" (p. 7). Mills (1959, cited in Goetting, 1995), adding weight to these arguments, reminds us this type of knowledge--insight into the social context--supplies the "resources to not only understand one's own life but, as a result, to at least partially control its outcomes" (p. 8). In addition, autobiography allows the author to see himself, reflexively, through the "eye of the modernist gaze" (Denzin, 1997, p. 47).

Whether used as a vehicle to understand human experience or,
as Mills suggests, social change, autobiography is an important method for social researchers although it is controversial. While most researchers are not writing these texts, Smith (1994) and others (Denzin, 1997; Richardson, 1994; Edel, 1984; Marcus & Fischer, 1986) believe autobiography "is at the core of late twentieth-century paradigmatic shifts in the structures of thought" (p. 288) primarily because of the shadow of postmodernism (Marcus, 1994).

Autobiography is controversial because, by example, it "eulogizes the subjective" as the important part of human life "over the objective" (Smith, 1994, p. 288) and less significant parts of life; blurs the borderline between fiction and nonfiction; and serves as a critique of positivism in the social sciences. Critics also attack the limited, partial and unfinished nature of autobiography. They claim these texts are narcissistic, serving primarily as "monuments to the ego" of the author (Marcus, 1994).

As a narrative of the self autobiography works "outward from the researcher's biography, entangling his or her tales of the self with the stories told by others" (Denzin, 1997, p. 47). This process results in the creation of an "interactive" (Goetting, 1995, p. 8) text allowing author and reader to interact through their joint participation in these stories. As such, in this project readers can "watch" me interact with my journal and the professional literature while they vicariously interact with the Armenian context and myself through their personal interpretive and sense-making processes stimulated by their reading and thus, participation in this text.
This form of writing is an example of a "messy text" (Marcus, 1994, p. 567; Denzin, 1997). A text is considered "messy" primarily because of its many "sited"-ness (Marcus, 1994, p. 567), openness to the boundaries of the object of study, concern with position, multivocalness and acceptance of its own partiality. Messy texts leave the reader with a sense of being an unfinished product with unanswered questions and unsolved mysteries.

Among the reasons Marcus (1994) gives for constructing these texts, two are the most cogent for this discussion. First, messy texts arise "simply from confronting the remarkable space/time compression that defines the conditions of peoples and culture globally" (p. 567). In other words, as once inaccessible information becomes part of everyday life through globalized media and enhanced communication technology the otherworldliness of the global process becomes "encompassed by the local" meaning that "purely local meanings are no longer a sufficient object of study" (p. 567). In modern times everybody can be a global tourist without leaving the comfort of their living rooms, assuming they have achieved the economic status to participate in the otherwise unavailable modern global culture.

Second, messy texts "wrestle with the loss of holism" (p. 567). According to Marcus (1994),

In messy texts there is a sense of a whole, without evoking totality, that emerges from the research process itself. The territory that defines the object of study is mapped by the ethnographer who is within its landscape, moving and acting within it, rather than drawn from a transcendent, detached point. (p. 567)
According to Mayne (1990) one method of constructing a messy text as a narrative of the self is for the researcher to look at himself from "both sides of the voyeur's keyhole" (p. 8). In other words, I can view the assumptions and practices I used in Armenia as well as those I use now to interpret these experiences. Thus, I can study my actions in Armenia and myself, studying these actions. In a related way, a narrative of the self is a prime example of a messy text because the author is "somewhat relieved of the problems of speaking for the Other" because the author is the Other in his text (Richardson, 1994, p. 521). Therefore I can reflexively look at myself as the Other and as the researcher studying the Other.

Writing this story as a personal experience narrative provides me with a personal and professional vehicle to interpret this text. The interpretation I offer is based in the context of my life and times as an American citizen. It also provides a critique of the assumptions and actions I had as a modern tourist and professional consultant. Writing, in this context, is theory development (Richardson, 1994) or a method of "bringing news of the world to the reader" (Denzin, 1994, p. 505). In this project the "news" was created through interaction between my autobiography, including any learned pro-American and anti-Communist ideology, the people and culture of Armenia, the written record of my experience in Armenia, myself at the time of writing two years later, and after I made another trip to Yerevan.

Because of the highly personal nature of this text I want to
be clear this story is written from my perspective and reflects my accumulated world-view. I am writing this text about my experiences and cannot escape the boundaries and idiosyncrasies I bring to its creation, nor should I. I believe a personal experience narrative is the best method to present this story. It allows the true sense of challenge, confusion, and clarity I experienced in Armenia to be heard.

Whither Objectivity?

The overarching question in this project is "just what am I doing in the Armenian culture?" (Prattis, 1985, p. 277). My efforts to answer this question inevitably leads to a discussion of how I intend to characterize and apply the knowledge herein. As such, I respond to three important methodological questions. One refers to my relations with the research field, the second to my relations with my journal, and the third to my relationship with this narrative as a research account (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). These questions, specifically related to my interaction with the field, text, and telling are addressed throughout this chapter.

In traditional social science research authors follow a positivist or, its successor, postpositivist paradigm as a way of establishing authority and credibility for their text. Both paradigms privilege the importance of the researcher's efforts to achieve objectivity through methodology regarding their research subjects, data, and analyses. Even Max Weber, the so-called "father" of sub-
jective sociology, stresses the importance of the social researcher eliminating subjectivity caused by personal bias in the interpretation of research data (Ritzer, 1996) although it is not altogether clear whether he followed his own advice.

Critique of the positivist and postpositivist paradigms proliferated over the last 20 years so a complete rewriting of the "not-positivism" debate is not necessary here (see, Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Smith, 1990; Denzin, 1997). George Marcus (1994) asserts this discussion is "showing distinct signs of exhaustion" and the "storm seems to have blown over" (p. 563). The recession of this debate suggests an acceptance of the "enduring and far-reaching effects" (p. 563) it had on social research methodology. It has opened social research to new methods, writing styles, and genre's never before considered legitimate including the use of subjectivity. Needless to say, my study is a "not-positivism" project.

For my purpose, objectivity is the most significant issue associated with the positivist and postpositivist paradigms. Overall this project, by example, serves as a critique of objectivity related to the role of the inquirer because of its personal nature and basis in subjective social experience. However, I believe the following discussion is a necessary part of this text.

I critique the concept of objectivity in the context of two closely related domains: practice and research. Related to practice, I use objectivity to refer to my ability to serve as a professional expert without allowing the effects of personal adjustment to the
Armenian culture cloud my professional judgment. As a researcher, because I am the inquirer and the Other in this text objectivity refers to my ability to interpret and derive meaning from my data in a scholarly manner, despite its subjective foundation. In other words, can I analyze and write about a subject I am interested and involved in or must I hide the fact of my interest and involvement in order to gain professional credibility as a dispassionate and disinterested researcher? I discuss these issues in sequence below.

Practice

As a professional expert I initially believed I could operate strictly from my professional self by willfully blocking the effects of my personal perspectives as well as any cultural and social adjustment problems I experienced simply by denying their existence. As a result, I honestly believed I was free to perform in a professionally objective manner despite the existence of these personal issues.

The idea that the observer can artificially and willfully separate from the observed to gain professional objectivity is not only impossible, but in my opinion an altogether foolish notion. Yet, from a traditional sociological, social psychological, and anthropological perspective this notion has been the expected, albeit implicit assumption for social inquiry.6

The implication of the bifurcated self in practice--personal and professional--carries the same meaning as objectivity does in
social research. As I stated earlier, I believed my personal adjustment (or lack thereof) to the Armenian culture would not influence my role as a professional social worker and substance abuse prevention expert. In fact, the social work practice literature refers to the need for practicing social workers to learn, understand, and respect the values and beliefs of their clients. In the context of a helping relationship it is important for the social worker to maintain a relationship where their values and beliefs do not influence the helping relationship (Hepworth & Larsen, 1993; Lum, 1992). In other words, it is important for practicing social workers to remain "value-neutral" in their helping relationships (Sheafor, Horejsi, & Horejsi, 1997, p. 41) although the authors admit this is difficult to accomplish.

I believe that accomplishing this feat, were it possible, leads to colonialism in professional practice methods. For example, my job was to apply American substance abuse prevention knowledge and techniques in Yerevan because accordingly, drug problems are the same everywhere in the world. Therefore, the American grand narrative of drug prevention could be applied successfully in that country too. In other words, I assumed the Armenian drug problem was the same as the American drug problem. Following this line of thinking, I also believed the substance abuse problems in Armenia would respond in the same way as substance abuse problems in the United States do to our established substance abuse prevention theories and practices.
My job was to convince the Armenians to do what Americans do in the face of our problems. As such, if I were successful their substance abuse problems would be solved. This, despite the fact that long-term studies on the effectiveness of substance abuse prevention programs in the United States demonstrate either "no effect" or "modest effect" on actual alcohol and other drug taking behavior (Akers, 1992, pp. 181-182; Gusfield, 1996). I speak more to the issue of Armenian substance abuse problems and my assumptions about the same in Chapter IV.

This absurd notion is akin to the sociologist who believes an a priori set of methods will provide him or her the "distance" needed from their subject to block any affect their values and epistemological assumptions, as well as the values and assumptions of the culture or group they are studying, have on their interpretation of observed cultural practices (Denzin, 1997; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Campbell & Stanley, 1963). Accordingly, by rigidly applying such methods the professional in the field can effectively guard against "going native" (Lincoln & Denzin, 1994, pp. 581-82). Instead of practice-related colonialism, these social research practices ultimately lead to a form of intellectual colonialism where the social world always ends up reading like a clone of the West, or the West is used as a normative standard by which other cultures are compared.
For this discussion, I adopt Donna Haraway's (1988) concept of positioning as a critique of objectivity. According to Haraway, positioning means that all knowledge claims are situated and partial (1988), thereby assuming all research accounts are incomplete and require response from others positioned differently. Going further, Haraway claims, "Feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. It allows us to become answerable for what we learn how to see" (pp. 582-583). By recasting traditional subjectivity as feminist objectivity, Haraway changes the meaning of objective from a rigid and inflexible essentialism to a flexible and positioned view of knowledge.

Regarding feminist objectivity, Haraway (1988) says that situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals. The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular. (Objectivity in feminism is about) the joining of partial views and halting voices into a collective subject position that promises a vision of the means of ongoing finite embodiment, of living within limits and contradictions--of views from somewhere. (p. 590)

Similarly, Prattis (1985) believes a researcher cannot maintain distance from the experiences they observe, perform, or interpret. Personal experience narratives and other forms of *new writing genres* (Richardson, 1994, p. 520) *intensifies the participatory nature of field work and challenges any attempts to create intellectual or epistemological barriers to separate the writer from those being studied* (Prattis, 1985, p. 2). In other words, accord-
ing to these authors objectivity in the positivist sense is an impossibility.

Objectivity in social science research has been attacked over the last few decades (Mills, 1959; Smith, 1990, 1992; Denzin, 1992, 1997). According to Lee and Ackerman (1994) the researcher can no longer; presume to present an objective, non-contested account of the other's experiences. Social inquiry (and, I suggest, community development) should be organized around biographical moments connecting people and their private troubles to the larger public culture and its social institutions (Mills, 1959).

Other criticisms include the tendency to ignore the writer's place in the text while privileging an ocular epistemology (Denzin, 1997); ignoring the partial, situated nature of feminist knowledge (Haraway, 1988), while pursuing the impossible quest of objectivity, and risking the reinscription of "humanist and masculine myths of power and certitude" (Ganguly, 1992, p. 61); imposing their voices and values on the groups studied (Quantz, 1992); presuming a unified or essentialized subject while arguing from a null point of experience and not being sufficiently self-reflexive (Lemert, 1992); not developing local knowledge that could be used for political change (Collins, 1992); using language of those in the inner circle of power (Collins, 1992); and, being too theoretical and preoccupied with theory verification (Roman, 1992).

Like Prattis, many writers claim objectivity is impossible to achieve. Denzin (1997, p. xiii) says, "these texts (social inquiry)
are always (italics added) dialogical—the site at which the voices of the other, alongside the voices of the author, come alive and interact with one another. Morgan (1983) also claims that social science research is dialogical and based on social interaction or, what she calls engagement:

Scientists engage a subject of study by interacting with it through means of a particular frame of reference, and what is observed and discovered in the object (i.e., its objectivity) is as much a product of this interaction and the protocol and technique through which it is operationalized as it is the object itself. Moreover, since it is possible to engage an object of study in different ways...we can see that the same object is capable of yielding many different kinds of knowledge. This leads us to see knowledge as a potentiality resting in an object of investigation and to see science as being concerned with the realization of potentialities—of possible knowledges. (p. 13)

**Personal Statement About the Knowledge in This Study**

In the context of this discussion my project is either a subjective account of my experiences in Armenia or, from a feminist perspective an objective account of the same because of the situatedness and partiality of the knowledge generated in this study. I believe my work is representative of the latter since I write from my personal perspective about my lived experience in Armenia. In other words, this interpretation is limited only to my experiences in the specific time and place of my travels and of my writing about these travels. Any negative claims pertaining to my subjectivity are valid only if I make essentialist claims in an attempt to privilege my version of reality, or extend the "reach" of this knowledge beyond the self-imposed limitations naturally created by my posi-
Because of my decision to employ life writing, I realize I am vulnerable to a "critical response to (my) partiality" (Marcus, 1994, p. 572). I openly discuss the intentions and "moral biases" (Denzin, 1994, p. 511) organizing my research and writing. Therefore, a positivist critique would accuse me of developing unscientific accounts and ideas which are not useful because of my personal investment and involvement in the topic (subjectivity), the situatedness of my text caused by positioning, and because I am inscribed in the text as both subject and object.

I reemphasize here I am not speaking for anyone but myself nor am I claiming the interpretation or meaning of this text holds universal application. As such, I view accusations of subjectivity and bias as a complement, not a criticism. Any criticism of this nature means I accomplished my goal of presenting a true personal experience narrative. In other words, I want to "create bias, celebrate it, refashion it, carry it to its limits, and provide materials for its production" (Blum, 1970, p. 308).

I intend to make my perspectives clear. I want readers to know me personally through their reading of this text; what I thought, felt, and believed during my trip and what I think, feel, and believe now. I write this so readers can glean my perspectives and opinions about these experiences, my interpretation of them and on what knowledge stores I base my analyses. Readers, in turn, can decide the degree to which they agree with my analyses and what they
would write were they in the position to do so. This narrative is supposed to be an interactive textual representation of my Armenian experiences.

I, like several of the authors cited earlier, believe all social research is grounded in social interaction and characterized by the personal involvement and investment of the researcher in their setting and the people in that location. Social research, by definition requires the researcher's intensive involvement with his or her object of inquiry. Therefore, the product of an inquirer's observation and interpretation is mutually determined and influenced by this interaction and involvement. I believe this level of interactive involvement with the setting and people in that setting breathes life, emotion, and humanity into field research.

To seek objectivity by artificially creating distance between the inquirer and her subject chokes the life out of the text. Schon (1983) attributes this method of research to the domain of technical rationalists. Instead of creating an insightful and meaningful document technical rationalists instead inscribe a dry, meaningless account of the Other's existence according to his or her totalizing set of labels and categories. This process certifies the reproduction of a stratified social order where the author as expert explains the Other who, by definition cannot explain themselves. Expert descriptions are offered to a privileged class of readers, themselves experts--because of the expert's privileged access to the media of professional dissemination--who then may enter into a de-
bate about the accuracy of the expert's claims about the Other. Of course, the people who are the Other are not invited to participate in the debate. These people or cultures become objectified social facts.

This model of knowledge development conjures for me the image of several people, all whom consider themselves lion experts standing outside a lion exhibit at the local zoo debating the relative merits of the lion's mating habits and partner selection process. I use this example not to be funny but to illustrate how this process results in an ethno-, gender-, and class-centric reproduction of the "Old World Order" which maintains the status quo and allows the expert to remain in his elite social and professional position.

Instead of avoiding personal involvement, I believe it is my responsibility to intensify my interaction with the people and culture I am studying to the point where I purposely "go native" in order to reach the "center of the experiences being described" (Geertz, 1973, p. 18). In this way I try to distance myself from my home, life, values, and comforts to become more involved in the local culture. My intention is to avoid what MacCannell (1976) calls "touristic shame."

(It) is not based on being a tourist but on not being tourist enough, on a failure to see everything the way it ought to be seen. The touristic critique of tourism is based on a desire to go beyond the other "mere" tourists to a more profound appreciation of society and culture, and it is by no means limited to intellectual statements. All tourists desire this deeper involvement with society and culture to some degree. (p. 10)

MacCannell intended this passage as a critique of the tourist.
However, I believe this is one area where modern tourists and professional social researchers should find common ground in their mutual desire to get closer to their object of study as a method of facilitating deeper understanding and meaning from their touristic or research project.

In this way, this study is about what Clandinin and Connelly (1994) call the essence of the social sciences, "the starting point and key term for all social science inquiry" (p. 414), the study of personal experience. Any interpretative distance needed in order to give meaning to the text occurs, in my view, as a function of the time between my field involvement and writing and through the use of literature and other texts not directly part of my lived experience. Whether discussing objectivity in social research or social work practice, I believe it is impossible to eliminate the mutuality of interacting voices--observer and observed; personal and professional--from social inquiry.

**Reflexive Writing**

I utilize reflexivity in this study to develop my theoretical premise by exploring many facets of my own persona as they interact with the Armenian people and culture; as a method for self reflection and critique. When one explores their life or turning point experiences, "reflexivity is an inevitable part of thinking and writing" (Markle, 1995, p. 25).

Watson (1987) makes a distinction between two types of re-
flexivity: essential and derived. Essential reflexivity is an integral feature of all discourse—-one cannot choose to be reflexive or not in an essential sense—it is always part of language use. If one accepts this premise what is left is derived reflexivity, or the ideological issue of how to deal with the fact of reflexivity. If, by definition essential reflexivity is a feature of writing and communication then the issue remaining for social science pertains to the politics of reflexivity; when to use it, how much is appropriate and acceptable, and for what purpose. These are the questions making reflexivity an "ideological (issue) that in turn masks anxiety about a broader, but less conceivable, postmodernism" (Marcus, 1994, p. 568). In other words, reflexivity in social science research is often mistaken as a symbol of a paradigm shift away from positivism and postpositivism that has occurred over the last 20 years.

As a generally accepted method for writing in the social sciences, reflexivity represents a radical point of departure from the ideology of objectivity, distance, and representation in research texts (Marcus, 1994; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Reflexive knowledge lifts the veil of objectivity by bringing the experience, assumptions, and ideologies of the author and Other into the daylight for examination by social science readers and critics alike. It locates the researcher in social proximity to their object of study by linking them in mutual relationship and responsibility for the knowledge generated by their collaborative project.
While not a method used to proscribe the Truth in a universal sense, reflexivity generates knowledge about personal experience that is more believable or real than can be generated by a researcher strategically located at a distance from their object of study. Reflexivity forces the author to take moral responsibility for their writing—something third person, scientific writing allows them to avoid (Ashmore, 1989).

Despite the attention in the professional literature the label reflexive and reflexivity in the social sciences is multidimensional and, as such, vague. There are two forms of reflexivity relevant to this project: self-critical reflexivity (Ashmore, 1989; Schon, 1983; Marcus, 1994; Meyers, 1988) and reflexivity targeted at the social science discipline (Bourdieu, 1990b).

Self-critical reflexivity is associated with self-critique: a "personal quest" (Marcus, 1994, p. 569) to locate the subjective experience of human discourse by relying on the experience and position of the author and Other in the text. Authors inscribe themselves into their texts to give voice to the Other and themselves by providing information about themselves, in autobiographical form, to be used for self-examination and to allow readers an opportunity for the same. I discuss reflexivity targeted at the social science discipline later.

Ashmore (1989) and Woolgar and Ashmore, (1988) discussed three conceptions of reflexivity, two of which are relevant here. His first conception, reflexivity as self-reference, is based on the idea that
social science is an "implicitly self-referential discourse" (Ash­more, 1989, p. 32). According to Ashmore, because social science is about people and their social arrangements it must include reference to people in social arrangements responsible for the production of social thought.

As a method for self-awareness, his second conception of re­flexivity, Ashmore agrees with Gouldner (1970) that sociologists should practice personal introspection. Gouldner assumed that sociological theory is created through the "praxis of men in all their wholeness and is shaped by the lives they lead" (p. 489). Thus, the target of reflexivity is the person of the sociologist, designed to produce a new cultural producer capable of generating a "politically liberating sociology" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 38). Mills (1959, p. 5) expressed a similar idea by suggesting that people want "to achieve lucid summations of what is going on in the world and what may be happening within themselves" as a way to understand the intersection of biography and history within their society. In combination, Ashmore's work approximates the version of self-critical reflexivity I discussed earlier.

In his own work, Ashmore uses "new literary forms" (reflexive writing), what he calls "wrighting" (Ashmore, 1989, p. xxixx). He believes reflexive sociology, while sometimes controversial, provides sociologists with a vehicle for taking personal responsibility for their work by making their "moral commitment" to their text explicit (p. 80). While acknowledging the potential "traps" of re-
flexivity, (i.e., the impossibility of being both a participant and an analyst at once), Ashmore advocates for self-reference as a permanent part of sociological discourse (p. 27). Unfortunately, I think Ashmore's version of "new literary forms," while interesting and creative, makes his style of reflexivity vague, reducing the certainty of his "moral commitment" to his text. According to Richardson (1994) one benefit of new writing styles is its ability to open social scientific writing to wider audiences by making it easier to understand. Regretfully, in this respect Ashmore's writing falls short of this noble goal.

Self-critical reflexivity also provides a means, through positioning, to overcome the gendered character of supposedly value-free social research. Feminist versions of self-critical reflexivity focus on the situatedness and partiality of all claims to knowledge by contesting any essentialist rhetoric of the Truth.

This is similar to Friere's (1993) belief that social praxis results from the constant dialectical relationship between objectivity (world without people) and subjectivity (people without a world). Therefore, social inquirers must develop methods of understanding which recognize the place of other subjects in the world while appreciating. These methods must also be rigorous, yet recognize their own inherent embeddedness in social and cultural history. This is accomplished by understanding that a sociologist's perspective depends on his or her world view, which is "induced from the culture and experience of the theorist" (Calhoun, 1995, p. 4)
Calhoun believes reflexive practices are the primary way social inquirers can avoid misunderstandings caused by interpretation and meaning developed from the so-called objectivity of an "umpire's chair" (1995, p. 11).

In order to achieve these best practices and avoid the pitfalls of distance and objectivity, Calhoun (1995) proposes a revision of theory that produces reflexive critique in the following four senses:

A critical engagement with the theorist's contemporary social world that recognizes that the current state of affairs does not exhaust all possibilities; a critical account of historical and cultural conditions (both social and personal) on which theorists' own intellectual activity depends; a continuous re-examination of the categories and conceptual frameworks of the theorist's understanding, including the historical construction of those frameworks; and, a critical confrontation with other social explanations that not only establishes their utility, but also shows their blind spots and misunderstandings. (p. 35)

The second form of reflexivity comprises a "sociology of sociology" which serves as a systematic critique of the "presuppositions inscribed in the fact of thinking the world, or retiring from the world and from action in the world in order to think that action" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 382). Bourdieu (1990) concerns himself with a reflexivity which "produces an objectified form of reflexivity, making the object that which shapes your knowledge" (p. 21). While acknowledging the importance of self-awareness, Bourdieu concentrates on what he calls the key filters that alter the sociological gaze" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 38-39). He describes three types of bias resolved by reflexive practice: self-awareness;
the theorist's position in academe; and, the intellectualist bias.

The first refers to the researcher's identification of his or her social origins and location (class, gender, ethnicity, etc.), similar to the authors cited earlier. The second concerns the researcher's position in the academic field. Bourdieu believes the perspective of the sociologist, like all cultural producers, "always owes something to their situation as defined by their difference and distance from certain others with whom they compete" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 39).

Bourdieu's third, and one I employ in this project is the "intellectualist bias." This bias is predetermined by the rules, procedures, and methods of sociology as a science (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 39). According to Bourdieu, this is the most profound and distorting bias because it is deeply embedded in and by the professional culture. The only way to account for it is through a systematic exploration of the "unthought categories of thought which delimit the thinkable and predetermine the thought" and guides the process of social inquiry (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 40).

Reflexive Writing in This Project

If it is true we all have an unique perspective about our lives, born of our family and citizenship, and of our racial, gendered, and class location in the world then I have a story to tell. As a Caucasian, middle-class American male, I am not a member of an oppressed group. However, as an American citizen on professional
assignment in a foreign land I have a standpoint that is interesting and worthy of telling. As Smith (1990b) indicated in her project, I prefer to represent my standpoint openly in the text rather than embedding it within the language and methods of my research as unspoken, universal assumptions. In a project like this the use of the pronouns I and my is inevitable. They are intended as a means for taking responsibility for my writing rather than trying to gain credibility by attributing my opinions and conclusions to the authoritative third person of research-speak.

There are potential issues and problems in using a reflexive style. Writers who utilize this approach leave their projects open to professional criticism and/or dismissal as "dead-end self-indulgence, narcissism, and solipsism" (Marcus, 1994, p. 569; Ashmore, 1989). In addition, Marcus (1994) points out that self-critical reflexivity can "get stuck in a sterile form of identity politics" in which, "it is reduced to a formulaic incantation at the beginning of ethnographic papers in which one boldly 'comes clean' and pronounces a positioned identity" (p. 572). This characteristic most often occurs for reasons of "political correctness" limiting its potential value for producing a compelling and interesting text.

Simply knowing the authors demographic location is not sufficient if reflexive positioning is not used to critique the person's "monolithic authority" (p. 573) garnered as a function of their race, class, gender, citizenship, or academic background. Pronouncing one's self to be in a "politically correct" group is not enough.
In fact, this practice of announcing membership runs the risk of making this whole notion seem more like a cliché than a serious methodological option for generating important information about personal experience in the social world.

Reflexivity, whether targeted at the self or the discipline must be used to expose and inform about assumptions and ideology, not just locate the author in a politically correct demographic category. Such practices threaten to create a new Canon of reflexive writing which, by definition verifies Friere's (1993) observation that in most cases of social revolution the formerly oppressed group ultimately becomes the oppressor by using the same means the previously oppressive, dominant group used against them in the past.

Journal as Research Text

In this study I interpret and construct meaning from the pages of my field journal. Each day in Armenia I recorded my experiences in narrative form constructed from a collection of short written notes, sometimes on napkins or paper towels, and from an occasional audio-tape transcript. Beginning my night of arrival, each night I wrote extensively about the days events, careful to make personal observations about the culture, its people, and institutions.

In this study my journal serves as an "ongoing record of practices and reflections on those practices" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 34). It was my method of stitching together an account of the trip, my personal and professional praxis, and the primary way I
made sense of this experience, then and now. Journals and diaries, according to Carr (1966), provide a powerful way for individuals to account for their personal experiences. I leave it to the readers to determine if Carr's observation applies to my work.

I wrote every night simply because I wanted a record of my lived experience. I have a habit of writing a journal whether I am in or out of the country, especially when confronted with a turning point or epiphany experience. These are terms Denzin (1994) uses to describe a set of experiences that "radically alter and shape the meanings persons give to themselves and their life projects" (p. 510). Turning point experiences are most often the subject of personal experience narratives (Denzin, 1989; Richardson, 1994). While writing, I thought the journal--my Armenian autobiography--would simply breathe life and feeling into my stories and the 300 photographs I took in Yerevan. Therefore, as research data my field journal was, I thought, lacking the critical information I needed to explore this topic in a significant and meaningful way.

When this project was conceived, I believed my journal would be the most significant barrier I needed to overcome because it was not written as notes intended for use as data in research. According to Van Maanen (1988) this is not an unusual circumstance: "Occasionally ethnographic reports appear as retrospective accounts of a distinct period in a researcher's life not marked off at the time as fieldwork" (p. 9). When I began reading the journal with the eyes of a researcher I discovered, like Van Maanen stated, it was indeed
a satisfactory record of my experiences. In fact, because I did not write with research in mind, it is possible the journal is better suited for research than if I had known about its ultimate usage. Because of my original intentions I did not risk lapsing into research-speak.

I organized my journal by day, writing personal notes and summaries at the end of each week I was in Yerevan. Other than dates, I did not use additional structuring mechanisms (i.e., categorization by event, people, etc.) to organize my writing nor did I use any specific coding scheme. I did not separate personal comments from experience recording. My journal is simply an on-going narrative recalling my experiences as I remembered them each night.

These entries are autobiographical and highly personal. They are my edited version of reality as I experienced and interpreted my lived experience through moments of crisis, confusion, happiness, and discovery. The content of my journal is determined by my privileging of certain events for recording, how I remembered the events, notes I collected, and comments I wrote at the time. In other words, this journal is a collection of "notes to myself" (Denzin, 1997, p. 117). However, I did discuss my interpretations and thoughts with my partner each night while writing. Therefore, his assumptions and interpretations are weaved into the text of my journal. However, I cannot now determine where I was writing his ideas, my ideas, or our mutually determined ideas. Our interpretive collaboration melded into one account of the experience.
I am sure I forgot important events and people, or gave short-shrift to events and occurrences because of an imperfect memory and fatigue. These notes were often written very early in the morning, since my sleep patterns never fully adjusted to the eight hour time difference between Yerevan and Eastern Standard Time. I remember many nights, watching the sun set and rise over the majestic, snow-capped peaks of Mount Ararat and the top of my not-so-majestic computer screen.

Autobiographical moments, as stories taken from memory, are used reflexively along with journal entries to enhance this story and provide a thick description (Geertz, 1973) as context for my interpretation and discussion. I interact with myself through these accounts with additional discussion and critical comments intended to clarify and explain their meaning.

Because I write this study after more than two years since my return, it is impossible for me to recreate my biography to determine which factors were substantive influences during my the time of my Armenian experience, beyond what is contained in the journal entries. The cumulative wisdom of my lived experience since that time influences and undoubtedly changes my recollection and interpretation of my text. So, my interpretation now of my interpretation then is undoubtedly different because of life experience since that time.

Related to this issue, Denzin (1994, p. 510) discusses Sartre's (1963) "progressive-regressive analytical method of analysis" as the method that "organizes the interpretive process" in
Interpretive Interactionism. I believe it is impossible to work 'progressively' forward and 'regressively' backward in time from a current historical moment. Once a subject is placed in an historical context, it is impossible to produce a representative interpretation of anything but the present epistemological perspective of the interpreter. All knowledge of human life is social and therefore situated and localized to the current historical moment, the critical moment where the researcher reads and interprets the object of study (Giddens, 1984, 1990).

In addition, I quote my journal directly in an unedited manner leaving undisturbed its original form and language regardless of whether the grammar and language is correct. Only by reproducing my journal entries exactly as I wrote them can the reader get a sense of my attitude and state of mind at the time and in that place. I apologize in advance for the occasional punishment I may cause the readers because of poor grammar and occasional use of rough language in my journal entries.

Final Thoughts About Method

A personal experience narrative, to me, is the best way to make sense of experiences as significant and meaningful as these are in my life. At different points in my professional life I have used journaling as an aide to personal and professional development. Early in my career as a social worker I journaled as a way to gain insight into my reactions at being intimately involved in my cli-
ent's problems of living.

Since my Armenian trip I have used journaling to record my observations and experiences in other cities and countries where I worked including Moscow, Minsk and Brest in the Republic of Belarus, and Tirana, Albania. Therefore, my interpretation of this experience is inevitably colored by my subsequent international experiences, some good and some not so good, but all certainly memorable. This Armenian trip in the Spring of 1995 was only the beginning, my first trip abroad for personal or professional reasons. As such, Armenia is my first love. This is why my Armenian trip is the significant turning point experience in my life to date.

It also explains why this trip is the focus of my project.
CHAPTER III

LIFE-LEARNING

The Surreal Tourist - Soviet Memories, Part II

The Olympics

The Russian Judge always scored American athletes lower than they deserved. It was a collective joke in the United States. The Soviet Army competing against our own fresh-faced college kids—professionals against amateurs. Their heavily-muscled and mature athletes frustrate American athletes in every event. It's why we have the Dream Team in basketball. The Soviets beat our college team in the 1988 Olympics in Seoul Korea. America saw this as a defeat of our way of life. In this political world of competing dominant ideologies, athletic prowess equals national power. Wasn't that Hitler's notion in 1936? Whatever happened to "It's only a game?"

Evening News

May 1 of any year since 1945—we see news footage of Stalin, Kruschev, or Breshnev standing menacingly atop Lenin's tomb giving his power wave as legions of Soviet soldiers and ominous missile launchers parade by their proud and adoring leader. A modern-day Nazi Party Rally, brought to Americans in living color on the evening news. As a child I wondered when one of those missiles would
fall on me? As an adult I understand our objective news services produced ideological documentaries to remind us how dangerous the world can be.

**Television Commercials**

Soviet women—big, muscular, stern, and unattractive models walk the runway on stage in full length, army-issue underwear, followed by beautiful American women in their flattering bikini briefs. Even Jockey® underwear used Cold War propaganda to improve their bottom-line. I never located these women in my travels. The only women I see are beautiful indeed. If world dominance has anything to do with the attractiveness of the women, America is in trouble indeed!

**Preparation for Travel**

You know, Mr. Johnson – you are the first non-Armenian person I've ever booked a flight for to Armenia. What are you, a Peace Corps Volunteer or something? (Johnson, 1995, p. 1).

When my travel agent, an Armenian-American, made this unsolicited comment I started wondering what I would find in Yerevan. This comment along with UNDP documents, my professional experience and preconceived notions about the former Soviet Union conspired to create the "normative expectancies" I held about the upcoming trip (Jones, 1990, p. 5).

According to Edward Jones (1990) a person entering into a social interaction develops a picture in their mind, or normative ex-
pectancies about what they will face in that interaction (p. 5). Normative expectancies play an important role in how an individual perceives a situation, which in turn determines how he or she will adjust.

Expectancies are based on beliefs or "ideas we are socialized to think are true" (Downton & Wehr, 1997, p. 17). The truth-laden meaning of beliefs give them the power to shape people's perception of social reality and ultimately affect their behavior. Beliefs provide a "frame of reference" (p. 17) by which an individual interprets what they see, think, feel, and do in their daily social interactions. Therefore, they are the thought patterns which guide the way we understand ourselves, others, and society.

Beliefs develop over a lifetime of learning in a particular social and cultural context resulting in a form of ethnocentrism. In other words, through interaction with the environment—micro and macro—the individual develops social perspectives based on their own subjective interpretation of the information, their actions in response to that information, and feedback received as a result of that action. From these perspectives comes a range of routine and acceptable behavior consistent with others in their immediate social world. The person can their "fit their lines of action" with others in their social environment (Mead, 1934, p. 143), enabling them to successfully interact in their immediate social context.

In social situations people compare their personal circumstances to others. During a first intercultural experience it is
natural to compare new experiences with familiar cultural practices. When an individual enters a culture where their beliefs and actions do not fit with the beliefs and actions of the new culture they experience a cognitive, social, and cultural discrepancy. The discrepancy occurs when an individual compares their normative expectations to the actual social circumstances they encounter. As a result the individual often experiences what I call a psychic emergency, a term closely related to "culture shock" (Sanderson, 1991, p. 37). My interest in this subject pertains to where these beliefs originate and whether they can be changed in the context of newly confronted life experiences.

I subscribe to a model of socialization that involves interaction and negotiation between an individual and his or her social environment. This model allows a freer, more improvising, and negotiating individual who, through action and reflection on action (Friere, 1993), is a determining force in their social development over the course of a lifetime. Yet, when I began my Armenian experience I found that my expectations about the culture, people, and living conditions were largely a product of earlier learning.

This chapter sorts through years of living and learning in the United States to determine from which learning—contemporary study or earlier socialization—my expectations, attitudes, and beliefs originated. Along the way I must square the apparent discrepancy between my ideas about an active individual and the dominant impact of the environment on my beliefs about Armenia.
Socialization: A Review

As a theoretical field of pursuit socialization is well covered in the literature. Why then should I spend more time on it when I could simply refer readers to a compendium of sources? In my opinion there is no agreement on a central question of socialization: to what extent do individuals living and acting in their social environment have the capacity to change their accumulated social perspectives? I do not expect to solve this decades-long theoretical dispute here. However, I believe my intercultural experience in the Republic of Armenia in 1995 and again in 1997 can be used to shed light on this important issue in a contemporary, global environment. This is the dominant theme of this project.

Later I propose a model of socialization based on my experiences in the Armenian culture. In this discussion my task is not so demanding. I use the concept of socialization to uncover the attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes I held prior to making the trip to Yerevan in 1995. I begin with an overview of several major models of socialization divided into two sections: (1) models privileging structural determinism, and (2) models privileging agency. This is by no means an exhaustive review. My intention is simply to provide a general overview of the socialization literature as the foundation for my later work in this study.10

Structural Models

Most theories revolve around the extent to which an indivi-
dual's socialization is dominated by society. I believe too much emphasis is still given to Durkheim's original idea that socialization is the way in which the constraining properties of social facts make themselves felt by individuals (Durkheim, 1964). The notion of an external society vis-à-vis the individual privileges the power of the social environment and excludes the impact of personal agency on social development.

Recent trends however, move away from a structural approach to one that privileges a more active individual who influences and is influenced by others (Corsaro & Eder, 1995). As such, there is an increasing appreciation of socialization as a lifelong process, the importance of the sociocultural context for human development, and the importance of cross-cultural and historical factors (Corsaro & Eder, 1995, p. 428). My experience in Armenia demonstrates how these factors are relevant to one's ability to adjust in a foreign culture.

Although sociologists have moved toward "viewing socialization as a process of collective action and interpretive reproduction" (Corsaro & Eder, 1995, p. 424) the importance of lived experience is still discarded in favor of a macro-level description of an all-powerful, amorphous social structural web turning individuals into automata or treating them like 'scripted actors' in a Broadway theater production.

For example, behaviorists like B.F. Skinner (1969) hold a mechanistic view of socialization in which passive individuals are shaped by dominate environmental influences. Similarly the struc-
tural version of role theory, with a long tradition in sociology and anthropology, sees groups and society as a set of social positions which are consensually defined in relation to one another (Linton, 1945; Nadel, 1957; Gross, Mason & McEachern, 1958). Roles are conceived as sets of expectations attached to social positions which define behaviors appropriate for persons who occupy those social positions. These rules are enforced by sanctions by others with whom the role-player interacts.

Contemporary behaviorists share the basic ideas of their forefathers yet take a more active view of the individual by recognizing the importance of social factors (Bandura, 1986; Bowlby, 1980). However, they do not discuss the nature of this interaction in a meaningful way. It is one thing to recognize the importance of social factors and something different to explain how these factors influence socialization. Individuals may interact with their environment but are still creations of a one-sided interactional process where social structure is the constraining force in socialization. In this sense social interaction is best characterized as a monologue where the environment speaks and the person reacts. These models portray the individual as a "judgmental dope" (Smelser, 1989, p. 123; Garfinkel, 1967), leading to what D.H. Wrong called the "oversocialized conception of man" (1961, p. 185).

From the interactionist perspective Mead (1934) and Blumer (1969) theorized that individuals experience themselves from the standpoint of others in their social group. The person acquires a
sense of self "by taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself within a social environment or context of experience and behavior in which both he and they are involved" (1934, p. 138). Therefore, self-consciousness begins when a child develops the ability to assume the "organized social attitudes of the group to which she belongs" (Corsaro & Eder, 1995, p. 426). He called these attitudes the "generalized other" (Mead, 1934, p. 118).

Based on Mead’s work, Ralph Turner developed an interactionist role theory that rejected the rigid determinism of structural role theory (1962). Rather than seeing individuals occupying a rigid role configuration he believes they devise a role performance on the "basis of an imputed other" (p. 23). Individuals behave as if there were roles clearly articulated and planned yet they construct role expectations and behavior by taking the role of the other (Mead, 1934). Generalized assumptions about the role remain intact as a function of social structure, yet individuals negotiate the particulars of their daily role performance (Turner, 1962, 1968).

Similar to behaviorism, these models privilege the environment (generalized other) over the individual's ability to make a unique contribution to their social development. In the process of role-taking, interactionists use micro description to restate the power of macro structure in determining the attitude of the individual. According to Mead the generalized other is the attitude of social environment or "the whole (society)" that exists "prior to the part (the individual)" (1934, p. 7). In other words, individuals carry
society around with them to be used as a mechanism for social and personal control. Therefore, Interactionists describe individuals as purposive yet ultimately attribute social development to the generalized other, or the social environment. As such people change only if the social environment first dictates the change.

**Toward a More Active Individual**

Like I stated earlier many theorists now recognize the role individuals play in their social development. They refute models portraying social structure as the all-powerful force in people's development. I chose to review the interpretive perspective of socialization here because it provides a primary theoretical basis for the analysis of my lived experience in the Republic of Armenia.¹¹

The interpretive perspective, primarily structuration theory (Giddens, 1984), views socialization as a collective process where the child or adult is the "discoverer of a world endowed with meaning" (Corsaro & Eder, 1995, p. 427). From this perspective the child begins life in an already defined social group. Through the growth of communication and language skills over a lifetime the person interacts to construct their social world by participating in daily routines. Routines provide the individual with "ontological security" (p. xxiii)¹² and shared understanding as a member of a cultural group (Giddens, 1984). Social routines are "vital to the psychological mechanisms whereby a sense of trust and ontological security is sustained in the daily activities of social life" (1984, p. xxiii).
The impact of routinization is best illustrated by studying "critical situations" (Giddens, 1984, p. 61), defined as "circumstances of radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind which affect substantial numbers of individuals" (p. 61). They create "radical ontological insecurity," by threatening or actually destroying the "certitudes of institutionalized routines" in everyday life (p. 61).

Unfortunately Giddens overlooks situated critical situations in people's lives and focuses on events occurring at the group level which are outside of most people's lived experience. This is not to say the effects of war or genocide are not important for study. However, I believe a more practical and revealing topic for study are those critical situations occurring in everyday life that shape or change people's lives. I incorporate the importance of critical situations--or life-lessons--in intercultural adjustment in Chapter V.

Similar to poststructuralism, Giddens (1984) believes in the "reflexive character of human conduct" (p. xvi), rejecting the notion that human behavior results from forces people neither control nor comprehend. As such, he believes people have the ability to exert power and control over their environment and social structure to which they are subordinate. In terms of socialization, Giddens refers to the "duality of structure" (p. 16) where,

Structure is not 'external' to individuals: as memory traces, and as instantiated in social practices, it is in a certain sense more 'internal' than exterior to their activities in a Durkheimian sense. Structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling (p. 25).
As such, agency refers to an individual's capacity to make a difference in their social environment. It implies that individuals have the "power" (Giddens, 1984, p. 9) to act in ways conflicting with the social environment. Resources in the environment provide the avenue for creative action where a person can influence or change it in relation to themselves.

Unfortunately, Giddens does not address how or under what circumstances people impact or change their immediate social environment. While I like the dialectic of a constraining and enabling social structure, he does not specify the limits or range of this constraining and enabling function. Nor does he specify the resources inherent in the social structure promoting such creative action by individuals. Therefore, this model is a general description of socialization without clear direction about how the duality of structure operates in everyday life with situated individuals in their daily routines or during critical situations.

Structuration theory provides a framework leading to the promised land where individual involvement in social development derived from personal experience can be described. I believe we get even closer by combining Giddens' work with Denzin's (1989, 1992, 1997) poststructuralist interpretive approach. I refer readers to Chapter II for a discussion of how Denzin's approach applies to this project.

While I favor a model of social development which assumes individuals have the capacity for difference-making agency, I also be-
lieve significant others within the immediate social environment have an impact on what a person comes to believe about their world. Family members and other significant people shape a child's original beliefs and values. Therefore, I locate my beliefs about childhood socialization on the structure end of a structure-agency continuum. This statement assumes the child does not experience a life-changing critical situation that creates the need for agency at a young age.

I contend that many children in America are products of their immediate social environment because their lives are devoid of significant life changing critical situations. Over time the child gradually develops the ability to reflexively monitor their behavior. This ability lessens the effect of the social environment on their social perspectives and increases the impact of their subjective interpretation and thereby their capacity for agency. Socialization processes work differently for children forced to develop agency at an early age because of issues like poverty, severe family disruption, war, political upheaval, or life under a totalitarian regime. These events force children to mature faster than others creating the need for the child to interpret and act on their world, often for survival. This is very common in Second and Third World countries where political, economic, and social upheaval are commonplace. I believe this has been overlooked by Western theorists over the years.

Few countries are sheltered from the impact of the macro social structure like the United States. It is possible for people in
the United States to live effectively and yet be ignorant about the affects of the macro social environment. The United States is a relatively safe and stable world regardless of which political party is in power at home or elsewhere in the world. The exceptions to this are the poor and most minorities. These Americans are forced to live in America as if they were citizens of a Second or Third World country.

Life-Learning: Active Development of a World View

In this section I discuss a model of socialization that recognizes the reciprocal relationship between an individual and their environment. According to this model individuals can exert personal and relational power (agency) to change their world-view accumulated through lifelong socialization. In addition, socialization occurs in the relational context between the individual, local environment, and the larger social structures in which they occur.

Yet, because of traditional systems of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, class-ism, first vs. Second and third world countries, etc.) all people cannot exert the liberating force of agency. This is especially true in small and/or unstable countries vulnerable to political, economic and social changes that could, overnight, destroy its political and economic fortunes and the personal lives of its people. Unfortunately most of these factors are outside the immediate control of the country and people they affect. However, as history demonstrates, through a liberation pedagogy targeted at
the sources of oppression people can exercise their capacity for agency against their oppressors (Freire, 1970/1993; 1994).

In this project I use the term life-learning to represent the stores of knowledge (Schutz, 1932/1967)—or, wisdom—a person accumulates and utilizes over a lifetime to navigate their everyday social world. Life-learning is a multifaceted term encompassing many of the discrepancies in socialization theory by combining human agency and the subjective interpretation of social knowledge with the immediate environment and social systemic influences to form a comprehensive perspective on the process. When I add the concept of life-lessons in Chapter V this model also accounts for lifelong social learning and change.

As defined in the American Heritage Dictionary, Second College Edition (1985), as a verb learning means action designed for the person "to gain knowledge, comprehension, or mastery through experience or study." As a noun learning represents "acquired wisdom, knowledge, or skill" (p. 720). As such, I believe both forms of learning describe socialization. In this perspective a person acquires the wisdom, knowledge, and skill through the process of gaining knowledge, comprehension, and the use of skills, newly learned and practiced in social circumstances to live effectively in their life-world.

Learning is an active process where the individual participates in the process of knowledge acquisition. People are active learners who do not simply absorb information from the social envir-
onment. The quality of knowledge learned and mastery gained is a joint construction of the knowledge to be learned, quality of the instruction received, and the participation and aptitude of the individual learner. In other words life-learning as socialization highlights the active participation of the individual in their socialization, the subjective quality of the knowledge available to be learned, and the subjective understanding and retention of the knowledge by the individual. The local environment is active as a co-constructor of an individual's social self.

I utilize the word subjective in several ways. First, information available from the environment is subjective because it is uniquely disseminated and interpreted through the particular perspective of family members, local community, mass media, and schools. Even if one assumes a child is a passive sponge simply soaking-in social facts the rules, norms, roles, and beliefs of the community or culture are subjective. Each group of socialization instructors as it were, interprets for themselves information about the world before imparting it to their students. If this were not true—if, in a given community or culture everybody learned the same objective social facts—everyone in that community or culture would believe, think, and act exactly the same. There would be no diversity of experience whatsoever.

Second, comprehension is a subjective process based on individual aptitude, interpretive frame, and the interest and desire of the learner. As such, the child (or adult) retains and uses, con-
sciously or unconsciously, what information they subjectively privilege as relevant for their purposes. Life-learners do not attribute the same meaning and value nor draw the same conclusions from their lessons. This process is unique, depending on the learner. In this sense comprehension is dependent on many qualities of the learner including their psychological and biological limits and capabilities. Although the biological involvement of the learner is beyond the scope of this project it is important enough to acknowledge as a factor in the process.

The subjective interpretation of social knowledge occurs in the youngest child as they begin to interpret and act in their life-world. For example, one only has to watch the difference in the early behavior of any two children in the same family to understand this phenomenon. The discriminating process becomes more significant in later youth (adolescence) as well as in young, middle, and older adulthood.

If people did not subjectively retain and use information from their environment there would be no prejudice, racism, or gender discrimination nor would there be tobacco or other drug use. There is enough objective knowledge available about the negative qualities of these attitudes and behaviors that if people did not subjectively interpret it in unique ways these problems would not exist in the world.

Another important characteristic of learning is mastery. Through social action and reflection on that action children and
adults attain mastery over their everyday world. Mastery, by definition is gained and expressed through action and experience in the social world. The individual interacts in their environment via personal experience while at the same time reflexively monitoring their actions. This is the primary method of intercultural adjustment in the social world.

The importance of action leading to mastery or competence (White, 1959) in life-learning cannot be overemphasized. Life-learning is not simply a cognitive or affective process. It does not occur because people listen closely nor does it unfold within people like a developing physiology. In other words, in this model thoughts and feelings do not drive behavior. I believe action and reflection on action dominates a person’s immediate experience in the social world. People are first confronted with social circumstances demanding an immediate and active physical response where their current "evolutionary truce" (Kegan, 1982, p. 40) collides with an experience they can neither assimilate nor ignore.

For example, adolescents may face significant peer pressure to commit a criminal act, or in this case I needed to instruct a taxi driver in Armenia without knowing the language. These events demand some form of immediate action to resolve the dilemma. Through feedback from the environment, what Kegan (1982) calls the "single energy system of all living things" (p. 43), in conjunction with stored knowledge in the unconscious and present in the conscious mind, a person tries to make sense of their circumstances. Kegan
(1982) calls this process the "evolution of meaning" (p. 41) which includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral activity performed in an effort to competently respond to an immediate social situation.

At the critical moment where a situation demands action a person relies on information subjectively learned, stored, and recalled through the life-learning process. If the information is unhelpful in the current situation, through behavior and the reflective monitoring of behavior, people adjust in an effort to adapt to the novel situation in the most competent way possible. Therefore people construct their physical and social world in a "move toward the greater coherence of one's organization" (Kegan, 1982, p. 41). This is what he calls the "process of evolution as a meaning-constitutive activity" (p. 42).

As such, lived experience is the most important factor in life-learning. Humans are active beings who become by learning, adapting, and adjusting through personal experience. If the social situation is routine they utilize knowledge derived from prior learning and experience, most of which is stored in the unconscious. If, however a social circumstance is unusual or new (critical situation) they rely on conscious thought or the subjective interpretation of the immediate social situation.

At this point I digress to define the term unconscious as I use it in this project. Simply stated, I reject the traditional canon of the unconscious developed by Freud (1959) and his legion of followers. These theorists focus their attention on the management
of organic drives resulting in a "stratified model of personality development" in which human wants are regarded as "hierarchically connected" to a basic security system "largely inaccessible to the conscious subject" (Giddens, 1986, p. 123). Accordingly, whatever information or drives are stored in the unconscious determines human behavior and is most often understood to have a negative impact on the individual. In this conception it is like people are driven by base drives and desires developed through participation in and hopefully completion of several psychosexual developmental stages (Freud, 1959; 1961).

My purpose here is not to engage in a lengthy critique of Freudian developmental psychology. Needless to say, while his work continues to influence sociology, psychology, and social work practice, I do not ascribe to Freud's over-reliance on biology to explain social behavior. I believe unconscious knowledge, if it truly exists (who knows for sure, it is unconscious after all), is routinized or well-learned stored knowledge used by an individual in familiar social situations without thinking. In other words, unconscious knowledge does not need conscious attention. It is contextual, mediated by time and space, and applies to social situations where routinized knowledge works when applied in action.

My description of the unconscious is similar to Giddens' (1986) notion of "practical consciousness" (p. 2) which he defines as "tacit knowledge that is skillfully applied in the enactment of courses of conduct, but which the actor is not able to formulate discursively."
(p. 57). However, he does not believe practical consciousness is unconscious knowledge because the individual "skillfully" applies this knowledge in social interaction (p. 25). Yet, he leaves what he means by skillfully applied undefined in any practical manner.

I believe practical consciousness indeed describes knowledge stored in the unconscious. According to my definition unconscious knowledge is skillfully applied in social interaction because it is routine knowledge mediated by the person's location in time and space. This knowledge allows individuals to successfully negotiate their life-world. As such, unconscious knowledge operates outside the realm of discursive knowledge because an individual does not know it is being applied in a given situation nor can they discuss it.

Accordingly, unconscious knowledge remains unconscious until the person's social context changes making their routinized information no longer useful. In a changed social context, like that which I confronted in Yerevan, routine knowledge ultimately moves from unconscious to conscious, assuming the person is sufficiently self-reflexive, because it is no longer effective in their social world. Therefore, I believe unconscious knowledge changes when prompted by a changing social context. This, once again, assumes the person reflexively monitors their actions in the social world (Giddens, 1986). This movement of knowledge occurs when a person acquires new life-lessons which are integrated as part of their life-learning. I discuss this process fully in Chapter V.
One last comment on the unconscious. This stored knowledge does not reflect a person's organic drives, motives, or intentions. These labels are given to behavior after the fact (i.e., a Freudian slip) and are defined by the context in which the action occurred. The social process of attributing an individual's behavior to organic drives, motives, or latent intentions is part of a rationalization process used by an individual, social group, or community as a means of making sense out of behavior they did not immediately understand.

In the following section I explore the content of my life-learning through three "Autobiographical Statements" when combined with additional information, upon reflection, contributed significantly to my normative expectancies about Armenia.

Autobiographical Statement #1

First, to answer my travel agent, let me say I am not of Armenian descent nor a Peace Corps volunteer.

I am a Caucasian, Protestant male born near the end of the baby-boom era. By five years, I am the eldest of five children. My father is a public school teacher and mother a full-time professional mother and wife. I am sure my father's salary placed us into the middle-class of that era. I thought we were rich, my parents provided everything I believed I ever wanted or needed. Only later did I learn about the financial struggles they endured on one salary raising five children.
My family heritage is Norwegian and German although I was not encouraged to explore my ethnic roots. As far as I knew we were American. I had no practical need to know my ethnicity because I am Caucasian, Protestant, and middle class. My skin color, background, and socioeconomic status fits the profile of the typical American destined to inherit the American Dream (West, 1994; Hacker, 1992).

I am surprised by the lack of familial interest in our ethnicity. Because I was born to young parents, as a child I spent a great deal of time with my paternal great grandparents while my parents finished high school. Oscar and Ruth Johnson emigrated from Norway in the early twentieth century. Because they were such an important force during my childhood, I wonder just how influential they were beyond satisfying my immediate need for adult supervision? I believe it is informative to briefly tell Oscar Johnson's story as I have come to know it over the years.

Oscar was a professional baseball player for over 30 years beginning in about 1905 in Wausau Wisconsin. Early in his career he was headed for certain stardom at the major league level. In fact, he was promoted to the major league team (Chicago With Sox) just in time for the 1919 World Series. This of course, was the team that gambled and lost on the World Series becoming known forever as the "Chicago Black Sox."

According to my memory and family oral tradition, the day before he left for spring training to begin his major league career, Oscar suffered a sawmill accident that ended his dreams of playing
major league baseball. While training his replacement he acciden-
tally cut three fingers off his left hand at the first knuckle.
Although the fingers were lost from the hand in which he wore his
baseball glove (not his pitching hand), in those days the equipment
was such that he could no longer catch the ball at his position well
enough to play at the major league level. He would have been unable
to protect himself from a batted ball.

Not to be denied, Oscar (nicknamed 'The Big Swede' in news-
paper accounts of his day) rehabilitated himself to the extent that
he continued pitching baseball in the minor leagues for over 20 more
years, achieving acclaim among his contemporaries and wide-eyed awe
from his great grandson fifty years later. Oscar pitched against
many of the baseball icons of his era: Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig, Ty
Cobb, etc. He was indeed every young American boy's dream to have
as a great grandfather.

Following retirement Oscar and Ruth moved to my eventual home-
town--Flint, Michigan--and opened a small family business. He worked
this business and held court among local baseball players, fans,
newspaper reporters while financially sponsoring little league base-
ball teams, including my own, until his death in 1971 at 83 years
old.

Oscar was a man's man, priding himself on rugged individual-
ism and strength of body and character. For example, until two
weeks before his death Oscar lived in a high crime area of the city.
He steadfastly refused everybody's vigorous attempts to convince him
to move to a smaller and safer home. One night a man broke into his home. Oscar confronted the intruder and shot him with a pellet gun, chasing him away. Not bad for an 82 year old man. Soon thereafter my grandfather (Lee Johnson, Oscar's son) convinced him to move into a nursing home. I remember his embarrassment at having to live in the home, and I believe he decided his life was over. He died in two weeks.

He was proud that he never missed a day of work because of illness. I vividly remember how he retained his physical strength until he died. One of the last times I saw him alive he lifted me, a strapping 14 year old boy, high over his head before he gave me that big bear-hug for which he was famous. As a young boy, I have vivid memories sitting at Oscar's knee listening to him spin his baseball yarns, wide-eyed and eager to soak in every last word.

Oscar looms large in my life. I think about him today as if he was still alive waiting for me to visit so he could spend hours telling stories about baseball--and life. In fact, even today more than 26 years after his death at least one Oscar story is told at every family dinner. Oscar is THE role model for all of the Johnson men, his son, grandson, and especially myself.

I know Oscar's baseball stories are true: I have his memorabilia. I remember his three missing fingers and his inspiring life-force. Of course he told other stories, yet I do not remember them. I can only look to the historical period in which he lived to surmise what kind of man he was when baseball was not the topic of
Oscar lived before women could vote, during segregated times, prohibition, the roaring twenties, communist revolution, through two world wars, two police actions, economic depression, the New Deal, McCarthyism, the Kennedy assassination, the Civil Rights Movement, beginning of the feminist Movement, and the anti-war movement. He watched silent movies starring a young Gloria Swanson and Charlie Chaplin and talkies featuring Paul Newman and Marlon Brando.

His life spanned from the days when horses were the preferred mode of travel to the moon landing. He played baseball when it was whites only, saw Jackie Robinson break the color barrier, and women and minorities get affirmative action. He remembered Civil War veterans and visited our former slave-owning family members in Tennessee. Knowing Oscar, he was full of opinions and I am sure he shared them with me. Yet, I have no conscious memory of this ever happening.

Was Oscar a bigot? I wonder what he thought about women voting and working outside the home? I wonder if he feared communism, was a New Deal Democrat, McCarthy Republican, or a Teddy Roosevelt Bull Party member? What about African-Americans playing professional baseball, in fact what about African-Americans in general? Did he like John F. Kennedy or was he glad he was shot? How did he manage to miss serving in World War I? What would Oscar say now about diversity, standpoint politics, and Bill Clinton? Could he and I have a political discussion without arguing?
Why is this important? Because he was such a force in life, I wonder which of Oscar's attitudes and beliefs were transmitted to me directly during our long story-telling sessions or indirectly through my grandfather and father, before and after his death? Do you suppose Oscar's teaching influenced the expectancies I had when I arrived in Armenia?

Cold War Propaganda: American Nationalism Through One Person's Eyes

The Cold War period in American history is well documented in the literature. Therefore, I focus on anti-communist propaganda and its impact on the socialization of American citizens from the 1950's through the early 1970's. I intend this discussion to contribute to an understanding of how this period affected my perspectives while preparing for a trip to Armenia. Because I was a child when anti-communism was at its peak (Levering, 1982, Hixson, 1997, Lens, 1964) I, like other young Americans, was susceptible to information from the mass media, education, and my immediate environment. 15

From 1945 until the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 the Cold War was the most significant environmental influence on the social development of American citizens (Whitfield, 1991; Paterson, 1988; Lens, 1964). This is especially true for children receiving their primary education during the late fifties, 1960's and early 1970's. Fierce anti-communism permeated American life creating what Stephen Whitfield calls the "Culture of the Cold War" (1991) where the "loss of the sense of proportion, such an eclipse of rationality,
was a signature of the Cold War" (p. 24-25). This was an era where misrepresentations about communism were "heightened and the proclivity for self-righteousness went unchecked" (p. 25). In short, we were all deeply effected by the infusion of massive negative propaganda, paranoia, and fear.

Because the Soviet's were so powerful I never envisioned myself directly confronting the hangover of anticommunist propaganda in my lifetime. I had no previous experience with Eastern Europe other than what I was taught and more importantly what I learned as a citizen of the United States during that time.

During that era Americans defined themselves in comparison to the Soviet Union and by our anticommunist stance. Sidney Lens, writing over 30 years ago, stated that the "fear of communism has persisted in American life with varying intensity ever since the Russian Revolution over--(80 years)--ago" (Lens, 1964, p. 13). He believes this fear altered the course of American history and its values and institutions. I agree with Lens' assessment. Americans were (and are) fiercely anticommunist because of the perceived threat it posed to our way of life. This was no mistake. In reality communism is alien to the American way of life (Whitfield, 1991; Paterson, 1988). Yet, America overreacted to this perceived threat to national security.

Americans proudly--even arrogantly--proclaim their economic and political liberties to anyone who will listen. They think everyone should have the civil liberties and equal opportunity they be-
lieve exists in our country. To Americans, communism denies civil liberties and subordinates people to a stifling, state-dictated society that ruins self-initiative, stunts economic growth, and perpetuates the power of self-serving dictators (Paterson, 1988, p. viii). Americans cringe at communist support for worker revolution mainly because revolutions challenge America's "vaunted position as 'the haves'" (Paterson, 1988, p. viii). Finally, Americans have been saturated with media and government reports about the dismal record of communist leaders--from Stalin's purges to Fidel Castro's repression--shaping their beliefs about these regimes while being left never knowing for sure the difference between the truth and negative propaganda (Whitfield, 1991; Bogart, 1995).

While Americans did not invent the communist threat--after all, the Soviets did have the nuclear means to annihilate the world--they made it into a monster with overwhelming capabilities and unlimited ambitions. As Paterson (1988) states,

Americans have made the communist adversary into something it has never been, claiming for it a strength that it never possessed, finding it menacingly at work where it has never existed, blaming it for troubles it has never started, depicting it as a monolith it has never resembled, and attributing to it accomplishment it has never achieved...Americans and their leaders...(spoke)...of the 'communist threat' as if 'communism' constituted a unified movement (throughout the world). (p. ix-x).

To accomplish this the United States propaganda machinery constructed a "Master Narrative" (Ladner, 1971, p. vii) of "Democracy and Freedom" versus "Communist Oppression" by using culturally-saturating propaganda that colored all of American life. To "demonize"
(Hixson, 1997, p. xiii) the Soviet Union our government promoted worst-case scenarios and the Soviet Union's worst intentions (i.e., the Soviet desire to overrun Western Europe). These perceptions fueled a patriotic culture in the United States supporting unprecedented commitments of military power overseas and interference in foreign governmental affairs. America's commitment to the anti-communist struggle was considered this country's "manifest destiny" during the Cold War years (Hixson, 1997, p. xiv).

Even political groups who disagreed about most everything else were allies in anticommunism. The consensus included both major political parties, labor unions, and business groups. It included mass circulation magazines and daily newspapers, ethnic and religious groups, veterans and professional organizations, and liberal and conservative interest groups. While liberals and conservatives often disagreed on the best means to oppose communism both parties supported anti-communism as the central thrust of U.S. foreign policy.

Every war since World War II, with the exception of the Gulf War, was fought to contain communism. This is especially true of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, both a result of the United States government's anti-communist obsession (Paterson, 1988). The policy decision, originated by the "Truman Doctrine" in the 1940's (Levering, 1982), to militarize our opposition to the Soviets and use false propaganda as part of that strategy, ultimately cost America in terms of social justice, wealth, personal freedom and human lives.
Hixson (1997) believes the stakes were even higher for the Soviet Union:

The fall of the Soviet regimes from 1989 to 1991 stemmed largely from economic and social stagnation, and ultimately disintegration. The (Soviet) regimes thus collapsed from internal causes, with economic decline certainly exacerbated, to be sure, by massive Soviet over-investment in Cold War militarization. (p. xv)

Exaggeration of the communist threat led to activities violating their professed national ideals and a multitude of unintended consequences. For example over 250,000 United States servicemen were exposed to harmful radiation during above-ground atomic bomb testing and the military conducted chemical warfare tests over San Francisco, St. Louis, and Minneapolis exposing millions of people to unknown toxic poisons (Levering, 1982). In a means justify the ends era the United States government routinely sold out national values --and the people quietly went along with it all.

This obsession filtered down to common citizens especially children. The news media was preoccupied with anti-communism. The three major news magazines of the era--Time, Newsweek and U.S. News and World Report--all took hard line anti-communist positions along with Reader's Digest, the most widely circulated magazine at the time (Levering, 1982). Among newspapers the New York Times, Washington Post and New York Daily News along with the largest chain--the Hearst papers--were all strongly anti-communist. Broadcast news media also participated. CBS News regularly passed information it attained during news-gathering at home and abroad to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Levering, 1982, p. 61).
Boy Scouts were taught communists were the enemy and students learned they were godless. In order to pass civics examinations these students, including myself, had to memorize the evils of communism. I attended a school in the 1960's that practiced civil defense drills. Our teacher would blow a whistle, at which time we students would get on our knees and put our heads on the seat of our desk in a rather silly exercise to protect us from an atomic blast. School books and other curriculum materials contained anti-communist information including the Weekly Reader magazine. Clearly, to be a good American I had to hate all things communist, including the communist people.

Cold War Propaganda as "Othering"

How and why did this happen? In a nation of otherwise educated and thoughtful people why did Americans stand-by and allow this negative propaganda campaign to occur in an unmitigated fashion?

Anti-communism created national pride and forged unity at home. It allowed the majority of Americans, or the American majority race, to sleep peacefully knowing they were in a safe, protected environment. America was righteous and the communists were sinners. Everything else was irrelevant.

In essence, the Soviet Union was the evil 'Other' by which the United States gained its righteous self-image. Michelle Fine (1994) refers to this as the "colonizing discourse of the Other" or "Other-ing" (p. 70). Through the process of "inscribing the Other" re-
searchers "separate and merge personal identities" and use the Other as part of the larger goal of "domination" (p. 70). Fine's comments refer to social research but I believe its similarity to the Cold War is indeed striking.

Hall (1991) bridges this gap in the following quotation:

Thus, another critical thing about identity is that it is partly the relationship between you and the Other. Only when there is an Other can you know who you are. To discover the fact is to discover and unlock the whole enormous history of nationalism. (Nationalism) is a structure of discourse...that tried to expel the other symbolically--blot it out, put it over there in the Third World (or Soviet Union), at the margin. (p. 16)

According to Hall and Fine, the self (read, Americans) exists with its desired identity because of the invented Other (Soviet Union). This allows the emergence and recognition of distinct differences between the parties although some of these differences appear greater than they really are. As Paterson (1988) states,

when discrepant information about an 'enemy' calls into question strongly held beliefs, they strive to preserve those beliefs by discounting or distorting that information, refusing to think about it, engaging in wishful thinking, discrediting the source, or searching for other evidence confirming their beliefs. Americans have also... been notably ignorant and indifferent about world affairs. Such ignorance...spawns stereotyping and paranoia. In a chaotic, discomforting world, Americans have been prone to point an accusing finger at one conspiratorial enemy. Simplicity, after all, can provide clarity that sometimes misleads. Arrogance accompanies ignorance: Americans have traditionally seen themselves as the conveyors of material success and as noble missionaries in a world of sinners. In contrast, the 'enemy' is painted in the blackest terms and the picture that emerges is simple: good versus evil. (p. x)

In addition, this process allows the self to deny problems at home by attributing them to the Other. The Cold War allowed the
United States to deny systemic race, gender, and class violence at home and any misdeeds abroad committed in the name of democracy. This embarrassing fact was routinely pointed out time and again by the Soviet propaganda machine (Sivachev & Yakovlev, 1979; Skvortsov, 1969).

In fact both countries were able to hide the "dirty linen" of social problems and other unseemly behavior by focusing attention on the Other (Fine, 1994, p. 73). Few Americans, except special interest groups (i.e., African-Americans, women, gays and lesbians, etc.), complained about the government's priorities in any organized and consistent manner. Even then, group members and their supporters were dismissed as communist sympathizers or un-American because they violated the tacit agreement, based on propaganda, that problems at home paled in comparison to the bigger issue of protecting themselves and the free-world from Communist takeover.

Because anticommunism was a "staple of American public life" (Levering, 1982, p. 56) it is no surprise I retained negative stereotypes about communism and communists gained through my life-learning in the United States. These thoughts and ideas, falsehoods and negative stereotypes, were swirling through my conscious and unconscious mind (I learned much later) as I prepared for my trip to the Republic of Armenia—the former Soviet Armenia—on a quest to meet my (our) Absolute Other. What I did not realize was just how deeply embedded these ideas had become over the years.
Autobiographical Statement #2

I am a child of the Vietnam era and Watergate. Born in the latter half of the baby-boom, I came of age during the early 1970's. The impact of these two significant historical events shaped my perspectives. I grew up in a politically moderate family in a United Auto Workers (UAW) city. The union was all-powerful and General Motors was churning out cars and jobs enough to feed a nation's craving for luxury and a city's need for jobs. Flint, Michigan was a stronghold for the Democratic Party at that time. My UAW roots run deep. I am still a member of the liberal wing of the Democratic party.

I was raised to believe, and did for a time, that I could believe in our leaders because they were looking out for my best interests. My parents were socialized during World War II and the booming post-war forties and fifties where the American Dream was first realized and liberal politics were taboo. For the first time in history most Americans had something to conserve, therefore, we became a conservative nation. As an aside, I believe conservatives become so when they finally have money or when they believe they have been cheated out of money by minority group members.

The 1950's was the decade of comfort and denial. Americans believed everybody lived in an "Ozzie and Harriet"-style family with a house in the suburbs, three kids, and a nice new automobile in the garage. People had faith in the government and ignored everything else. Life was relatively peaceful for working and middle class
white people and difficult for African-Americans, women, and other minorities, but who noticed? Had it not been for those damned communists, America in the 1950's would have been as close to Eden as humanly possible. We had won two World Wars, done our best to ignore the debacle in Korea, and enjoyed a booming economy. Nothing could stop our progress now. Or so America believed.

I was walking home from school for lunch on a bright, sunny day in November 1963 when I heard the news: President Kennedy had been shot. People came running--screaming and crying--from their houses into the street to console each other. I remember being very sad because my mother was crying as she watched the news accounts of the day. I was still too young to know I should be sad too. I learned later why I should have been upset. I believe the assassination of President Kennedy set in motion historical factors that ultimately led to Watergate and the rampant contemporary cynicism that engulfs our country today.

I was watching television one April night in 1968 when I heard the flash news report. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on the balcony of his Memphis hotel. Dr. King was a hero in my fully integrated neighborhood in Flint, Michigan. I remember the sadness and anger my African-American friends showed the next day towards other white children and myself.

Later that night I watched Robert Kennedy speak to an angry and grieving audience of African-Americans trying to bring a sense of calm and dignity to that tragic moment. I also remember the fear
that gripped our neighborhood about the possibility of renewed rioting by angry black citizens. My neighborhood was on the fringe of the Detroit riots in 1967. Everybody was afraid of the upcoming summer to begin with, and now this tragedy. Yet, my white neighbors clearly overreacted and, there were no riots that year in Flint, Michigan.

I remember playing outside one night in June 1968 when I heard my mother and father scream from inside the living room. I rushed inside certain to find them both dead on the floor. Instead, I watched with shock as Robert Kennedy lay shot in the head by an assassin in a Los Angeles hotel kitchen. My most vivid memories of that night are two: the audio tape the networks played of the kitchen just after the shooting and Kennedy’s spokesman announcing his death the following morning.

We stayed awake all night hoping to hear that Kennedy was going to live. I was 11 years old at the time and politically aware enough to know that Robert Kennedy would have become President in a few months. And what a great President he would have made indeed.

I was in a hotel in Marshall, Michigan one night in August 1974 relaxing with my teammates after a state baseball tournament game. We were about to begin our nightly party when then President Richard Nixon announced he was resigning the Office of the President at noon the following day. His announcement stopped our party. Wow, he was a crook after all!

We stayed in the hotel room the rest of the night watching,
with joy in our hearts, the news coverage of Nixon's resignation. We knew he was a criminal, this simply proved it. All of those lies, and from the President of the United States no less. I thought he was supposed to be looking out for me. Instead, he clearly was concerned only about himself. Nixon could have cared-less about the rest of us. I was 17 years old when the final chapter of "America Loses its Innocence" was written that summer night in 1974.

By the time the "Reagan Revolution" began in 1981, I was a full-fledged member of the cynical generation, what I call the generation of Americans who came of age during the Watergate era. As far as I was concerned the government was filled with liars and cheats, only interested in fulfilling their need for power and money on the backs of the poor, minorities, working people, and poor countries.

Long before Ronald Reagan called the Soviet Union the evil empire, I thought I had stopped believing Cold War rhetoric. The events I described earlier were too much for this American to take and still maintain faith in the Master Narrative. I reacted by working for social causes and in grass-roots political movements. I worked on Jesse Jackson's campaign in 1984 and in 1988 when he won the Michigan Presidential primary election in an overwhelming upset. I ran for local office and was involved in several controversial local projects involving the homeless and other city concerns. I turned my cynicism and anger toward the fight for social justice. Unfortunately, many of my radical friends believed the capitalist
propaganda of the 1980's and became yuppies, all voting for Reagan and George Bush. I guess we dealt with our disappointment in our own way.

When the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 I believed we were living through a special moment in history. A major world power was collapsing right before our eyes. I never really believed the Reagan-Bush rhetoric proclaiming America's victory in the Cold War by causing the Soviet collapse. Yet, as I watched these changes occur I remember feeling strangely patriotic. I remember thinking that finally the Soviet people would be happy and the world safe. How foolish was I? The world is now far more dangerous than it was before the Soviet collapse. My discussions in 1995 with Russian, Belorussian, and Armenian citizens reinforced this 1990's New World Order reality.

In the conservative 1990's America seems lost without our Soviet Absolute Other. Who can we blame now? America needs an enemy; someone or something we can claim responsible for all that is wrong in our country. In post-Cold War America, I believe the poor are our new Absolute Other. It has been a long time since America was forced to look inward. The last time we were without an immediate foreign threat occurred in the 1920's and early 1930's. That historical period resulted in prohibition and the Great Depression. In the 1990's we look inward and do not like what we see. So, out of social necessity we construct a new Iron Curtain, this time between the rich and poor. We are in an era of heightened class
conflict in America. I believe this issue will supplant race as the most significant problem of our time. Sometimes I wish we still had the Soviets to kick around.

Given my political leanings and membership in the cynical generation, I believed I was well prepared for my trip to Armenia. The old, anticommunist rhetoric from the Cold War era would not be a problem for this progressive, truth-seeking American male? Or would it?

Cognitively, I was ready. I was armed with an open-mind and professional expertise. I believed I had left anti-communist prejudice in my childhood. Yet, whenever I discussed the trip or the collapse of the Soviet Union, or anything related to the experience I felt a strange and powerful sensation. I felt like it originated in the depths of my gene-pool. Perhaps it was the outer limits of my unconscious calling me home to my anti-communist upbringing. I had this unspoken, ethnocentric urge to proclaim America the hero and communists, even former communists, the enemy. Although I did not realize it at the time, I was set-up for a major psychic emergency in Yerevan.

UNDP: The Official Assignment

Up to now I have focused on the development of my life-learning. In this section I explore how information I gained immediately preceding the 1995 trip interacted with my life-learning to formulate normative expectancies about Armenia. Like I pointed out ear-
lier, by the time I was ready to leave for Armenia I believed my anticommmunist life-learning had disappeared. Consciously, I believed contrary to what I learned as an American growing up and learning the world during the Cold War. I was wrong.

When I began preparing for the trip I discovered this life-learning remained with me, albeit deeply hidden in the form of practical knowledge. In this section I discuss information about the specific trip and how this information commingled with my prior life-learning to create the normative expectancies I carried on the airplane to Yerevan, Republic of Armenia.

In July 1994 I responded to an announcement from UNDP requesting consultants able to develop a substance abuse prevention project in the Republic of Armenia. In September I was informed I was selected for the assignment. Thus began my preparation and training for international service. I was headed to a country I barely heard of and knew even less about. I had no idea what to expect. What I had was information sent by UNDP about the country, its people, culture and living conditions.

As background I offer a brief description of the Republic of Armenia, as I understood it prior to my trip in 1995. The main source of information for this description is a UNDP (1993) report on the living conditions in Armenia. In 1995 this was my primary source of information about the country.
The Republic of Armenia (Winter, 1995)

A distant republic of the former Soviet Union located in the southern Caucasus Mountains of Eastern Europe, the Republic of Armenia has maintained a distinct national and cultural identity since the seventh century BC. The Armenian people descended from ancient tribes who inhabited their traditional homeland in Eastern Anatolia during prehistoric times. There is a remarkable record of continuous human occupation of the region around Mount Ararat, (today part of Turkey) since the Old Stone Age. Mount Ararat (Masis) is the legendary resting place of Noah's Ark and an ever present reminder of the genocide to all Armenians in the homeland.

Armenia was a great power in the times of Julius Caesar (first century BC) and is also the oldest existent Christian nation in the world, having been converted by St. Gregory in 301 AD. Once dominated by Persians, Romans, Byzantine Greeks, Arabs, and Turks, the Armenians had only brief periods of independence over its many thousands of years in existence. Armenia was invaded by the Turks in 1064, which began nearly a millennium of strife between the two peoples (UNDP, 1993). The hatred between the two countries was exacerbated by the genocide in 1915 and recently by the Turk's support of Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

In 1920 Armenia became part of the Soviet Union in a deal to protect them from further Turkish aggression and to give the Soviets a strategic border with the Turks and the Muslim world to the south. Contemporary Armenia which borders Turkey to the west, Georgia to
the north, Azerbaijan to the east and southwest, and Iran to the
south represents only 10 percent of historical Great Armenia, a fact
not lost on all Armenians regardless of where they live in the world.

By the time of my trip, the Republic of Armenia had suffered
through seven tragic years (1988-95). Since 1988, few countries
have endured natural and human disasters like the Armenians. In
December, 1988, Armenia suffered a major earthquake leaving an es­
timated 50,000 people dead and 500,000 homeless (Verluise, 1989).
"The earth itself, the very rock on which Armenia lives, proved
unstable" (UNDP, personal communication, 1994). This fact made the
earthquake even more intolerable for Armenians because of the faith
they placed in their homeland as the foundation of Armenian culture
and tradition. Now, even the land was unstable. This tragedy thrust
Armenia into the world spotlight leading to an outpouring of foreign
humanitarian aid. The cities of Leninakian (now called Gjumri), the
second largest city in Armenia, and Spitak were completely destroyed
sending thousands of refugees fleeing for an already overcrowded
Yerevan (UNDP, 1993). My colleagues in Yerevan said their city also
shook that fateful day, although little was damaged. As of my trip
in 1995 the majority of these devastated areas were not rebuilt and
the refugee problem was mounting.

In 1988 and early 1989 old tensions between Armenia and Azer­
baijan boiled into armed conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.
This mountainous region southeast of Armenia was given to the
Azeri's by the Soviet Union, although 75 percent of its population
was Armenian (Malkasian, 1996). Given the Azeri’s close political and religious ties to Turkey, this was a hotly debated issue that lay dormant during the 70 years of Soviet rule. In 1989 amidst nationalistic fervor on both sides the Azeri’s massacred hundreds of Armenians in the city of Sumgait, a move that ultimately led to war in 1990. While I was there, a negotiated cease-fire was in place since May 1994 although there were reports of occasional bombings near the Armenian-Azerbaijan border (UNDP, 1993).

In 1991, two more events almost sounded the death knell for Armenia. In September Armenia declared independence from the Soviet Union. Literally overnight they were left without Soviet industry, protection, and economic assistance. The effects on the economy were crippling. Also, as a result of the Karabakh conflict, the Azeri’s and Turks imposed a blockade of Armenia. Since Armenia is a landlocked nation, this led to economic devastation.

The blockade was exacerbated by civil strife in Georgia, Abkhazia, and North Ossetia (neighboring regions) which resulted in the closure of the railroads and the gas pipeline coming from the north, making them totally reliant on outside humanitarian aid for subsistence. The country was dependent on imports of fuel resulting in a severe shortage of this commodity which crippled the economy. There was no central heating or hot water, houses received electricity for less than two hours per day and schools closed during the winter because of the harsh weather conditions (UNDP, 1993).

I believe the impact of the blockade is twofold. First, people
were leaving Armenia. The destabilizing exodus of some 800,000 educated and resourceful Armenians, mostly young people, occurred at a time when they were needed the most for nation-building. Second, the diversion of Armenian energy, exuberance, and initiative to the difficult requirements of simple survival. The quadruple shock of earthquake, loss of the all-controlling Soviet state, the death and destruction of war, and the isolation and deprivation caused by the blockade had turned Armenia in on itself and numbed the hopes of a people yearning for a successful, independent future.

Reports From the "Front"

The following excerpts are taken from two documents I received from the UNDP after I accepted this assignment. Two of these documents in particular were significant in my preparations. The first is called Living Conditions in Armenia (UNDP, 1993). The second a copy of a field report written by UNDP more recently (UNDP, personal communication, 1994). For an American unconsciously looking for a reason to be suspicious, these reports were perfect. I offer a few selected examples of the official and unofficial reports I received just prior to my departure (UNDP, personal communication, 1993, 1994).

1994. The hotel (Dvin, where I stayed) was an Intourist hotel, and it is assumed the rooms are still bugged. When people come to see you and if you get on a sensitive subject, it is recommended that you use your notebook computer screen for communication. The staff at the hotel screen visitors, they are treated suspiciously and made to leave their ID cards at the desk, as well as fill out numerous forms and get passes just to visit.
1993. The Soviet hangover has left many civil servants and much of the citizenry with the feeling that any form of state other than authoritarian control is abnormal, (and) unreal. Armenians are stopped occasionally on dark streets by groups of men and made to produce identity papers and justify their movements. Any movement outside after dark is considered dangerous.

1994. The Armenians use the word 'mafia' to describe any powerful group operating illegally or extra-legally. There are competing mafias, in and out of government, and they play rough. The former mayor was murdered in 1994, probably by a government minister. A newspaper office was burned out...the second or third such incident in two or three months. Journalists are occasionally beaten up by unknown assailants.

1993. Water, electricity, and gas are all rationed and sometimes unavailable. As a result, utilities normally have a schedule of operation....It is however difficult to learn their scheduled time of operation. Furthermore, because of the recent energy stoppage, local telephone service might become inoperable in most places. Given these circumstances, it is important that you take precautions and plan your schedule ahead of time. For example, you should have saved boiled water for drinking in containers.

1994. I do worry about what seems to be a somewhat narcissistic wallowing in past monstrous grievances (genocide, Nagorno-Karabakh question), for I fear this may tend to become self-reinforcing and can negate efforts at growth.

Letter of Reference: UNDP. 16.9.94

In addition to reports about living conditions I received the official "Letter of Reference" from UNDP stipulating the goals and objectives of my assignment. As I received this letter the biggest question in mind was how the Armenians could be concerned with a developing drug problem given all the other hardship and crises they faced. The reports I read about the economic conditions made me wonder why drugs were a concern when it seemed the Armenia people
had bigger issues to worry about, like the survival of their state.

Then, I read the letter (UNDP, personal communication, 1994).

Over seventy years of communist propaganda has diverted public attention from the real social problems and ills developing throughout the Former Soviet Union...Moreover, the recently undertaken efforts to transform to a market economy as well as the economic and energy blockades imposed on Armenia by its neighboring Republics of Azerbaijan and Turkey have severely hampered the ability of the Country to provide employment, education, and social development opportunities.

As such, the "Letter of Reference" (1994) described the conditions in Armenia, that led to the decision to fund a substance abuse "public education project."

There is general consensus that as a result of freer trade routes, less government control, a dramatic decrease in the standard of living due to the causes mentioned above, as well as increased pessimism and hopelessness about the future, the younger generation has become more prone to the abuse of damaging drugs. The popular perception of teenagers, gathered informally, is that 50% to 60% of teenagers in Yerevan are abusing injectable drugs such as morphine. (p. 1)

The next paragraph in the letter gave me a clue about the accuracy of these statements:

Although there is no evidence to support such an extravagant claim and, moreover, the current economic realities of many people make it seem impossible that so many can afford drugs to that extent, it nonetheless reveals the perception of younger people regarding this issue. (p. 1)

At the time I believed the notion of a developing drug problem in a former Soviet satellite country was as objective as a Durkheimian social fact (1964). From the perspective of a trained substance abuse professional from a country (USA) obsessed, in my opinion, with the "horrors of drug abuse" (Falco, 1994, p. 4), I was convinced Armenia had a drug problem or was in denial of it's drug
problem. These were the only two options I could foresee.

Yet, the claim of 50% to 60% abusing injectable drugs was astounding. If this was true, the streets would literally be filled with empty morphine vials and used needles. I had visions of people asleep on the streets and rampant crime. I remember thinking that the time for a drug prevention campaign was long past. They needed a major substance abuse treatment intervention at the community level. Now I understood why the City Commission was so concerned. If the conditions in this letter were accurate, relieving drug abuse in Yerevan was a matter of survival. The Armenians were about to lose a generation of young people--the future of their democratic nation.

Autobiographical Statement #3

By 1980, drug abuse almost killed me. My admission into a hospital for treatment was the first step that ultimately, less than one year later, led me into a career in the human service field. Yes, I was one of those recovering addicts who became a substance abuse counselor. Therefore, I am well-grounded in the disease model of substance dependence. The disease model is a controversial yet widely accepted notion that dependence on alcohol and other drugs is a chronic and progressive disease--similar to diabetes--a person cannot cure nor control without lifelong support. The disease is characterized by the chronic overuse of substances, the defense mechanism called denial, destroyed lives, and lifetime attendance
In either Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or Narcotics Anonymous (NA). Since the disease cannot be cured one must remain constantly vigilant to ensure that it does not begin again, triggered by a relapse into drinking or using drugs at a later date (Johnson, 1972).

This is how I was socialized into the substance abuse profession. Early on I believed I owed my life to NA. I was on a crusade to see that every person with a substance abuse problem found the same happiness I did. The problem was, I thought they should find their happiness in the same way that I did. I was a missionary for the disease model.

My early years as a professional were spent working as a counselor in a private clinic I began in 1982. This was about the time I received my first graduate degree in counseling psychology. In 1987 I sold the clinic and moved to the second phase of my career. Along the way I changed my mind about the disease model. What I am not sure of, especially during my trip to Armenia, is whether I changed my beliefs too.

My advanced clinical training was under the guidance of Jay Haley, a pioneer in the family therapy movement. Haley’s work with families began in the 1950’s where, as part of the famous Bateson Group, he participated in what was considered groundbreaking research into the inner workings of families with schizophrenic members (Bateson, Jackson, Haley & Weakland, 1956). From there Haley worked with another pioneer in the field, Salvador Minuchin where they developed their individual models of family therapy (Haley,
1973, 1976; Minuchin, 1974). When I knew him, Haley was working out of Washington, DC.

I began to see alcohol and drug dependence as a problem of human relationships. I believed this problem, while having physiological ramifications, was not a disease but a function of the person's immediate environment whether that be their family, peer group, and/or community-at-large (Haley, 1981; Stanton & Todd, 1982; Stein-glass, Bennett, Wolin & Reiss, 1987). In other words substance dependence, from my new perspective, was no longer an individual but a community problem.

I spent the next eight years in non-profit administration in the substance abuse treatment field developing programs and writing successful grant proposals for my program ideas. I developed new programs based on the family systems models in which I had trained. I was, by 1993 a successful program administrator, public speaker, and local family systems therapy expert17. Yet, I was ready to move on.

About this time, I received my second graduate degree, this time in social work. Then came my trip to Armenia, doctoral school, and a new career in academe, all beginning in 1995. When I was in Armenia my future, personal and professional, was uncertain. In 1995 I truly believed I was beyond my early beliefs in the disease model of substance dependence. Now I had the opportunity to bring my experience and expertise to Armenia. Little did I know at the time that the Armenians would provide me with the most significant
lessons I would learn to date about people, culture, social problems, and especially substance abuse. On this assignment, my expertise alone meant very little indeed.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter demonstrated how my normative expectancies were shaped by prior life-learning. I discussed the impact of my family and the immediate environment, Cold War anticommunist propaganda, macro-level political events, professional training and experience, and UNDP documentation on my attitudes and beliefs about the Republic of Armenia before the trip. They conspired to create one suspicious and wary traveler in 1995.

I assumed my official hosts would sugar coat their social problems and conditions so I planned to meet with people off tour, at times and in places outside the supervision of my Armenian hosts. Because I was told rooms and offices were bugged I planned to meet outside buildings and use my computer screen in the hotel if I felt the need to be critical of Armenia. I was afraid to move around the city, especially at night. Since they were poor I was sure I was a target for Armenians needing money or an American passport. For that matter since everyone was poor, everyone was a threat to my security. I took extra food, iodine tablets to make the water drinkable, and two money belts so I could conceal my personal effects. What was worse, I went expecting the Armenian people to want to hear about life in America. I assumed they knew as little about
us as I did about them. In the end, I assumed they wanted my life in America. As I will show in Chapters IV and V, I was wrong on all counts.

To demonstrate the effects of these issues I employed three autobiographical statements, not for self-aggrandizement, but to reveal the content of my life-learning up to the time of my trip. These personal stories about my experience as an American citizen raised during the height of the Cold War suggests the following issues:

1. As I discussed in the first Autobiographical Statement, growing up in a male dominated, ethnocentric American household shaped my beliefs about myself, my immediate social world, and the former Soviet Union. While I cannot remember specifically what Oscar Johnson and the rest of the family taught me, their impact on the normative expectancies I held about Armenia was undoubtedly significant. As I will discuss in more depth later, I believe it is impossible for an individual to know from where they gained their life-learning. One can only infer understanding and attribute meaning from autobiographical material. In this study my personal memories, in the form of autobiographical statements, allows the reader and I that opportunity.

I believe most children in America are socialized products of their environment. As the child begins leaving home (i.e., attending school, etc.) they gradually develop the capacity for agency, defined earlier as the power to subjectively interpret and act upon
and within their social world. Yet, at the moment when a person's initial beliefs are developed—in childhood—most become the beneficiary or victim of a dominant social environment. The dominance of the environment recedes if the child is subjected to a critical situation that forces him or her to develop the capacity for life-changing agency at an earlier age than most American children. If not, even as reflexivity and agency develops as the child matures, their subjective interpretations and actions fall within the confines of their original life-learning. In other words people in this situation may superficially change but their core beliefs—their life-learning—remains unaffected.

2. In the second Autobiographical Statement, I showed how my coming of age during the 1970’s helped determine how I subjectively interpreted events that shaped my accumulated life-learning. The most seminal events during that period were macro political events: political assassinations and Watergate. They caused personal disillusionment with my prior life-learning and led to knowledge and behavioral changes as a way of expressing this dissatisfaction. At the same time because I did not experience these events as critical situations, my life-learning, especially related to communism and the Soviet Union, was not supplanted by the new knowledge, beliefs, or actions.

What does it take for a person to change their life-learning? The ability (or desire) to change accumulated life-learning is caused by a critical situation and the resulting subjective interpreta-
tion of its meaning and value by the individual involved. Critical situations, as I explain in Chapter V, create the context for change at multiple personal levels (i.e., thoughts, feelings, actions). Otherwise, people have no need to consider alternative information.

Significant events that are not considered critical situations may lead to superficial cognitive and affective changes—and perhaps behavioral changes—while leaving basic life-learning intact. A person will not usually discover the intactness of their life-learning until they are under pressure. Pressure caused by a psychic emergency exposes an individual’s underlying beliefs despite the fact that the individual believes they have changed. Until that critical moment an individual is never sure if their current beliefs and actions are the result of changes at the level of life-learning.

3. The third Autobiographical Statement demonstrated the impact of a critical situation—drug abuse—on my professional beliefs about the nature of substance dependence. Prior to that time I had not heard of the disease model of chemical dependency. I believed people dependent on drugs were weak-willed. In this vignette I demonstrated how my subsequent professional training and experience was not a critical situation because it resulted in only superficial changes to my life-learning about drug dependency. In this project my beliefs about drugs and drug abuse are important in order to understand the initial impact of the Armenian culture on my intercultural adjustment.

The interaction between the personal and professional is a
critical issue in intercultural adjustment. Personal and professional beliefs and practices in a foreign culture are a hindrance if the individual is unaware that their expertise a function of the social environment and culture where it was developed. Those who proceed into an intercultural setting unaware of the contextual nature of their expertise perpetuate intellectual and/or practice colonialism by trying to force people in that foreign culture to adhere to practices familiar to the visiting professional. As such, they become ineffective in that foreign culture. Like I was told by citizens of Yerevan during a focus group in 1997:

We don’t need for you Americans to come over here and teach women with doctoral degrees, who have raised their family, how to bake cakes or teach scientists without work how to plant vegetables in the city. We need you to look, listen, and use your talents to help us figure out plans that will work here. We may be poor and going through bad times, but we are not stupid (8/13/97).

Which is more important in intercultural adjustment: learned knowledge or lived experience? For a person traveling, working, or moving to a foreign culture this is an important question. This is not the time in this project to answer this question with any certainty. Yet, I know that after three university degrees (two graduate degrees in human service professions), 15 years of professional experience, and a personal struggle with drug abuse, what I learned about the Soviet Union and communism during my first 15 years of life prevailed as I prepared for this trip. I was about to return to my roots of anticommunism, the result of accumulated life-learning during a time in American history when communists were evil,
Americans were righteous, and American nationalism ran strong and deep throughout the culture.

This chapter is the foundation for the remainder of this project. In Chapter IV I rely on my 1995 journal transcripts to demonstrate how I reacted and adjusted to the people, conditions, culture, and history in the Republic of Armenia during my first intercultural experience.
CHAPTER IV

VISITOR IN A FOREIGN LAND - 1995

Introduction: Daily Experience in a Foreign Culture

Much of this chapter was written in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia between April 1 and May 6, 1995. In the preceding chapter I discussed how being socialized in the United States shaped my normative expectancies for this trip. In this chapter I explore the extent to which these expectancies affected my social and cultural adjustment in two related areas of Armenian life: culture and history, and everyday life. As such, this is not an analysis of Armenia, but of how I experienced Armenian life in the context of a collective history and culture which runs the gamut of human experience and emotion.

Because the present "inevitability" (Huyssen, 1993, p. 250) impacts "what and how we remember."

It follows that the strongly remembered past will always be inscribed in our present, from feeding our unconscious desires to guiding our most conscious actions. At the same time, the strongly remembered past may turn into mythic memory. It is not immune to ossification, and may become a stumbling block to the needs of the present rather than an opening in the continuum of history. (p. 250)\textsuperscript{18}

Armenia is a society with unique social customs, norms, and rules. Their history is long and culture is deeply rooted, the result of centuries of oppression by powerful foreign countries. In this country everyday life, culture, and history are interlaced in a
never-ending cyclical process. This is a traditional society trying to shake off the effects of years of assimilation and invisibility under Soviet Union rule. In Armenia the present is not severed from the past (Seidman, 1995), but weaved tightly into one long and winding tapestry of pain, death, and destruction at the hands of human and natural oppressors. This chapter is about my personal meeting with this culture over a six week period in 1995.

Amsterdam to Yerevan: A Bellwether of Things to Come

The following sequence of events occurred between Amsterdam and Yerevan on March 31, 1995. I present these events in sequence because they represent a microcosm of my overall experience in Armenia.

After arriving in Amsterdam and a visit the Anne Frank Museum, I returned to the airport and located the gate from which I would depart later in the day. Johnson (1995) states,

I was told to be early for my Armenian Airlines flight because departure times were unpredictable and they did not assign seats. I guess it is common practice for Armenian Airline officials to sell, if you have enough cash, more seats than are available on the plane. (p. 1)

The flight from Schiphol International Airport to Zvartnots International Airport in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia was scheduled to last four hours. Luckily, I had enough time to prepare myself for Armenian Airlines. I had heard little about the airline but imagined the worst. Armenian Airlines? Based on my negative attitude about Armenia at the time, I questioned their ability to fly a
safe and modern airline. I was wary of their mechanical and technological prowess, wondering out loud to my travel partner whether the aircraft was sound and the pilot well-trained and sober.

As I looked around the airport, I relaxed. Schiphol Airport is a modern and clean facility. In fact, it is much cleaner and appears better organized than many airports in the United States. Perhaps airlines that do not meet international standards cannot use this port-of-call? I found my seat in the waiting area of gate G2 where Armenian Airlines flight 152 was scheduled to depart in about two hours, at 4:45 p.m. local time. Temporarily, I stopped thinking about the airplane and looked around at the people also waiting to board the flight. Who else is going to Armenia besides myself?

At the gate I met several people—all Armenian expatriates—some who were returning home after many years in the Diaspora. Many were visiting for the first time. This was my first exposure to Armenian people. I was seated next to an English-speaker, and we struck up a conversation. He was an Armenian-Canadian traveling to Yerevan with his sister. According to Johnson (1995),

he was returning to Yerevan for the first time in 16 years. Their father removed them in 1978 to escape the oppressive communist regime he said. He was a pleasant man, open to discussion about Armenia and the state of affairs. He didn’t believe conditions in Yerevan were going to be as bad as we had been told... He also said that when it comes to Armenia, do not believe anything until you see it. I will take his advice. (pp. 3-4)

During a break in the conversation I was approached by another man. His accent and personal style said all I needed to know: he was an American. He was a State Department employee on official
assignment in Yerevan. I (Johnson, 1995) was about to meet an ugly American:

He [State Department man] was openly critical of Armenians, Armenia, the former Soviet Union, and so on. He attacked their character and customs, calling them robots and beggars. Because he was new with the State Department, he said in a very loud voice, he was placed in Yerevan--a shitty place to visit or live--because the Department was testing to see if he had the right stuff for field work. He made these comments while surrounded by Armenians, most of whom spoke English. I am embarrassed to be associated by nationality with this jerk. I hope his attitude is unusual, but I doubt it.

Interestingly, as soon as my Armenian friend realized this guy was US Government, he left. Later I was speaking to the gentleman from Armenia in another area. When the State Department guy approached, the Armenian again left immediately. Now, either the Armenian was a criminal or he was telling me something about who I should associate with and how I should present myself (Johnson, 1995, p. 5).

I wondered if this arrogant representative of our government is the image people abroad have of Americans, or is he an isolated case? Perhaps Whitfield's comment about American arrogance is accurate? If this man is any indication of how Americans act abroad, I understand why the French are rude to us.

After waiting for two hours at the gate our airplane pulled slowly into view outside the large window overlooking the tarmac. It was a small jet, brightly painted in orange, blue, and red--the national colors of the Republic of Armenia. According to Johnson (1995),

one example of Armenian national pride occurred when our airplane pulled from the runway onto the tarmac near the terminal gate. The crowd of Armenians began applauding! My new friend told me it was the first time these people, including himself, had ever seen the Armenian national colors on an airplane. You see, what is now Armenian Airlines, used to be Aeroflot, the Soviet airline. Armenia had no national colors during the
Soviet period. I guess this is a time to celebrate Armenia's new freedom! These people seem to have deep pride in their country, although most lived in the Diaspora after fleeing the Soviet regime years earlier. (p. 5)

The crowd reaction to the airplane surprised me. I suppose because Armenia was Soviet Armenia for 70 years, this first indication of Armenian statehood was a thrill for the visiting Armenians. They took obvious pride in their country. For these people, it was their first opportunity to salute Armenian independence in-person. Seeing the national colors on the airplane finally made Armenian independence a reality.

A few minutes later, and without any announcement or signal I could see, everybody in the waiting area rushed to take a position in front of the ticket-taker. The problem was, there was no ticket-taker. After standing a few minutes, people returned to their seats. This reoccurred three times in the next hour before we were officially asked to form a line for boarding. After that, we stood in line for what seemed like hours, when in fact it was only 30 minutes. Boarding was an hectic process, indeed. I quietly hoped the flight was run more efficiently than the boarding line. Here is how I (Johnson, 1995) described this experience in my journal:

My impression is that they [Armenians] are used to pandemonium, or maybe it just appears that way or is part of the culture. Everybody does whatever they want, but very slowly. Certainly they are not interested in a time schedule. They don't act in the American way of rush, rush, rush! Lines don't form, people push and shove. There was also a lot of stopping and starting. Were we supposed to be in line, or weren't we? We stood up in line and sat back down at least three times, like we were practicing a ritual. Finally, and I mean finally--we boarded the airplane. (p. 6)
Our scheduled departure time had passed by the time we boarded. The plane, a Tupolev 154, looked clean and sound from the outside. When I saw the inside of the cabin I almost fainted. The first thing I noticed was the carpet. The well-worn, dark colored carpeting was not attached to the floor but haphazardly cut around the seats and doorways. It looked like somebody recently decided the airplane needed carpeting. It was so loose against the metal floor it slipped from under my feet with each step.

The air was stale and smoke-filled. The engines were working, but there was no fresh air circulating in the cabin. People milled around smoking and drinking. I was one of the last to board so I had to walk the length of the plane to my seat. Open luggage racks lined each wall. As I approached my seat I was hit by a foul smell emanating from the toilet. I was in the last seat next to the toilet. The door would not close and it smelled like the toilet had not been flushed or cleaned in weeks. From my seat I could see directly into this odorous room by looking over my left shoulder.

I found a small opening for my bag on the overflowing luggage rack and took my seat. For the first time I noticed the condition of the seats and remainder of the cabin. The coach section, where I was seated, was separated from the next cabin by what looked like a hanging blanket. The seats were lightly constructed and covered with bright orange material. The back of each seat folded onto the seat in front making it possible to lay down by putting your feet on the folded seat-back in front. Of the four legs holding my seat
stable only three were bolted to the floor. I could move the seat back and forth. A sudden stop and I could be airborne inside the plane! My seat belt was missing. I noticed other seats were missing belts too. The seat next to me was empty because the covering was ripped open exposing the cushion springs. The pouch where one normally would find a magazine, vomit bag, and safety instructions was empty. I wonder if the seat cushions float in the event of a water landing?

I looked to the front of the hazy cabin. Light bulbs in the warning signs were burned out and they were all written in Armenian. I assume the fasten seat belt sign was the one with only half of the lights working, because I recognized the sketch of a buckle. The airplane was crowded, hot and in my biased opinion, unsafe. My earlier assumption about airline safety at Schiphol Airport was apparently misguided. The following journal (Johnson, 1995) entries describe this experience best:

The flight to Yerevan was an interesting experience for this white-knuckle flyer, used to airline cleanliness, orderliness, timeliness, and safety precautions and regulations. First, airline personnel couldn’t get all the luggage onto the plane. The banging sound coming from the cargo hold below was disconcerting. When the baggage was finally loaded, the plane was too heavy to fly. You see, luggage limits are not part of the Armenian Airlines experience! I think I was the only person holding to the two-bag limit. One women was pushing a dolly with six large boxes stacked from floor to handle as her carry-on luggage. The inside of the plane was jammed with boxes and luggage. Almost every open seat was filled with luggage. Passengers were taking consumer goods to Yerevan for family and friends, so they spared no baggage. (p. 6)

I heard a loosely translated rumor that luggage was being left behind for one week because the plane was too heavy. I watched from the window as workers unloaded luggage from the plane,
then reloaded it. I heard the crew bumping around in the cargo hold attempting to squeeze back in all the luggage and boxes. Now What? The plane was too heavy again. Within minutes the solution was obvious. I watched in a muted state of horror as fuel trucks began pumping fuel from the airplane. Airline officials apparently decided that either the extra luggage or extra fuel would stay in Amsterdam (p. 6).

The next rumor was that our flight plan was altered. Because we dumped fuel, we could only make it halfway to Yerevan. Now they were planning a refueling stop in Bulgaria. Where is Bulgaria anyway? (p. 6)

Most of the familiar rules of flight, at least the ones I am used to, are out the window on Armenian Airlines. There were a few safety instructions, spoken in Armenian of course, and the inside of the plane looked like it was built fifty years ago. I met an English-speaking doctor who said there was water in the toilets this trip so the stench was not as bad as before. I guess this is social progress. Inside the plane the air was heavy and smoke-filled. This wasn't a smoke-free flight. (pp. 6-7)

Finally, the plane began to move. It taxied for quite a while and then, without warning, the engines revved and the plane started down the runway. The problem was that about 25 percent of the passengers were still standing and talking. They fell all over each other, but didn't seem to care. One man fell over the seat in front of me and landed on my lap. The plane shook wildly, luggage falling off the open racks to the floor. We had such a long, slow, and gradual ascent that it was hard to tell if we were climbing. Either it was really heavy or the engines were not strong enough to lift the plane. When we finally became airborne, everybody applauded like they were happy—or surprised—the plane flew. I was both. (p. 7)

The second rumor was accurate. We landed in Bulgaria sometime in the middle of the night (I long ago lost track of time). Similar to our takeoff ritual, we simply descended—it actually felt like we were falling from the sky—and landed without warning. When we began the nose-dive, I thought we were dead for sure. People were standing, talking, and falling all over the inside of the plane. When we finally landed, they applauded. (p. 7)

In Bulgaria, we were ordered off the plane and taken by bus under armed guard to a terminal building while they refueled the plane (and probably checked our luggage). We were given numbered cards and told we needed it to get back on the plane. Of course, I learned this after finding somebody to translate.
We re-boarded in about an hour, repeated our earlier take-off ritual (including the applause) and finished the flight to Yerevan. When we landed, the people on the plane applauded again. I didn't know landing was a signal to celebrate. I'd like to think they were used to taking off and landing safely! This turned out to be the longest, most surreal and terrifying six hour plane flight of my life. To tell the truth, when the plane came to a full stop on the tarmac, safely in Yerevan, I wanted to stand and applaud too. The big problem is, I have to fly out on the same airplane.

Why does this sequence of events represent my Armenian experience so perfectly? Within eight hours I learned that nothing about the next six weeks could be taken for granted. It was one new and surprising experience after another. Being in Armenia demanded I pay attention to the environment and suspend my beliefs, attitudes, and normative expectations if I was going to successfully adjust.

I was in a new culture—at least new to me—where the routine behaviors and social rules of my world were no longer relevant. I had to look, listen, and learn how best to fit my lines of action with Armenian social customs. I was in their environment and, unlike the man from the State Department, I did not expect the Armenians to change for me. Change was my responsibility.

My problem at this stage of the trip was that I compared everything in Armenia to what I was familiar with in the United States. My expectations about the people, who I should associate with, how I should present myself, and in this case proper airline procedures collided with my actual experiences throwing me into a continuous psychic emergency. Besides the United States, I had no lived experience by which to compare these new experiences.
The social world is defined by a person’s location at a particular moment in history. As such, this moment is the reference group by which he or she compares new and unfamiliar experiences. In social situations people use their reference group to evaluate personal attitudes and behaviors in a new situation by comparing them to standards established in a familiar social context (Shaver, 1981). For example, an individual is a fast runner only if there are slower runners for comparison. A person is attractive if there are unattractive people, there are no white people without people-of-color for comparison. A modern country exists only because there are premodern countries. We are rich and they are poor. In other words, social differences define lived experience. Difference assumes a noticeable contrast which leads to the formation of attitudes and beliefs about the self and others through the process of defining the social world.

In Armenia my reference group was the United States where the norms, rules, and rituals worked in everyday life. On this trip my standards were formed by these familiar life experiences. I compared my new experiences in Armenia to home, helping to develop the various conclusions I made about Armenian society.

During the flight I learned that almost everything in my new surroundings contrasted with my reference group. Therefore difference was the rule, not the exception. Nothing could be taken for granted. I had to be hyper-vigilant in order to observe and understand everything occurring in the environment. But, I also needed
to relax and understand I was not at home any more.

The Modern Tourist

Could it be I would spend more time as a tourist than a practicing professional? In this section I review Dean MacCannell's interesting work on the "modern tourist" to be used as a theoretical framework for interpreting and understanding the experiences recorded in my journal.

In his books The Tourist (1976) and Empty Meeting Grounds: The Tourist Papers (1992), MacCannell calls tourism the primary ground for a "production of new cultural forms on a global basis" (1992, p. 1). At the same time, modern tourism is "one of the best models available appreciating the relationships between individuals and modern societies" (1976, p. 1). Modern tourists, according to MacCannell (1976), are "actual sightseers, mainly middle class... deployed throughout the world in search of experience and authenticity" (p. 1). Modern tourists embark on the ultimate personal journey to locate themselves and their history through participation in nonmodern worlds and cultures with the people who inhabit these strange places. As such, they try to make sense of their fast-paced, ever-changing modern lifestyle. For moderns, "reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 3).

Modern tourists fear becoming stuck in one place with one
life. They have a deep desire to move on and to travel. As such, the tourist is a "conscious and systematic seeker of experience. . . of the experience of difference and novelty--as the joys of the familiar wear off quickly and cease to allure" (Bauman, 1995, p. 96). Modern tourism is, therefore, a critique of modern life. Chris Rojek (1993) believes the tourist tendency is born of, 

the restless dissatisfaction and desire for contrast. . . . We are never convinced that we have experienced things. . . . fully enough; we are always dully aware that our experiences could be better; no sooner do we enter escape activities than we feel nagging urges to escape from them. (p. 216)

Modern tourists seek depth; their goal is to experience life as it really was in the past or is in contemporary nonmodern societies. It is not enough to simply view public attractions or witness local people spinning carpet or cooking traditional foods, tourists have a desire to experience life the way observed Others do. This goal is so paramount that tourists critique their experiences by the degree to which it approached reality. In this way, MacCannell believes "modern tourists share with social scientists their curiosity about primitive peoples, poor peoples, and ethnic and other minorities" (1976, p. 5) because "social problems also figure in the curiosity of tourists: dirt, disease, malnutrition. . . . tourists will go out of their way to view such egregious sights as the Berlin Wall, the Kennedy Assassination area and even the ovens at Dachau" (MacCannell, 1976, pp. 6-7). According to Markle (1995), historian Michael Marrus stated,

Auschwitz attracts seventy thousand visitors per year, a remarkable number given the location of the camp far from
the usual tourist route. These visitors have not left the site untouched. The pile of inmate shoes and the mound of women's hair, are considerably smaller now than they were a few years ago. One presumes that tourists, for whatever reasons, treat these objects as memorabilia (or icons?) and take them home. (p. 1)

Visitors tour the site of arguably the most horrific crime in world history because they believe they can feel, for a moment, what it was like to be in a concentration camp. Of course, they do not really want to know. Tourists choose events carefully according to how strange and innocuous they are. They want these events only to seem real, when in fact they are virtual attractions. Tourist itineraries and attractions are, therefore, characterized by a "profusion of safety cushions and well-marked escape routes... (where)...the strange is tame, domesticated, and no more frightens; shocks come in a package deal with safety" (Bauman, 1995, p. 96).

As such, the desire to experience reality in nonmodern worlds has limits. Almost every country has western-style hotels serving western-style food and conveniences (MacCannell, 1992). For the right price tourists can afford a private taxi or car. They are relieved of having to walk several miles everyday or ride overcrowded or unsafe public transportation. In other words, modern tourists want a real experience but not one which compromises their idea of an appropriate lifestyle. They maintain their ontological security by knowing they can return home when the experience gets too real.

Home, in this case, is in their familiar environment in a Western-style hotel. Having a "home" is part of the tourist's safety package allowing them to relax and unpack--the place where "nothing
needs to be proved and defended as everything is just there, obvious and familiar* (Bauman, 1995, p. 97). Therefore, tourists are not required to adjust to a new cultural environment, they observe it as if they were attending a cyborg exhibit at Disney World. Bauman (1995) calls this phenomena being "in" instead of being "of" the new environment (p. 95). In this context, being "of" represents cultural and social adjustment. Anything less, according to Bauman and MacCannell, is tourism.

Most modern tourists are Westerners seeking to overcome modernity's ahistorical forces. Modernity, as an ideology, is futuristic—a disconnection of present from past—a severing of people from the history of humans and human society so they have no home or stable identity. In the context of tourism, Zygmunt Bauman (1995) says the "value of 'home' in the (sic) homesickness lies precisely in its tendency to stay in the future tense forever. It cannot move to the present without being stripped of its charm and allure" (p. 97). Modernity, therefore, is the promise of a future end-state where "quality of life" is not a worry but fact of life (Bauman, 1995, p. 78). In this world anything "old" is discredited or discarded. Old buildings are replaced, old products become new and improved and old people are retired at 65 years of age.

Modernity is based on progress, improvement, and fast-paced, chaotic living. Modern tourists, trying to repair their loss of heritage—cut-off from their cultural roots, as it were—search the world over hoping to make a primal and spiritual connection with
themselves, their history and culture. Tourists want to transcend time and space. "Our first apprehension of modern civilization," says MacCannell, "emerges in the mind of the tourist" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 1).

MacCannell and Bauman offer a theoretically novel lens by which to critique intercultural adjustment. They speak to a critical issues regarding the actions of an individual in an intercultural environment: the difference between being "in" and being "of" that culture. In this chapter I am concerned with whether this transition is possible. If so, I want to determine if I satisfied my "dream of belonging--of being, for once, of the place and not merely in it" (Bauman, 1995, p. 97).

The Quest to Locate Self: The Journey of the Modern American

MacCannell (1976; 1992) says Western tourists travel to non-modern lands to locate themselves and their heritage by observing how the people live. In seeing how the Other lives, tourists see in themselves their ancestors—understand better how their people lived in another time and place. I wish to extend this argument to include all human social interaction because like Bauman (1995) says, "life ... is always a self-critique" (p. 77). Within this context, life's journey is wrapped up in a longing to find one's self and to locate one's real identity in the hectic modern world.

Everything we do in our lives: work, love, play, travel, acquire, and consume is part of the desire to locate ourselves in the
modem world. Paulo Friere (1970/1993) calls this the "problem of humanization" (p. 25). Friere believes humanization is the "people's vocation" (p. 25). I believe it is our life's obsession. The desire to know "who I really am" grips Americans with the same ferocity as the desire to breathe. It is borne of "widespread, often vague, but always acute and unnerving feeling that life as it is, is not good enough" (Bauman, 1995, p. 77). For this reason the search for one's self is, like tourism, a critique of daily life.

Popular psychology, talk-show hosts, and other new age gurus owe their fortunes to our obsession. In fact, they foster the obsession by preying on our unhappiness and promising to fix our dreadfully low self-esteem with three easy payments of just $29.95! Have you noticed the brisk sales of self-help books, the exploding number of psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers opening private therapy practices and the number of highly watched television talk shows? It seems everybody has a missing or absent "inner child." These authors, practitioners, and celebrities promise the elusive magic pill the public is searching for to get them to the promised land. This industry relies on people being unhappy by adding to the critique of daily life which makes finding one's self seem more possible than finding the Holy Grail.

The quest to find oneself is a part of the American condition caused by the life-learning process. Americans are socialized to believe there is a place, always in the future, where happiness exists through hard work, honesty, and belief in God. Americans be-
lieve they can find a satisfying and comfortable lifestyle where he or she feels no pain and has no problems.

Yet, this place is always in the future, just beyond reach; hanging out there as an incentive to keep searching by purchasing the next new self-help book or video tape. Ultimately, the promise of "quality of life" creates the feeling of homesickness that leads Americans on their never-ending quest to find themselves (Bauman, 1995, p. 97). Jonathan Matthew Schwartz (1989) advises "to distinguish the homesick searching from the nostalgic yearning" (p. 15). According to Schwartz, the latter is past-oriented while the "home" in the homesickness as a rule is "in the future tense. . . . It is an urge to feel at home, to recognize one's surroundings and belong there" (1989, p. 32). This process operates at the unconscious level, driving people onward toward a lifestyle always just beyond their reach.

The constantly changing and paradoxical nature of the quest to locate one's self is the root of the popular psychology industry, the modern tourist phenomenon, and why the true nature of life-learning can never be ascertained. Because the process of becoming, naming and then understanding who I have become is reflexive, it is also by definition an historical phenomenon. It can only be accomplished through the reflexive monitoring of previous thoughts and behaviors. The key element in understanding life-learning is time--and history--but it is usually missing from the professional literature on the subject (Giddens, 1986). The continuous movement of
time ensures I can never know "who I am," only "who I might have been." About the time I think I know who I am, time has passed and I am somebody else.

The same process applies to life-learning. Only in hindsight, through rationalization, can it be determined how or why a person believes or acts the way they do and what influences led to their thoughts and behaviors. While information gained through rationalization should not be dismissed, the scientific causes or influences on a person's life-learning remains, at the end of the day, forever a mystery.

Adaptation in Armenia: 1995

The rest of this chapter is divided into two parts. The first discusses Armenian history and my interpretation of its impact on myself and the Armenian people. Specifically, the Armenian culture is an interesting mix of private troubles which have meaning in the context of public issues--the micro--macro connections C. Wright Mills spoke of in the Sociological Imagination (1959). As a people I found Armenians more in tune with their sociological imagination than Americans. Like I stated in Chapter III, people living in a country with the history, geography and socio-political conditions of Armenia are aware of these connections more so than citizens of the West. As such, I try to reflect this historical-cultural awareness and the role it played in my social and cultural adjustment.

The second part of this chapter addresses my interpretation
of how I was affected by Armenian daily life. I include a variety of topics for consideration, including problems caused by language differences and an in-depth analysis of local living conditions. I was in Armenia during a period of significant pain and suffering. They were living through a collapse of their lives after 70 years of Soviet rule. This discussion recounts how the Armenians--and I--managed the difficult conditions in a land which was, ironically, strange to both.

History and Culture

This is not a comprehensive analysis of the Armenian cultural identity. Indeed, that work would fill volumes. It is intended to demonstrate how historical events--some recent and some not--affected the Armenian culture in 1995. As such, this discussion is limited only to the aspects of Armenian history and culture which affected my adjustment. It is divided into two subsections. The first, entitled "Armenian Identity, Part I" involves three pillars of Armenian Identity: religion, Mount Ararat, and the Armenian alphabet. These factors provide the Armenians with history to celebrate. There is no dissent among the Armenian people about the significance of religion, Ararat, and the alphabet. These factors are, in large part, responsible for the characteristics which make the Armenian people unique in the world.

The second section, entitled "Armenian Identity, Part II," looks at significant historical tragedies in Armenian history which
play an instrumental role in shaping the Armenian identity. The events include the 1915 Armenian Genocide, 1988 earthquake and the Nagorno-Karabakh War. One consequence of the Nagorno-Karabakh War is the energy blockade of Armenia by Azerbaijan and Turkey. It is greatly responsible for the collapse of the Armenian economy. These six factors, three positive and three negative, are weaved together to holistically define the Armenian cultural identity.

Culture is historical, bound up in traditions passed down through the generations. Culture is memories of events--either real or imagined--which define a people and their world view. I adopt my definition of culture from the Birmingham School (Willis, 1978) where it is viewed as collective subjectivity--that is, a way of life or outlook adopted by a community or social class (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 25) which ultimately defines their world view. As such, the collective subjectivity, or culture, of the Armenian people is an intricate mixture of contemporary and historical events, both glorious and tragic.

This definition of culture alters the formerly predominant hierarchic notion, which believes culture refers to the best and most glorious achievements of a people or civilization (Alasuutari, 1995, p. 25). By focusing only on glorious history, the hierarchic model confuses culture with the concept of dominant ideology. As such, this is not an accurate description of Armenian culture.

I found the Armenian culture strong, traditional and fully informed by history. Every Armenian citizen with whom I spoke basked
in the mythological heroism of ancient Armenia, the holiness of their religion, their prized language, and the strength of their families. Yet, this celebration is stained by the haunting memory of genocide, Soviet oppression, earthquake, war with Azerbaijan, and newer forms of death caused by cold, darkness, and starvation. Armenians believe they are part of the earth—but not the world. They feel alone, ignored, and left to perish. Yet, because of their collective consciousness (Durkheim, 1893/1964) Armenians believe they will survive another millennium in their homeland. This interesting and complex mixture of history and culture dominates Armenian life and living verifying Geertz’s belief that people "unmodified by the customs of particular places do not in fact exist, have never existed, and most important, could not in the very nature of the case exist" (Geertz, 1973, p. 35).

As a modern tourist I was awed and personally changed by the depth of the Armenian historical memory and the power it wields in everyday life. If, according to Durkheim (1922/1956), education and socialization "are the ways by which an individual learns the ways of a given group or society" (p. 71) then perhaps I was being resocialized into the Armenian society. I was certainly developing a "sense of devotion to (Armenian) society" (Ritzer, 1996, p. 210).

Like MacCannell suggested, in the face of Armenia’s contemporary hardship framed by historical oppression I found my past in this far-away land. I am not Armenian; but I am human. In times as desperate as the Armenians were facing I could not differentiate by
ethnicity. They like I, are part of the human race of people—all citizens of the world. In Armenia I made a powerful human connection between the modern world, where life is not informed by history, and the traditional world where life is based on history. MacCannell (1976) believes modern tourists look for representations of their premodern past in foreign countries. As such, the tourist hopes to transcend time and space, to find the door to a historical time tunnel as it were, in order to find themselves in the historical image of their ancestors. Perhaps, he is correct.

Armenian Identity, Part I

To understand the contemporary Armenian identity is to understand three important factors: religion, Mount Ararat and language. I discuss these pillars of Armenian identity below.

Armenians are a religious people. As an Orthodox Christian nation, they are proud of the fact the Armenian Orthodox Church has survived nearly 1700 years. In 1994 UNDP estimated that 94 percent of the Armenian population were members of the Church. Although the Church is divided into two sects—mostly over politics—each shares the same religious beliefs and are led by the same Catholicos. The center of Armenian Christianity—and perhaps the center of Armenian cultural life—is Echmiadzin, a small village near Yerevan.

I quickly learned the importance of religion to Armenians. It provides the historical foundation for their persevering attitude and survival. Throughout the trip my Armenian friends made sure I
understood. I visited several stone churches, heard stories about early religious leaders, visited Echmiadzin during the election of a new Catholicos and witnessed religious celebration. Whenever we spoke about life and living conditions religious themes were invoked. Armenians are proud the Soviet regime could not destroy their religion or extinguish their Church, although organized religion was banned during that period.

Every Armenian has a passion, almost an obsession, for Mount Ararat. Named Masis by the local population, Mount Ararat was part of Greater Armenia before being annexed by Turkey in the late 1800's. As I describe below, Masis dominates the Yerevan horizon and is a constant reminder of the majesty of Greater Armenia and death and suffering at the hands of the Ottoman Turks. It took only a few days for me to develop a similar obsession for the mountain.

Language is a predominant cultural and historical symbol in Armenian life. It is a source of great pride and myth. The Armenian language is, as much as anything else in Armenian history, an important part of the Armenian cultural identity.

Religion, Masis, and language. These three factors give Armenians reason to celebrate their cultural heritage.

Religion

During the flight to Yerevan I was exposed to the importance of religion in Armenian life. If you recall my description the flight was crowded with people flocking to Yerevan to participate in
the election of a new Catholicos, the religious and moral leader of the Armenian People. At the airport, local Armenians turned out to welcome religious leaders from various segments of the Armenian Diaspora for a week of religious events scheduled to coincide with Easter, the most celebrated holiday in the Armenian Orthodox religion (Suny, 1993). He was to become the first newly elected Catholicos in more than 40 years. Being in Yerevan during this event was akin to being in Rome for the election of a new Pope. Armenians felt a sense of spiritual renewal and hope which was lacking in their life since the heady days of the 1988 mass demonstrations in Independence square (Malkasian, 1996).

I am not a religious man. I could best be described as an agnostic. While there may be a greater power operating in the world, I am not sure how this power manifests itself. In my view, religion is a human program of social control. Since I am not qualified, nor interested in theological matters, I discuss religion in Armenia in terms of its impact on the Armenian psyche--or, collective subjectivity--in their historical and contemporary struggle to survive. An analysis of the means by which their religion manifests itself in everyday life offers an enlightening view into the Armenian culture.

For example, I visited a church on the frontier between Armenia and Turkey overlooking a heavily guarded no-man's land separating the two enemies. This particular church is a magnificent place that sits high on a hill overlooking the foothills of Masis, which dominates the western horizon. The entrance to the compound is a
long winding path spiraling upward from the bottom to the top of the hill.

This church was once the prison where Saint Gregor the Illuminator spent 14 years as a prisoner around 300 A.D. Upon his release Gregor organized the Armenian Orthodox church, leading to the adoption of Christianity as their state religion in 301. Armenia was the first country to do so (Marsden, 1993; Malkasian, 1996; Suny, 1993), ahead of Rome in 335 A.D. (Sourian, 1995). The Armenians are proud of their historical milestone and seize every opportunity to proclaim their Christian leadership.

This was an experiential visit. Gregor’s former prison (at least I was led to believe it was the same place) is now an interactive tourist attraction (Johnson, 1995).

The church, built in the 8th century, sits on a hill. It was prison prior to becoming a church. It dates to the second century. It is significant because Gregor, the father of the Armenian Orthodox church, was imprisoned here in a deep, dark cellar for 14 years. I climbed about 40 feet down into the Gregor’s cell. It has dark, black walls with a high rounded ceiling. A small air vent is cut into the rounded ceiling. There was a prayer site at the bottom with candles providing the only light. I guess prison guards threw Gregor food down the shaft we used to descend. It is impossible to imagine anyone living there over night, let alone 14 years. I would have seen God too. (p. 42)

It is surreal to visit a church which was previously a prison, sitting at the base of Mount Ararat with armed Turkish frontier guards in plain view beyond its stone walls. The whole scene is strangely symbolic of the Armenian plight. Here, in this dark hole in the ground a world religion was born to comfort millions of Armenians world-wide. Just beyond the walls is the continuous symbol
of Armenian genocide, Mount Ararat. It is ironic how in one visual frame are the symbols of both human oppression, death and religious salvation. Here, in this place I was surrounded by history. It hung from the walls of the prison and cried out from the foothills of Masis. It is the quintessential Armenian paradox of life: from death, life emerges.

I believe Gregor's lasting lesson is perseverance. It demonstrates the will and strength to survive the most horrendous conditions. Armenians believe they are right in their current struggle with the Azerbaijanis and Turks. They stand on moral and historical grounds while refusing to wilt under the weight of despicable living conditions. They have a sense—better yet, they know—they are correct. On issues pertaining to the survival of their state Armenians stand on principle, culture, and the shoulders of martyred ancestors. These convictions originated with Gregor and are maintained by his memory.

Principle, honor, sacrifice, and servitude. If these are the Armenian base cultural values then they are the moral responsibility—or role prescriptions—for Armenian women. Armenia is a patriarchal society. Men dominate women who spend their lives serving men and family. Women have no rights per se. They have duty and responsibility. It was interesting to work with women in professional positions by day who, at home, are duty-bound to act deferentially toward their husbands. Women raise the children, shop daily, cook, clean, and tend to the family business inside the home.
while men gather amongst themselves for coffee, drink, and political debate. Women are bound to their husbands for a lifetime, never able to remarry should they become widowed. Domestic and sexual violence are significant problems in Armenia but official statistics do not reflect this fact. Women do not report domestic or sexual violence committed by their husbands to the authorities. Their punishment at home—and socially by others—would be more severe after-the-fact, than the original beating.

Most women are university educated. They worked outside the home until the economy collapsed in 1991. The Soviets demanded that women work, while culture demands they serve their families. Armenian women live a hard and difficult life, working a first and second shift under normal conditions and a third shift because of the changed living conditions (see section below entitled "Electricity").

While there was a growing problem with prostitution in 1995 (although it was nonexistent compared to American cities) girls and young women live under a strict sexual code. They must be virginal, pure, and wholesome although the sexual code for Armenian men is the same as American men. Men can pursue sex but women must not relent to the pressure. Armenians live with the same sexual double-standard as Americans yet it is more strictly enforced. The women I know took this very seriously. The men, even more so.

One family escorted me to an Armenian church on the outskirts of Yerevan. It was Sunday so it was busy with people silently pray-
ing and placing lit candles along side the others left that day. This was a special church to my hosts. They were married here some years before. It was also special because of the legend of the 14 virgins. The skeletal remains of these women were found forever mixing legend with fact. The following series of journal entries (Johnson, 1995) reviews this visit and the legend of this particular church:

We visited the church where my hosts were married. Anna told me the story of how 14 female orphans, all young virgins, were massacred during the 12th century on the grounds of the church. The Priest had them all killed because the most beautiful one refused to marry him. Thus, she stayed loyal to Armenian traditions and did not give into the priest, who was, by church law, not allowed to marry. Recently, the remains of all 14 women were discovered. The skeletons are encased in glass coffins in the location where they were found, presumably where they were buried nearly 700 years earlier. (p. 15)

When leaving we backed out of the church, not to turn our backs on God. Women wear a linen head cover while in the church because of some issue with them coming from man so they must be covered because they were not originally exposed before God. This would not go over very well at home. (p. 16)

It is clear where the female role in Armenian society originated. My female host said the fourteen virgins who died protecting their virginity serves as an example for Armenian women: it is better to die than give up your virginity before marriage. In Armenian society women are the keepers of this strict cultural and sexual standard. Men do not have a responsibility other than demanding women be virgins. Women and children must remain virtuous in the eyes of God and man.

Similarly, Armenians would rather die in their cold and dark apartments than let the Azerbaijanis and Turks win the day. Yet,
most Armenians are worried these difficult times combined with the allure of the Western lifestyle will weaken the traditional values upon which their collective identity is based. However, since the communists could not significantly change their values, I (Johnson, 1995) doubt Americans can either.

Communism did not affect their religious values. The Armenians complied with the Soviet regime without changing their basic values of family, moderation, and religion. The communists were not able to end religion. While they closed most of the churches, worship continued in private. Their orthodox Christian religion has survived almost 1700 years, how did the communists think they could end it? (pp. 62-63)

Armenian society is comprised of an interesting mixture of Weber's types of authority. They grapple with the remnants of Soviet legal authority imposed by massive bureaucratic structures. They (Soviets) imposed systems of domination through legal means via rules, laws and regulations (Weber, 1921/1968). On the other hand, Armenian society abides by a substantive traditional authority related to the values, roles, and behaviors dictated by religion. Weber believed traditional authority is based on claims made by leaders and a belief by the followers in the "sanctity of age-old rules and powers" (Ritzer, 1996, p. 239). In 1995, Armenian society fit this definition.

The suddenly changed social, political, and economic conditions forced Armenians to rely on tradition as their authoritative guide because it was familiar and recognized as legitimate by the people. Their example shows the progression of legal authority supplanting traditional authority as a society moves from premodern
to modern. It also demonstrates how, in the face of catastrophic social, political, and economic collapse, societies with a strong traditional history quickly return to it as their primary basis of authority. Weber's process appears to work in both directions, a phenomenon his modern perspective did not allow him to consider.

**Ancient History**

In its common usage, the idiom ancient history implies something is old, past its prime, and irrelevant. If one claims something is ancient history, it has no bearing on today or the future. This idiom is a quick means for dismissing the past. This is the American way; and a subtext of modernity. The ideology of modernity defends the virtue of constant and steady social and technological progress made possible by distancing the present and future from history. It is predicated on looking forward at the expense of the past.

In America the goal is to render history irrelevant by looking toward a bright and prosperous future. Americans dismiss history as old and tired. Sometimes it seems this dismissal is an admission of past ineffectiveness or wrongdoing. Americans deny events in history they would rather not remember. Therefore, victory in World War Two is remembered, slavery is ancient history. Americans collectively claim past technological success but dismiss the genocide of our Native people as the misguided deeds of other people in the past. This phenomenon is an interesting case of the splitting of
the self in relation to events, periods, or actions Americans would rather not remember. This is what Langer calls the "politics of forgetting" (1993, p. 264).

I believe American culture is unstable and without solid foundation. Indeed, there are pockets of thriving ethnic groups in various parts of the country. Yet, after one or two generations they lose their cultural moorings and become assimilated into the American way of life. While America has a collective subjectivity determining their world view, I suggest this world view is without depth, inherently unstable, and porous. It is faddish and based on the whims of consumerism and leisure. It leads to a chronic state of psychic unhappiness which drives Americans to look for an Absolute Other in foreign, nonmodern lands (MacCannell, 1976). It feeds the popular psychology movement by leading people to search for their missing inner child. American culture provides no psychological foundation, thus driving the desire to find it through hyperconsumerism and chronic overuse of expensive and ineffective self-improvement strategies.

Despite the recent diversity movement (see, Cox, 1994; Morrison, 1992; and Fernandez, 1993)\textsuperscript{19}, America ultimately is one nation without substantive cultural difference. I am not speaking here in terms of race or religion, but the core region of human collectivity called culture. In other words assimilation remains a strong and dominate force in American culture. By design, modern America robs even the most ethnic of their culture and heritage. As a white male
from a country which acknowledges only glory in the past, ignores
the contemporary oppression of blacks and women, the historical
shame of slavery and genocide of its Native people of North America,
it was a strange experience to learn the phrase ancient history
could have such an important meaning.

America is a nation without culture because it is a nation
without a recognized diverse history. For example, I struggled to
find gifts to take to Armenia that represents American culture. I
could have opted for something unique say, from the Native culture.
But unfortunately in modern times American Indians do not represent
America, nor am I a Native person. Instead I settled on small rubber
Disney characters. What better way to represent American culture
than with Mickey Mouse? My informal survey of friends and collea-
gues produced a consensus on this issue: take Mickey Mouse and Don-
ald Duck. This is shameful.

In Armenia ancient history is important. It defines their
nation by giving it strength and purpose. It helps them survive the
difficult times of the present. It gives them something substantive
to fall back on in times of social and political chaos. The Ar-
menians are proud of their ancient history. Unfortunately America
acts like it is ashamed of its past.

For example, at Lake Sevan I was walking up a hill to get a
better view of the crystal blue lake water and the snowcapped moun-
tain ranges in the distance when I literally stumbled over piles of
stone. Johnson (1995) states that he
stumbled upon the ruined foundation of a church. The bishop, through a translator, told me it was the foundation of the first church here, built in 302 AD, one year after Armenia adopted Christianity as their state religion. (p. 44)

At home these old stones would have been removed long ago. In its place, perhaps, someone might place a green-painted historical marker commemorating the site. Perhaps the marker would end-up in the middle of a parking lot or the entrance to a shopping mall built on top of the historical site. When and if America reaches the age of Armenia virtually nothing so old will survive the pace of modernity and capitalism. Even the battlefields of the Civil War are threatened by advancing capitalism. As the argument goes; can we let an old battlefield like Gettysburg take up valuable real estate? Will not the people of the area—in fact, all Americans—be better off with another shopping mall?

Imagine being someone from a country best represented by the virtual reality of Walt Disney, standing amidst the ruins of a church built in the fourth century? This was not the oldest place I visited. The temple of Garni, located about one hour from Yerevan, still stands. It was built in the first century when Armenians were still animal worshippers. Compare this to my house. I live in a house barely 70 years old. It is a nice brick two-story home with unique oak finish throughout. I was recently advised it may soon be time to sell the old home and replace it with something newer and by definition, better. Old house? In Armenia my house is not even broken in yet.
Ararat

Breathtaking. This is the only word to describe Mount Ararat. It is a majestic mountain. Ararat is the fabled final resting place of Noah, his Ark and all those animals. It's profile dominates the Armenian Western horizon. Armenians consider Ararat their own although it currently is part of Turkey. The mountain was once the centerpiece of Greater Armenia until political compromises following the Russo-Turkish War in 1878 allowed Turkey to annex it along with the rest of Eastern Armenia. As I stated earlier, Armenian love for this mountain is matched only by their passion for religion and language.

Prior to the trip I had heard about the beauty of Masis. Yet, for a couple of days I did not understand because it was shrouded by clouds. Then, early one morning I got my first full look at the Mountain. On that morning I immediately understood why Ararat is the most overused icon in Armenia. It seems every home, public place or work of art and sculpture includes Ararat in some visual way. Walking through Vernissage, an open-air shopping center near Republic Square, is a trip though a virtual Ararat museum. Local painters and sculptors, woodworkers and metal workers glorified the image of Ararat and its shorter neighbor Little Ararat in their work. Not only did Ararat dominate the real horizon, it was everywhere else in Armenia too.

Within days of first sighting Masis, I was hooked. The first thing I did every morning was look to the West. I wanted to see
Masis. I needed to see Masis. It became my morning ritual. Wherever I was in the city or country I sneaked a peek at the beautiful, tall, snowcapped mountain. I even purchased a painting of the mountain which now hangs in my study. I still look at it everyday and remember. It is the most enduring visualization of my two trips to Armenia.

The mountain appears unusually tall and full. Its snow-covered peaks shine like a jeweled crown, as if it floats just above the landscape. Although it is more than 40 miles from Yerevan it looked like it was at the end of the street. I even gazed toward the mountain at night, not quite sure what I was expecting to see. Now and then, small blinking lights appeared. Perhaps I was looking for the Turks looking at Armenia? Maybe I adopted the local paranoia about the voyeuristic Turks, peering down from Ararat keeping tabs on the Armenians? Nonetheless, the mountain captivated me—like it did all Armenians.

Ararat is a symbol with mixed meaning for Armenians. On the one hand it represents the glorious past when Armenians ruled all of Greater Armenia. On the other hand it is a constant and immovable reminder of the genocide and loss of prized land to the Turks and Russians. But, this is the Armenian recipe of life; three parts of glorious legend and tradition mixed with three parts of unimaginable pain and suffering. While sometimes it is impossible to know if the glory and legend is based in history or in state-sponsored ideology or both; it is never impossible to know the Truth of their contem-
porary and historical pain and loss.

Language

The Armenian alphabet was authored in 405 A.D. by Mesrop Me­shots so Armenians could interpret the Bible. This unique alphabet, the so-called "regiment of letters and its thirty-six warriors" (Marsden, 1993, p. 171) remains an inseparable part of the Armenian identity and culture. According to Sourian (1995, p. xv), the Armenian alphabet opened a "golden age of letters" and led to a proliferation of monasteries across Greater Armenia, each dedicated to monastic scholarship. In Yerevan the Madenataran is a shrine to their language. Sitting high on the upper slopes of the Yerevan bowl facing Ararat, Madenataran contains over 10,000 bound manuscripts and 100,000 historical documents. When I visited Madenataran I could not read the letters but could feel the history.

How important is this alphabet to Armenians? Glorious stories of heroism and courage abound in Armenian lore recounting efforts to save their treasured alphabet from outside invaders. There is one story about Armenian women in their last moments before dying by Turkish hand in 1915, scratching the letters in the sand so their children might learn them. There is another story about the efforts of Armenian philologists fighting against the Soviet demand for the Armenian alphabet be changed to reflect the Russian mother tongue. It is impossible to separate Armenians from the Armenian language.

Over the years two versions of the language have developed:
Eastern and Western Armenian. Frankly, my untrained ear could not
tell the difference but Armenians in Armenia—Eastern Armenian
speakers—say the difference is obvious. In this way the language
is a symbol of stratification between Armenians and Diaspora Armeni­
ans similar to how skin pigmentation stratifies the African-Ameri­
can social hierarchy. The Soviets banned Armenian language during
the communist period forcing Armenians to speak, at least publicly,
Russian as their first language. Yet, Armenians never stopped teach­
ing their children the traditional language. As part of a package
of grievances, the Armenian desire to have their language reinstated
as the first language was part of the early protest movement against
the Soviets under glasnost and perestroika (Malkasian, 1996; Mars­
den, 1993).

The great triumvirate in Armenian life are religion, Ararat, and
language. These important factors cling together to create the
center of Armenian culture. Every Armenian knows this; it is in­
grained in their being. It was an important part of my Armenian ex­
perience. No visitor to Armenia can leave without multiple and
varied lessons in this cultural fact.

Armenian Identity. Part II

While the components of Armenian identity discussed in Part I
are based on shared knowledge, it is a different kind of knowledge
which comprises the issues discussed here. Religion, Mount Ararat,
and language are but one part of the Armenian cultural identity.
Perhaps, they are best described as the positive part of the holistic Armenian identity because they are the celebrated by Armenian people daily. They do not stimulate heated debate, create controversy, or divide people like the factors in Part II. The previous issues illicit one meaning and one opinion. Religion, Masis, and language are examples of "collective memory" (Young, 1993, p. xi). People's interpretation of the meaning and worthiness of these issues is similar wherever and whomever one talks with.

The next three issues are quite different. They represent what Young called "collected memory" (p. xi). That is to say the memory of genocide, earthquake, and the Nagorno-Karabakh War are an "aggregate collection of its members' many, often competing memories" (1993, p. xi). The collected memory of these events, now woven into one consistent theme in Armenian identity are organized, shaped, and inspired by the institutions and rituals of Armenian life. They are not neutral, but intertwined with national and international politics. As such, they are part of the politics of memory and forgetting (Langer, 1993).

The memories of these events stimulate debate about how horrible each event was and which actions could rectify them in the contemporary world. They are political as well as historical issues. One aspect of the collected memory of these events is uncontested: the genocide, earthquake, and Nagorno-Karabakh War are a conscious and volatile part of the Armenian identity. In casual conversation Armenians routinely mention at least one of these issues. More often
than not conversation revolves around the consequences of all three events and what political or moral course Armenia should take toward resolution. This is an example of what Lyotard (1990) calls the moment "where the present is the past and the past is always presence" (p. 16). Armenians may not agree on the content but they agree on the consequences and the validity of their historical claims.

In America, men's casual conversation often turns to sports and whose number one? In Armenia, it turns to death by Turkish hand (genocide), natures wrath (earthquake), or the Azerbaijanis (war and blockade). The nature of casual conversation is determined by local perspective, yet this is one issue I found simultaneously difficult and easy to comprehend.

In this section I discuss the three issues: Genocide, Nagorno-Karabakh War, and earthquake. My purpose is to provide historical context and demonstrate how these issues are intertwined into a whole of the Armenian culture. I begin this section with a discussion of the Armenian Genocide.

**Genocide**


Genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a nation, ethnical, racial or
religious group, as such: (a) killing members of the group; (b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (p. 210).

According to Miller and Miller (1993), "on the basis of this definition, the events of 1915 clearly constitute a genocide of the Armenians" (p. 45). Why is there even discussion about whether the killing of between 600,000 and 1.5 million Armenian by the Turks and Kurds was genocide (Hovannisian, 1994; Suny, 1993, Miller & Miller, 1993; Malkasian, 1996)? Primarily because the Turkish Government has not admitted responsibility for the tragedy. In fact, they still deny, (a) the genocide happened; and, (b) almost a full generation of Armenians died as a result (Derdarian, 1996; Verluise, 1989). More recently, the Turks claim the Armenians in Eastern Turkey died as the natural consequence of War and there was no concerted effort on their part to extinguish the Armenians (Hovannisian, 1994; Verluise, 1989).

Hovannisian (1994) reveals evidence that Turkish lobbyists played a deciding role in the United States Congress' inability in 1985 and 1987 to pass commemorative resolutions recognizing April 24 as a "day of man's humanity to man" with special emphasis on the Armenian Genocide (p. 131). The long and bitter Congressional debate led to claims by United States Representatives that perhaps the genocide did not occur. Yet, according to Robert Melson, between 1915 and 1916 approximately half of the Armenian population of Tur-
key died as a direct result of the genocide. Worldwide this represented one-third of the total population of Armenians (1986, p. 64-66).

Turkish Atrocities

While this is not a full account of the Armenian Genocide, a brief review is necessary for clarity. The need for this discussion becomes clearer later when I discuss the contemporary relationship between the Armenian Genocide and Nagorno-Karabakh War.

As 1915 approached, more than two million Armenians lived in Eastern Turkey (Anatolia) while another one million lived in the Russian Caucasus region (now the Republic of Armenia). Until 1879 Armenians were protected by the Russian army after they defeated the Turks in the Russo-Turkish war (1877-78). However, the Treaty of Berlin forced the Russian Army to retreat leaving Armenian villages in Eastern Turkey easy prey for the Turks and Kurds in the region. From 1894 to 1896 Kurdish tribes killed more than 100,000 Armenians (Miller & Miller, 1993, p. 38). This was a frightening prelude to the greater atrocities twenty years later, also committed by Turkish and Kurdish troops.

In 1913 an extreme nationalistic party called the Young Turks seized power in Turkey. Armenians across Turkey supported the Young Turk revolution, seeing it as potentially ushering in a new era of reforms. They were right. During World War One the Young Turks ordered the deportation of Armenians under the guise their
villages were too close to the front.

Deportation occurred in the context of a Turkish anti-Armenian propaganda campaign which established an environment where genocide could occur with the complicity of the Turkish people (Derdarian, 1996; Hovannisian, 1994). Perhaps the most heinous propaganda tactic occurred after the Armenians were ordered to turn in their guns as part of the Turkish war effort. After the Armenian weapons were stockpiled the Turkish Government publicized pictures of the weapons claiming the Armenians armed themselves in preparation for an insurrection against the Turkish people. Systematically, the Turkish Government carried out a negative propaganda campaign aimed at dehumanizing the Armenian population, similar to what later occurred in Nazi Germany towards the Jews. As such, before the Turks acquired power over Armenian life they acquired power over the definition of Armenian status (Bauman, 1995, p. 203).

In May of 1915 an emergency order called the "Temporary Law of Deportation" was enacted (Miller & Miller, 1993, p. 42). This order authorized the deportation of persons who might be guilty of treason or espionage or who could be removed for military purposes. The Armenians, according to the Young Turks, fit each category. Over the next several years Armenians were forced into long marches into the mountains and deserts of Eastern Armenia and murdered. Records exist showing, for example, out of 18,000 Armenians deported from one village only 180 arrived at Aleppo, their final destination (Derdarian, 1996; Marsden, 1993). Along the way the Armenians were
starved, beaten, raped, shot, and burned. In another example of Turkish savagery, at a cave near Shadaddie located in the Syrian desert thousands of Armenians--naked, starving, sick and alive--were forced into the deep cavern until it was full. Live human beings were packed like animals, body on body, into this cavern until there was no room to move or breathe. When the cave was full Turkish soldiers set the inside on fire killing all but one child, who later told the story (Marsden, 1993).

Turkish atrocities against defenseless Armenians rival those committed by the Nazis twenty years later in terms of savagery, if not in number. Yet, after the war the world ignored the Armenian Genocide. While there has been debate over the years about the validity of Armenian genocide claims (Miller & Miller, 1993), Lawrence LeBlanc refers to it, and the Holocaust as the "two modern paradigms of genocide" (1991, p. 17). The Armenian Genocide was the first "great" genocide in the "Age of Camps," a name aptly given to a twentieth century which will be remembered as the century of genocide (Bauman, 1995, p. 206).

The world may have ignored the Armenians (Suny, 1993), but the Armenians never forgot. Turkish refusal to accept responsibility for genocide preserves its prominent place in Armenian consciousness, since it at least one blood-relative of almost every contemporary Armenian. The genocide is an open wound on the soul of the Armenian people. They claim an historical grievance against the Turks and the West for not holding Turkey responsible for their
actions. Armenians watched the world--and ultimately Germany--rally around the Jews after the Holocaust. And yet, the same privilege is not afforded the Armenians. Hostility between Armenia and Turkey continues. For example, as reported by the New York Times on April 18, 1993, Turkish president Turgut Ozal just two weeks before dying suddenly remarked: "What harm would it do if a few bombs were dropped on the Armenian side by Turkish troops holding maneuvers on the border?" (Sourian, 1995, p. xix). This quote was told to me at least a dozen times during my stay in Yerevan. Until I recently read Sourian's account and located the article while preparing this study, I never believed it was true.

Commemoration, 1995

Beginning in the 1920's the Soviet government banned Armenians from commemorating the anniversary of their Genocide. Their refusal, in the context of world-wide denial of the event, led to mass civil demonstrations by the Armenians against the Soviet regime. On April 24, 1965 hundreds of thousands of local Armenians and millions more in the Diaspora gathered illegally in Yerevan and around the world to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the atrocity (Malkasian, 1996; Hovannisian, 1994). The sheer force and volume of this demonstration became the pretext for the Soviets to approve the construction of a memorial in Yerevan.

Arthur Danto (1986) wrote, "we erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never
forget" (p. 152). If this is true the Armenian Genocide memorial serves both purposes. The Armenians remember--and do not forget. Although this sound like a game of semantics, they are in fact, quite different. To remember an event suggests its acceptance. It is associated with the remembrance of a positive as well as negative past but implies the event being remembered is completed (i.e., ancient history). By contrast, shall never forget implies a state filled with emotion, usually negative. It suggests the event is still alive and fresh in the mind of the person or people never forgetting. It usually means the event not forgotten carries contemporary meaning charged with emotion.

For example, we remember D-Day but never forget Pearl Harbor. African-Americans remember the 1963 March on Washington but never forget slavery. Every American remembers the dead in the Federal Building in Oklahoma City but never forgets the dastardly act of terrorism that caused the death and destruction. Obviously, there is a significant difference between these two forms of memory. The Armenians remember their lost ancestors, but never forget the Turkish atrocities, their subsequent refusal to accept responsibility, and the loss of sacred land.

My trip came at an unusual time in Armenian history. During the first week a new Catholicos was elected to lead the Church and during the fourth week they commemorated the eightieth anniversary of their Genocide. These two significant social, cultural, and historical events made interesting bookends for this trip.
April 24 is the annual day of commemoration of the genocide. On that day in 1995, I found my way to the hill in Yerevan, where the monument to the massacres is located, to participate in their day of mourning. The following journal entry (Johnson, 1995) recaptures the events of this day from my perspective.

This was a day to remember. I walked to the site of the genocide memorial in Yerevan, about 20 minutes from the hotel. There was a reported 1 million people gathered to walk up the brick pathway to the memorial in solemn procession. It took us nearly two hours to make it to the monument. There were people from all walks: war veterans with their medals, young, old. It was quite an experience. (p. 104)

This event—April 24, 1995—commemorates the 80th anniversary of the horrible genocide of Armenians at the hands of the Turks during WW I. The Turks have not claimed responsibly for this massacre and it still causes the Armenians great pain and suffering. These are a people with an incredibly long historical memory. In fact, the Turks unwillingness to apologize and the Armenians unwillingness to forgive is one of the major reasons they are being blockaded by the Turks as well as the Azeri’s. (p. 104)

At the top of the hill was a stark, simple, yet moving memorial complex. In the Armenian tradition of architectural simplicity. A tall obelisk stands in front, next to a monument made of twelve stone pillars, curved upward and inward partially enclosing the center of the memorial, in the shape of a henge. It looked like a circle of teeth curving to a spot in the center, all made of stone. To enter, I stepped down a about six steps. In the center of the monument is a round, stainless steel eternal flame. The memorial tradition is to lay flowers around the eternal flame. The flowers represent lost Armenian lives. When I arrived at the flame, the circle of flowers was approximately twelve inches high. A friend told me that by seven p.m. the circle of flowers stood five feet tall. This is a very moving and serious ritual for Armenians, commemorating the most horrible event in their history. (p. 105)

There were groups of children, adults, police, veterans, etc., in different uniforms carrying flags and flower arrangements in solemn procession. I noticed that even the young people were serious. There was no fooling around on this day. I was close to the people, sensing their moods, and feelings. The
older folks were the most serious and solemn. I am sure most of these people lost relatives in the genocide. (p. 105)

Of the three parts of the monument: the flame, the henge, and the obelisk; two of them (henge and obelisk) stand for the land and its loss. They are the most visible components of the monument complex. The henge's twelve stone pillars represent twelve stolen provinces of Western Armenia while the obelisk is split by a fine hairline into two parts representing the split between western and eastern Armenia. The flame of course, stands for lost loved ones (Mar­sden, 1993, p. 173).

As I discuss later the loss of land is as deep a wound as the loss of life. In fact, losing land serves to make losing life even more deep and painful. Until recently a significant part of the Armenian demand upon the Turks, in addition to claiming responsibility, was the return of Greater Armenia including Mount Ararat. A well-connected Armenian friend told me the loss of land to the Turks led to a law forbidding the private ownership of land in contemporary Armenia. People own what rests on the land (for example, their flat) but not the land itself. Before I could blame this law on communism she explained its basis in the lessons of history. Because Armenia is a small country surrounded by rich enemies, they fear the Turks would purchase their land legally and take over the rest of Armenia. Of course, what she did not say is that if this occurred Armenians believe another genocide would happen.

I admit the extent of my knowledge about the Armenian Genocide was limited prior to this trip. About the only memory I have of it
was a regular admonishment from my grandmother to clean my dinner plate because there were millions of starving Armenians who would appreciate my food. Aside from that, I had no idea what happened between 1915 and 1920. The Armenian Genocide was not part of the World History curriculum in the public schools I attended as a youth. Therefore, when I began reading about it I was shocked. I was even more taken aback by the extent to which the 80 year old genocide is a constant topic of conversation. Armenians speak about the Genocide as if it happened last week. I never grasped the reason for this during the 1995 trip. For example, the following journal entry (Johnson, 1995) asks fundamental questions about this historical, yet current event.

How harsh was their treatment by the Turks? To this day, the Turks seem almost threatened by the Armenian presence. Maybe the threat comes from the knowledge of past wrong doings, almost a national sense of guilt and shame buried so deep they do not even know it exists, so they continue to treat the Armenians like a dangerous enemy. I commented to friends that this day must really make the Turks nervous. Most smiled and agreed. The Armenians have some power over the Turks in this way. The power of past wrongdoing (emphasis added). Interesting. (pp. 105-106)

I noticed that Turkey appeared to have an unusual interest in the Armenians. I developed this opinion based on information like the aforementioned quote by the former Turkish president in the New York Times, by armed guards lining the Armenian-Turkish frontier, Turkish participation in the blockade, the inability of Armenian airplanes to fly over Turkish airspace, and their refusal to discuss the Genocide. These factors, along with my growing affinity for the Armenian perspective on Turkey, led to the belief this large and
powerful country worried too much about weak and crippled Armenia.

This led me to consider what may be the lasting effect on the Turkish national psyche caused by their remembrance of their participation in the genocide, and its relationship to the refusal to apologize for acts committed 80 years earlier under Ottoman rule. Contemporary Turkey distances themselves from the Ottomans but will not admit genocidal wrongdoing committed so long ago. It reminds me a lot of the United States government's mishandling of slavery and treatment of Native Americans in history. What are the political and economical ramifications of owing up to one's terrorism in the past? To me, the answer to this question is simple.

Pragmatically, apologizing is the natural--and best--thing to do especially after Germany saw fit to apologize to the Jews and the rest of the world for the Holocaust. Other authors have written that the Turkish refusal is driven by a concern for reparation demands and the return of land (Marsden, 1993, Suny, 1993, Verluise, 1989). Most Armenians believe they refuse to apologize because the Americans, a NATO ally of the Turks, refuse to pressure them into doing so. Each of these reasons sound reasonable and are probably part of the answer to this inexcusable state of affairs.

However, I believe the reason for their refusal and concern about tiny Armenia are inextricably related in one other way. When I discussed this idea with Armenians, they not only understood but agreed with my logic. Let's see what you think?

The power of past wrongdoing led me first to consider guilt as
a reason for Turkish refusal. The American Heritage Dictionary. Second College Edition defines guilt as "(a) the fact of being responsible for an offense or wrongdoing;" or "(b) remorseful awareness of having done something wrong." While these definitions apply, they do not explain in powerful enough terms what I believe the "power of wrongdoing" is on the behavior of a country and its people. If there is a phenomenon called "collective guilt," I believe it is best explained in the context of power—the power of knowing one is responsible for the greatest form of evil known to humankind.

"Remembrance," according to Huyssen (1993) "as a vital human activity shapes our links to the past, and the ways we remember define us in the present" (p. 249). In other words, a society needs the past to construct and anchor their contemporary identity and to nurture a vision of the future. Perhaps this statement provides insight into the Turkish attitude and behavior toward Armenians.

Memory is unstable. It is affected by several factors which include forgetting and denial or repression and trauma. Or, "more often than not... (memory is affected by) ...the need to rationalize and maintain power" (Huyssen, 1993, p. 249). As a function of the collected memory of their egregious behavior, could admitting they (the Turks) were responsible for an atrocity like the Armenian Genocide, in order to maintain power and control, paradoxically lessen their sense of power and control as a nation and people? If there is any truth to this theory, then the refusal of the Turks to apolo-
glize is backfiring. The tactic they use to solve the genocide question causes a powerful sense of irrational insecurity which results in a loss of power and control. They are giving the Armenians power, where rationally, power should not exist. The final journal passage (Johnson, 1995) of this section addresses this issue:

The Armenians let the Turks know what day it is by completely lighting up the city for the whole weekend of the holiday. The government gave people 12 hours of electricity this day, turned on the street lights, filled and ran the city fountains, and generally made themselves a beacon on the Turkish border. If there are Turks on and around Mt. Ararat, they can surely see the lights and know what they mean. It is an interesting way to get their point across. (p. 106)

Armenians seem to believe their survival—regardless of how they survive—means victory over the Turks. The longer they survive and the Turks refuse to discuss the Genocide, the deeper is their moral victory over their despised enemy. Yet, this strategy has a downside: the longer the standoff remains, the greater the danger is the psychically-wounded Turks or their allies in Azerbaijan will commit further violence to settle the issue. This is a potentially dangerous game for the Armenians indeed, but one they are willing to play. Do they have a choice in the matter?

Nagorno-Karabakh War and Blockade

It is not hard to believe that Armenia and the surrounding Transcaucasus region is a battleground. In fact, historically it is harder to believe this region is not the site of war. Throughout history the region and especially the Armenian homeland has been the site of major wars between competing hegemonic nations. The con-
Conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region is no different. Under Soviet rule the ethnic tensions between these countries over Nagorno-Karabakh were suppressed. However, with the announcement of Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of perestroika and glasnost, tensions boiled over in early 1988 (Gregory & Stuart, 1990). They continue to this day.

This is not a complete history of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Other writings achieve that purpose quite well (see, Malkasian, 1996, Suny, 1993, and Marsden, 1993). This discussion is intended to place the conflict in its contemporary and historical context. Every aspect of Armenian history is interlaced into their culture. As such, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan is part of the contemporary Armenian psyche, but not for obvious reasons. Yes, it is true the Armenians lost several thousand young men to fierce guerrilla fighting between 1990 and 1994. In many countries, the loss of life is bad enough. However, the conflict over mountainous Karabakh dates back to the beginning of the century. The events which occurred before, during, and after the hot war keeps alive the legacy of the Armenian Genocide in the hearts and minds of the Armenian people. To Armenians, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is a potential replay of the 1915 Armenian Genocide. Having said this, a very brief recap of the historical context of the war is necessary.

While historically, border disputes over Nagorno-Karabakh date to the nineteenth century, the contemporary problems began following
World War One. Beginning in 1918 when the short-lived Transcaucasian Federation--Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia--broke apart and each claimed independence, Azerbaijan laid official claim to the mountainous Karabakh region. This mountainous region, approximately the size of Delaware, sits outside the Armenian border to the southeast. In 1918, Armenians comprised nearly 90 percent of the population of this region. Mountainous Karabakh is considered by the Armenians to be their ancestral home dating back many centuries.

From 1918 until the Soviet takeover of the region in 1920 Armenians and Azerbaijanis battled over the region. In 1920 the Soviet Union declared, after much political wrangling, the Nagorno-Karabakh region would remain part of Azerbaijan. Throughout the years that followed this dispute remained quiet, but unresolved. Occasionally Armenians from the region would mount a protest with the Central Soviet government requesting reunification with Armenia. However, their pleas went unheard by Moscow.

In 1988 the conflict came to the fore after nearly 70 years of relative obscurity outside the region. In February of that year Karabakh Armenians marched in mass protest demanding reunification with Armenia. Over the next several months, under the leadership of the newly formed "Karabakh Committee" (Malkasian, 1996, p. 24) Armenians in Yerevan took up the cause in mass demonstrations which included grievances against Moscow ranging from environmental concerns to the genocide and their loss of historical lands. Shortly, as the political dealing between Moscow and the region intensified
similar demonstrations began in Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan (Malkasian, 1996; Suny, 1993). The scene was set for war in the region.

In January 1989 this developing cauldron exploded in the coastal Azerbaijani city of Sumgait. On that night after several days of intense nationalistic demonstrations in Baku, gangs of Azerbaijani men attacked, burned, and slaughtered Armenians living in Sumgait. Estimates of the dead ranged from as low as thirty-one, to as high as several hundred (Malkasian, 1996). As news of this pogrom reached Yerevan, the downward spiral toward war began.

Over the next year tens of thousands of Armenian and Azerbaijani refugees flowed into their respective countries out of their fear of retaliation in the escalating conflict. Prior to this time, Armenians lived in Azerbaijan and Azeri's lived in Armenia. Not any longer, the situation was deadly. There were reports of violence against foreign citizens in both countries during this period (Malkasian, 1996). By 1990 armed conflicts were occurring in the Karabakh region.

As part of their war effort, Azerbaijan and Turkey stopped the flow of gas and oil to Armenia placing the country under a full-fledged blockade. Armenia was a country under siege. Trade was cut-off between Armenia and the outside world and the long dark period in Armenian life began. By the winter of 1991 Armenia was completely dark and cold, how I found it in 1995.

In May 1994 the international community, including Russia and
the United States, helped broker a cease fire between the comba-
tants. As part of this agreement the armed conflict was suspended
but the blockade continued.

In 1995 the Armenians were struggling with the unsettled busi-
ness of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, although few spoke at length
about the issue. I believe their reticence about the war was mainly
because they were tired and in shock while trying to survive the
harshness of their daily living conditions. Yet, those who did
speak about it did so with the resolve so familiar in the Armenian
culture. While the war may have turned semi-cold--there were occa-
sional terrorist bombings throughout the region--passions ran hot in
Armenia over the future of Nagorno-Karabakh (Johnson, 1995).

Back to Azerbaijan, many Armenians today consider the Sumgait
pogrom of 1988 the new genocide. Although it was perpetrated
by the Azerbaijani, still, in their eyes, it was committed
by the Turks, since they consider Azeri's as Turks. Sumgait
was a brutal massacre of Armenians living in Azerbaijan, one
that helped trigger the war and blockade in 1990. The people
I spoke with believe this could happen again now, because the
75% Armenian population living in Karabakh will not leave no
matter what. Because of their commitment, they could be
slaughtered again like their ancestors in Western Armenia
during World War I. (pp. 87-88)

This journal entry is indicative of how everything in Armenian
history comes together to form a cultural whole. In many ways the
Armenians are still fighting the Turks, their ultimate enemy. This
conflict rekindled memories of the Genocide and their hatred for
Turkey. Armenians considered the Azeri's to be "poor Turks" (John-
son, 1995, p. 45) whose only purpose in life is to continue the
centuries-old campaign to eradicate the Armenian people from the
region. Yet, before accusing the Armenians of being overly paranoid, one must look at the astonishing historical similarities between contemporary Nagorno-Karabakh and 1915 Turkey to understand their collective fear and loathing about the future.

Like Eastern Turkey before the genocide, a significant Armenian enclave is living in a region ruled by Muslims. Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan, cut-off from their native homeland in Armenia. Similar to 1915, locals in Azerbaijan attacked and massacred Armenians living in the region with their only intent being to kill Armenians because they are Armenian. Also similar to 1915, the populace of Azerbaijan has the same feelings of hatred and loathing toward the Armenians as did the Turkish population, creating a context where genocide could occur. And, just like 1915, the international community--first the Soviets, now the rest of the world--seems to be turning a blind-eye toward Armenian claims and grievances. To Armenians, the contemporary Nagorno-Karabakh situation provides the same fertile ground for genocide that existed in 1915 just before the Turks massacred their ancestors.

Another important aspect of this situation is its timing related to other significant social, political, and environmental issues in Armenian history between 1988 and 1995. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is but one massive disaster during this period. Almost simultaneously, the Armenians suffered through an earthquake, the war and blockade, collapse of the Soviet economy and their own declaration of independence, and the total collapse of their economy.
and resulting hyperinflation. As such, in 1995 the Armenians struggled to make sense of a world which is apparently hostile and unsympathetic toward their plight.

To Armenians, it is one thing to suffer at the hands of human enemies, but an entirely different issue to suffer because of nature. In the section below I describe the 1988 earthquake. In Chapter V, I revisit the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and its importance related to the contemporary impact of the Armenian Genocide on Armenian daily life.

**Earthquake**

Armenia—the Rock—is part of the mountainous portion of land linking the Black and Caspian Seas on the frontier between Europe and Asia. This area, known as the Transcaucasus region, experiences frequent earthquakes. However, never in recorded time was the area hit by an earthquake with the destructive power of the last one.

The earthquake that hit Armenia on December 7, 1988 reverberated across the world for three important reasons: it devastated a people still haunted by genocide, it happened amidst the first and most intense challenge to Mikhail Gorbachev’s glasnost and perestroika policies (Suny, 1993; Verluise, 1989; Marsden, 1995; and Malkasian, 1996), and it was the first time the Soviet Union allowed foreign assistance and relief into the country (Verluise, 1989).

In the months and years after the earthquake it became inexorably linked with the Armenian crusade for independence. However,
more importantly it is linked to Armenian grievances against Azerbaijan over the status of Nagorno-Karabakh. Like so much else in Armenian history, the earthquake has far greater significance than the loss of home and life.

My experience of the earthquake was relatively minimal compared to other issues. However, it was one among a series of stories which grew in significance as I spoke with Armenians about their life and history. I never actually saw the earthquake zone, although I tried to get a ride the approximately 50 miles from Yerevan to the region hardest hit. My hosts discouraged me from going. Knowing their discomfort at my witnessing the current social conditions in Yerevan, I understand their reticence. Because of these factors, I decided to include a short section about it in this chapter.

By 1995, the region was not rebuilt. In fact, friends said it looked today (1995) much like it did in the immediate aftermath of the quake seven years earlier. Before rebuilding efforts began, the Soviet collapse and Armenian declaration of independence occurred. In other words, the money dried up. The earthquake zone, once the second most populated region in Armenia, was inhospitable. Most people from the region migrated to Yerevan in the immediate aftermath of the quake, grossly overcrowding and already overcrowded Yerevan. In 1995, of the nearly 400,000 people who fled to Yerevan in 1988 most had not returned.

On Wednesday December 7, 1988 between 11:41 to 11:45 a.m., the
Armenian earth trembled. The very foundation on which the nation rested shook violently, killing nearly 50,000 and displacing over 400,000 people. It was inconceivable to Armenians—then and now—that nature would cause something this horrific to happen to them. To many, this was a sign from God. Some saw it as the work of Moscow (more later). Everybody could not believe it.

The main quake registered 6.9 on the Soviet seismic scale. Two significant aftershocks registering 5.8 and 5.2 finished the destruction in four minutes. It destroyed large parts of Gjumri (then called Leninakan), Kirkovan, and almost the entire towns of Spitak and Stepanavan (Suny, 1993). The unofficial death count rose as high as 100,000 and as low as 25,000. I heard varying reports from different sources, although most list the final death toll at approximately 50,000 men, women, and children (Verluise, 1989).

Thousands died immediately. The rest perished in the days following the quake because the Soviet system of relief was slowed by mass confusion and bureaucratic delays (Verluise, 1989). It took nearly two days for relief workers to arrive at the scene, and they were French. It took even longer for Soviet relief workers to arrive. During this time, almost everybody trapped by collapsed buildings but still alive, died. The poor response and bureaucratic wrangling by the Soviets added to a Soviet conspiracy theory and resentment toward the Soviet Central Committee.

Why did these people all die? An earthquake registering 6.9 should have done damage, but not flatten an entire region. Soviet
construction supposedly was built to withstand earthquakes up to eleven on their scale. Yet, the region was devastated. Much of the unexpected damage was blamed on poor Soviet construction, materials, and engineering. Many I spoke to believe the Soviets had lied to them, and the buildings were not built to these standards. Most were built in the late 1970's and early 1980's during a time when the Soviet economy was slowly deteriorating (Malkasian, 1996). The following journal entry (Johnson, 1995) recalls one of the few conversations I had about the earthquake:

I was told today that part of the problem during the earthquake was that the buildings in Gjumri and Spitak simply melted into dust because they were built so poorly. The floors were built from large slabs of concrete so when the building collapsed, these slabs fell straight down, crushing everything and everybody in its path. If you look at the buildings in Yerevan, the same could be said. In fact, I commented the other night that another earthquake would leave Yerevan in a dusty shambles, killing hundreds of thousands. These are the same buildings that could not withstand the last quake. By the way, what about Medzamor? (p. 70)

Almost all of Yerevan's high rise apartment buildings were built about the same time as the ones which fell apart during the earthquake. In addition, the Medzamor nuclear power plant stands just outside of town ready to begin operations again in late 1995. After hearing from the Armenians about shoddy Soviet construction, I began to look closely at Yerevan. As I wrote in my journal, the buildings looked weak and old although they were new compared to the Armenian churches and other ancient buildings scattered around the country. I wondered, how many would die if (or when) another earthquake hits this region? What if Yerevan is the epicenter the next
time? Over 1.5 million are literally packed into the crumbling high-rise apartment buildings. It is a monumental disaster waiting to happen. Yet, Armenians do not have time for those concerns, almost everything in their life may cause death. An earthquake was near the bottom of their list of immediate concerns.

If anything about the earthquake could be humorous, the next story qualifies. The Armenians seem to favor conspiracy theories. The earthquake was no exception. One group of people, claming to be former military, told me they knew the earthquake was caused by the Russians. Yes, it seems the Russians planted nuclear explosives along the fault line and triggered the blast on purpose. They wanted to stop Armenia from claiming independence and justify putting off a decision on Nagorno-Karabakh. These men called this the genocide of 1988, only this time the Russians were responsible. I thought I had stumbled into a support group for local psychotics. What a remarkably unbelievable tale. However, other sources have verified this was a widespread rumor during the months following the quake (Marsden, 1993, pp. 168-169). Thank goodness most thinking people did not share this suspicion.

The Nagorno-Karabakh question remained the Armenians central concern, even at the scene of the earthquake. When the quake struck Western Armenia Mikhail Gorbachev was in New York. He immediately flew to Armenia to view the damage. While there, a telling incident captured on news footage, occurred. This story demonstrates how Armenians integrate their private troubles with public issues. I
quote Peter Sourian's (1995) written account of the event:

News footage showed Gorbachev on his visit looking shocked, even disgusted, when a man who had lost his mother in the earthquake profited from the occasion to ask him what he was going to do about Karabakh. When Gorbachev took him to task for his presumed inhumanity toward his own dead mother, the man shot back: It's the same thing, with a look of contempt. (p. xviii)

What does this question mean? The man who asked it of Gorbachev, only days before lost his city and mother to the earthquake. This is a difficult lesson to understand for an American, but one that sheds an important light on the Armenian psyche and historical memory. Once again, the loss of land (Karabakh) was as traumatic as the loss of life (earthquake). To the Armenians, a loss of any part of their heritage, culture, or country is a loss of significant magnitude. No single loss is more meaningful than another to people who have suffered so many losses over the last century.

In 1995, I was struck by the vast differences between the Armenians and Americans. On the one hand their historical memory provided a sense of depth and lineage America lacks. On the other hand the Armenian people carry a heavy burden. This was obvious to an American on temporary assignment. I visualized every Armenian carrying extra weight about their shoulders, the weight of being an Armenian in a hostile world and of past oppression, death, and destruction. The weight of their ancestors and children. Yet because of culture, each person carries their share of the weight. Nobody carries for anyone else.

Now I understand the seriousness of the Armenian people and
why they resented comparison to outsiders. It was clear why it was so important I listen and learn about their heritage. They wanted me to be of and not simply in Armenia. I was invited into their lives, quite an honor indeed. However, in 1995 I was still too much the modern tourist to fully understand the privilege they were offering.

Armenian Life

I was a visitor in a strange and foreign culture. As such, I did not have a frame of reference by which to understand their daily life. I did not share the "common-sense understandings" (Giddens, 1993, p. 96), "mutual knowledge" (Schiffer, 1972, p. 42), or "stock of knowledge" (Schutz, 1932/1967, p. 8) existing among people in a mutually familiar cultural context.

Because I have a different cultural frame of reference my experience and interpretation of Armenian life developed through the "creative process in which the observer, through penetrating an alien mode of existence, enriches his or her own self-knowledge (by) coming to grasp the perspectives of others" (Gadamer, 1960 cited in Giddens, 1993, p. 62). Starting out as a naive and suspicious tourist, I slowly developed new knowledge about Armenian life.

In this section I recall a variety of events to demonstrate my initial reaction to new cultural experiences. I include events as mundane as sleeping, language, and translators to my experience of local living conditions. This text alternates between lived exper-
Science and the professional literature. The interpretation and application of the professional literature is framed and informed by my lived experience as I recorded it in my journal.

**Armenian Time**

Johnson (1995) states that between April 1 to April 10,

I can’t sleep, up until nearly 6 am with jet lag. Finally fell asleep and overslept. Our driver from UNDP arranged to pick us up at 11 am and we made him wait. Then we discovered he had his wife and kids in the car. Great way to make a first impression. (p. 15)

My sleep patterns are interesting. I’ve been sleeping only a few hours, mostly in one and two hour blocks. I feel good during the day, but I am up all night. I must be running on adrenaline. It will be interesting to see how long it takes me to adjust. (p. 23)

The strange sleep habits continue. Its now 3:35 am and I am wide awake. It seems I have developed a pattern, sleep from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., then stay awake all night. I haven’t gotten tired during the day, so I guess it doesn’t really matter. (p. 25)

Good news, I slept from 7 p.m. to about 3:30 a.m. tonight. Been up ever since. The skyline at dawn is great. The vision of Mt. Ararat this morning is beyond description, almost majestic. No wonder the Armenians feel so strongly about it, it has an unusual, almost indescribable aura that Noah or God is near it’s peaks (p. 37).

I finally slept and slept very well. I went to sleep around 5 p.m. and woke up at 6:30 a.m.. Maybe this means my body has finally arrived in Yerevan. (p. 49)

It took ten nights for my physical body to arrive in Armenia, since they are eight hours ahead of my Eastern Standard body clock. The time difference was an obstacle to my emotional and cognitive adjustment. Physically, I did not notice a problem. I was never
tired; at least I never felt tired. In fact, I had no time for
tired because there was always something to see, hear, feel, or do.
My mind was a constant blur; intoxicated by the excitement of this
new experience. I remember being physically exhausted twice: the
night of my arrival and the first night I slept through the night.
In the end, when my body needed sleep, I slept.

The time difference affected me in more insidious ways than
simply the loss of sleep. These issues were a barrier to my adjust­
ment. For example I found myself comparing the time between Armenia
and home as if I was a slave to some unconscious desire. I added
and subtracted time to determine what was happening at home at any
particularly moment. For example if it was 9 a.m. in Yerevan I
quickly figured it was 1 a.m. at home and I would be asleep. Intern­
ally I thought, "If I were home I would be at work, asleep, watch­ing television, etc." In effect I had not left home. As such, I
lived in two worlds: the world of my body and immediate conscious­
ness and the home in my mind.

This is a sign of homesickness; or the deep desire to belong
someplace other than the present (Bauman, 1995). While Bauman says
the home in homesickness is a longing for a better future state, my
experience of homesickness differed. It referred to past and future
states of being. I considered what I normally did in the past at a
particular time or what I would do in the future at a particular
time. My home, therefore, was an idealized past or future in some­
place other than where I was at the moment.
The issue of time also presented other struggles. Time, and being on time means something different in Armenia than in America. On time, in Armenia means when and if we arrive. Most meetings were scheduled for a day, not a time (i.e., We can meet tomorrow). It was commonplace to sit several hours waiting for a meeting to begin. Perhaps the person with whom I was supposed to meet did not arrive, or they were talking to someone else. Whatever the reason for the delay, waiting was my pastime.

Early in my trip this caused a lot of anxiety. I got frustrated about late starting meetings, people not showing up, and what little could be accomplished in a day because of their indifference toward time. It felt like I was running in a vat of molasses up to my waist. I was exerting psychic and physical energy to make progress but getting nowhere. Wearing a wrist watch was a curse. Knowing the time only increased my anxiety about time. Before this trip, I was not obsessed with timeliness, or so I thought. My Armenian experience exposed this ugly truth about myself.

I learned first-hand how obsessed American culture is with time. Time is our commodity; it is what Americans sell. The economic value of individual time ultimately dictates social class. It determines, at least for the working and professional classes, their worth and status. It is the driving force in social life because Americans have the means to capitalize on time. Most people have access to public transportation or private vehicles running on passable streets and roads. American life is convenient by design, a
necessity in a mobile society. It is characterized by drive-through shopping, eating, and banking. Americans are equipped with mobile telephones, electronic pagers, and laptop computers so they never fall out of touch. People shop by television, on the Internet, and by catalog. Work is designated by shift and a certain number of hours per week. Everybody has an hourly rate. In America, time is money and therefore, life. For this American in Armenia, this expectation made my life miserable.

I attributed this phenomenon to the culture and people. I blamed Armenian apathy towards time on their communist past and a resultant lack of self-initiative. I even participated in the American critique of the Armenian worker: Armenians are lazy and unmotivated and lack a business culture. There is no possible way they can be successful capitalists on their time schedule. I am embarrassed to admit I made an inaccurate assessment which led to a wrong-headed fundamental attribution error. I assumed the Armenian treatment of time was the result of internal personal traits and not the difficult social circumstances in which they lived and worked (Jones, 1990; Meyers, 1996), as the following excerpt demonstrates. Johnson (1995) states:

Next stop was the social work office [Yerevan State University], where the director could not make it to the office for some strange reason (emphasis added). I sat there for a few minutes, left my card, and then left. I need to make another appointment with the director. My host says the director is not good and still a loyal communist. Oh well, I told her that in our country conservatives think social workers are communist too, so she fits right into the profession. (pp. 53-54).
It never occurred to me the Armenians had practical reasons for considering time and being on-time irrelevant. There I was amidst the wreckage that was once a thriving community and I ignored its presence and impact on the people. Even in good times Armenians do not value time to the extent Americans do. However, in 1995 they could not worry about it given the social and economic conditions. There was nothing I could do in their country to make life timely like at home. I learned that not even a time-obsessed American could make meetings on time. I had to change or go crazy worrying about timeliness. Needless to say I stopped wearing a wrist watch and grew amazingly comfortable--almost peaceful--after eliminating temporal concerns from daily life. I (Johnson, 1995) got the message.

Of course, we started the planning day very late, near 10 a.m. This was primarily due to the transportation problems around the city. Some people travel longer than the meetings last. Believe it or not, we had 19 of the 21 participants show up on Friday for the one-hour follow-up meeting. I expected five to seven at most. It took most of these people two hours just to get here. We started late, but who can fault them given how difficult it is to get from one place to another. This attendance shows their level of commitment and involvement to the youth center. (pp. 84, 93-94)

Another element of time in Armenian life was caused by the energy blockade. As such there were two categories of time: a time for living and a time for dying. Living-time happened during hours with light and heat. Armenians lived in the day and during the spring, summer and fall seasons. This is when life carried on in a constant struggle to prepare for night and winter. Armenians had to accomplish everything they wanted and needed during these hours and
days. It was all they had in 1995.

On the other hand, Darkness and cold--night and winter--signified death-time. I define this time as either a physical death of the body or a virtual death of the soul. When night fell or winter began, Armenians essentially ceased living life as they or anyone else in the civilized world defined it. Old people, the sick, and babies died in record numbers during winter. Those lucky enough (a matter of perspective, I suppose) to survive lived through a hell of unimaginable proportions. They died perhaps the worse possible death of all; the death of spirit. Armenians lived life ruled by these extremes. They were either alive or dead, in real and/or spiritual terms. There was little in-between.

**Electricity**

Johnson (1995) remarks in his journal on electricity. He states that

In the hotel (emphasis added) I have electricity sometimes [approximately eight hours per day] and I am supposed to have hot water. However, it is now Monday night [two days after arrival] and I haven't had a bath since Friday at home, since the hot water has not worked. Baby wipes keep me clean, but certainly not what I am used to. I am able to wash my hair in the tub with cold water. (p. 10).

Good news, I took my first hot bath since Friday and it was great. I felt clean for the first time. I hope this becomes an everyday occurrence. (p. 23)

Thank God for small miracles, second day in a row with a hot bath. It is amazing what one celebrates in a country like this. I wonder if the hot water (actually mildly-warm water) will last? (p. 25)

I guess my luck ran out on the water. Haven't had hot water
in three days. Been washing my hair in Jermuk [carbonated mineral water] for three days now. Feels like I am on a very long camping trip. (p. 37)

It is interesting I had the courage to complain because the eight hours of electricity and off-and-on again hot water was a luxury compared to everyone else living in Yerevan at the time. In fact, most days the hotel electricity worked twenty-four hours. The rest of the city was dark twenty-two hours per day. At night I looked over large areas of the sprawling city and saw nothing; no lights, people, or movement. Where rows of six, eight, and twelve story apartment buildings stand during the day, only darkness prevailed at night.

Many nights I was awake until dawn writing my account of the previous day's events. Around 2 a.m., all the lights in the city would suddenly turn on. The lights would stay on for an hour and then darkness would befall the area again. On Monday April 10 I looked from my eighth floor balcony into the darkness and remarked to my journal, "Right now there are 1.5 million people in the dark" (Johnson, 1995, p. 52). I understated the truth. The rest of the country was even darker than Yerevan. Actually, there were more than 3 million people in the dark. Johnson (1995) goes on to say,

I went home after this and spent night quietly in the room. Without street lights and power not to mention money, nothing happens here after dark. Nobody is out at night. The place goes dead at dark. I was told not to go out at night at risk of being robbed. I'm not sure of this yet, I was also told not to drink the water. (p. 52)
Creative Solutions

Electricity was a major problem in Armenia. Beginning in 1991, Yerevan averaged two hours of electricity per day and rural Armenia had little or no electricity at all. Adding to the difficulty, nobody could predict which two hours it would be turned on. Therefore, whenever the lights came on, whether it was 9 a.m. or 2 a.m., people had to complete their daily work. Cooking, cleaning, laundry, whatever they needed requiring electricity needed to be accomplished. Armenians had no normal routine and therefore, no ontological security (Giddens, 1991). A full night's sleep was not an option. Yet the Armenians never complained. The most demonstrative reaction they offered was a slight shoulder shrug and saying, "What can be done? It is our life right now."

Under these conditions this generation of Armenians learned to survive like their ancestors. Living conditions most of us—including myself—find unlivable, they find tolerable. They accept the lack of light and heat as their most current burden in life. Amidst the turmoil, Armenians found ways to improvise in order to improve their immediate living conditions. For example, one family rigged their electrical appliances to run by car battery. All around their flat, car batteries sat next to appliances in metal trays. While this did not solve the problem, the children could occasionally watch television and the family had lights for more than two hours per day.

However, the strategy I found most interesting is called left
lining. This is the most ingenious and creative solution the Ar­menians devised during these times. Many people had a left line in their flat. I normally learned about it when someone inadvertently stepped on the wire, turning out the lights. A left line is a piece of electrical wire strung from a government building or other facil­ity with electricity to a private home. For a relatively small fee a person could hire someone to left-line their flat. It is quite simple to accomplish.

As it turned out, my hotel was one of the hottest left-line sites in Yerevan, because it had a generator. One day I was curious so I climbed to the roof to see for myself if the practice was true. Indeed, I found at least forty lines attached in haphazard fashion to the hotel generator, running over the edge of the building to­wards the neighborhood below. Across the city I saw open and badly wired electrical transformers with attached wires coming from dif­ferent directions. These electrical boxes were dangerous. At night it was not unusual to see raw electrical current jumping from wires in these boxes creating an ominous fireworks display for passersby. Left-lining is an unsafe but necessary solution in a country enve­loped in darkness for the past four years.

Naturally left lines were illegal too. To hide their lights from the street people put thick curtains on their windows. To the casual observer it was nearly impossible to know homes were lit. Yet, left lining was not a secret nor was it hidden very well. In plain view electrical wires ran over roofs, onto balconies, and
along the ground into electrical boxes on the outside of buildings. Once I learned about left-lining it seemed like I saw electrical wires running everywhere. Before I was informed about the secret I never noticed all of the wires. Obviously, the police did not enforce this law.

Armenians did not worry about the illegality of left-lining. During the communist period they learned creative ways around the law. Within the Soviet system of laws and rules Armenians prided themselves on working the system to their benefit, not unlike many Americans. Armenians viewed this as individual initiative, not law-breaking. Much of daily life was spent acquiring goods and services "outside" the communist system via the black market. Left-lining was no different yet only a relative few took part in this practice. While some creative people were able to light their homes the vast majority were in the dark for all but two hours per day.

**Nuclear Power**

Where did the electricity disappear to? The current situation actually began during an environmental protest in the early days of the Gorbachev regime. This protest conspired with the earthquake, Nagorno-Karabakh war, energy blockade, and the loss of the Soviet economy to blanket Armenia in darkness and destroy its economy along with any semblance of the life they once lived. Any one of these events would have been difficult for most countries. In Armenia they all occurred over a three year period.
In 1976 the Soviet Union constructed a dual reactor nuclear power plant in Medzamor, a small town located less than 25 miles from Yerevan. It has a similar design as the ill-fated Chernobyl Nuclear Power plant in the Ukraine. Beginning in the mid-1980's local organizers started a grass-roots environmental campaign aimed at shutting-down Medzamor and the Narit chemical plant, a major rubber and chemical factory important to the Soviet war machinery (Malkasian, 1996, pp. 134-135). The plants were responsible for making Yerevan "the most polluted republic capital. . .(sic). . . ranked among the ten most polluted cities in the USSR" (Malkasian, 1996, p. 134).

Medzamor generated more than 25 percent of Armenia's energy. It was closed during the winter of 1989 (Malkasian, 1996, p. 193) amidst fears of environmental damage. However, another reason for its closure was the fear another major earthquake would strike unstable Armenia causing an Armenian Chernobyl disaster (Malkasian, 1996, Verluise, 1995). This is a realistic fear because Armenia is an active seismic zone.

When I arrived the Armenian people were rethinking their decision to close the plant. Pragmatics--and four years of darkness and cold--was winning out over the environment. I commented on this in my journal (Johnson, 1995) although I did not know all the facts at that time:

There is a nuclear power plant on the outskirts of Yerevan (Medzamor) that was closed in 1989 because of the earthquake. Today I stopped outside the plant's abandoned gates and gazed at the tall hour-glass reactors standing idle in the April
sunshine. It looked like a picture of Chernobyl. Inside is Armenia's best hope for light.

I met a nuclear power expert in Yerevan who is working with a team from the United Nations to reopen the nuclear plant. While there is a lot of pressure from Green groups to keep it closed, nuclear power will provide Yerevan with 24 hours of electricity. This is a vital first step in restoring some sense of normalcy to the population and allow factories, business, schools, etc., to resume operation.

According to the man (what was his name again?) this plant is not, as is widely publicized, a Chernobyl-type reactor. That's good, if it is true. While I am against the use of nuclear power because of its destructive potential—although I admit I don't know the first thing about it—in this case I wholeheartedly support its use to help these people. Of course, this is easy for me to say, I don't live here. Any leaks or major accidents won't kill me directly. (p. 13)

In July 1995 one of the two reactors—the newer one—reopened. By 1997 most of Yerevan and the surrounding region had electricity although people must now pay an electric bill (Johnson, 1997). Yet the social and environmental issues remain the same with one major exception: in the 1980's Armenia had not lived four years without electricity or heat. The only protesting in 1995 was by non-Armenian green groups, none of whose members actually lived in Yerevan. In reality nothing else has changed. Armenia is still an earthquake zone and engaged in a conflict with Azerbaijan which could erupt into war any moment. Yet, the Armenian people overwhelmingly favor the reopening Medzamor. I do not blame them for being pragmatic.

Is it possible for Americans to understand what this life is like? Perhaps the generation of the Great Depression can; I do not know. I could not have understood it had I not traveled and lived in Armenia. Had I been asked two days before I arrived in Yerevan,
I am sure I would have said Medzamor should remain closed. The Armenians would just have to find another way to generate electricity. Yet as my journal demonstrates less than three days after I arrived, having lived without electricity and hot water for a fraction of the time the locals did and witnessing a county in total darkness, my attitude changed. I think it is telling it took Armenia so long to reconsider their earlier decision.

In the United States when the electricity shuts off during a storm or the furnace stops working in winter or for that matter, if cable television goes out during a big moment in a football game, we holler and scream. In the rare instance where power is lost for several hours or even days, it is grounds for protest. Interestingly, as I write this a major early season ice storm knocked out the electricity for thousands of people in my home area. Reports say the power will not return for two or three days. This is major news here. Local television news spent nearly fifty percent of the 11 p.m. news broadcast covering the storm and the potential hardships associated with the loss of electricity. I guess life is a matter of perspective. For a moment Americans experienced the Armenian daily lifestyle and did not like it at all. What would happen if the power company announced that electricity would not return until spring?

Americans have the luxury of opposing nuclear power: our resources seem endless. We come to expect the basics—heat and light—will work. Yet, to Armenians light and heat are not basics, but
luxuries. Imagine a morning in America without a hot shower and coffee. It is unthinkable.

Physical Environment in Yerevan

On my first night in the country I stared outside into the darkness unable to see anything beyond the wooden railing of the balcony. I had an uneasy feeling not knowing what was outside. It was so dark I could not tell if I was "looking" at an open field or block of city buildings. As morning approached I heard a rooster crow from somewhere in the darkness. I had no idea what to expect. The ride from the airport offered little about the city's appearance. I was a curious tourist waiting for the sun to answer my questions.

As the sun rose on my first morning in Yerevan the ground below appeared in shadows. When the morning light covered the landscape I got my first glance at Yerevan (Johnson, 1995).

The living conditions of the people are sad. Outside my hotel window is the cund neighborhood. I assume this is the oldest part of town, dating back some 2800 years. It looks like pictures I have seen from the poorer parts of Calcutta. Broken down houses, some underground, and unfinished buildings. People are living in basements. There are several families living in the same household. All of the apartment buildings I can see from the balcony are old and ill-maintained. Foundations and walls are crumbling, probably because of poor quality Soviet construction materials. It is so poor and ruined it is beyond verbal description. Looks a lot like the aftermath of an earthquake. Mt. Ararat stands in the distance just above this sad sight, making it quite an ironic scene: in the same visual frame is the poverty of the cund district and the Armenian symbol of Turkish oppression. (pp. 10-11)

Rock, stone, and brick was strewn everywhere in Yerevan. There
were rock piles, broken cement, and bricks stacked along side the streets, between buildings, and laying across sidewalks. This city is either falling apart or being built. Frankly it is hard to tell the difference. Of course, Armenia rests on a mountain made of rock and the city is primarily built from rock. As such, they have a different conception of rock than Americans. Armenians appreciate rock, they trust it’s strength as a foundation and accept it as part of everyday life. In America, rocks are considered litter; a sign of poverty and/or a disgusting lack of concern for appearances. Besides, rocks and stones ruin the lawnmower blade.

I learned to appreciate Armenian rock, especially what they were able make from it. Armenia has beautiful, ancient churches built from rock. I came to like the stark and simple, yet dramatic Armenian architecture. Yet after thirty-six hours of travel with no sleep and several hours of eager anticipation muted by total darkness I did not understand the attraction to rock. I was simply shocked by the appearance of the Yerevan landscape.

The Cund neighborhood sits on a sloping hill with homes literally standing on top of each other. This neighborhood looks more like overturned earth than houses. I was not sure whether this was Yerevan or the remains of the 1988 earthquake zone. The skyline is littered with idle construction cranes. In every direction they stand next to partially constructed buildings. Walk down almost any street and one cannot help but notice a large number of unfinished construction projects. At some sites, worker’s tools wait for their
return. People said the work crews simply walked away when the
Soviet Union collapsed because the money for these projects collaps-
ed along with the economy.

Most store front buildings are empty with broken windows and
missing doors. The once thriving main business district is deserted.
Stores have goods but the selection is scant. Meat is nearly impos-
sible to find except in the one store which carries Western goods
for foreigners working in Armenia. Prices in this store exceed the
normal Armenian budget. Overall, Yerevan is a city in trouble; try-
ing to survive hard times. The streets and public parks look de-
serted and the depressed body and facial expressions of the people
in and around Yerevan tell the story of their misery and struggle.

I hate to admit it but my immediate reaction was based upon
appearance. This neighborhood, along with the rest of Yerevan,
looked poor and rundown; more like the site of a disaster than a
capital city. From my perspective this neighborhood must be where
the poor people in Yerevan live. My hotel was in the ghetto. Yet I
had no direct evidence to support this assertion. My opinion was
based on observation from a distance which I compared to neighbor-
hoods in the United States. In essence I made conclusions about
Armenia, a country I knew nothing about, based on stereotypes about
neighborhood appearance and its relation to social class in the
United States. What is worse, I did not know if there is a direct
relationship between these two variables in Western social scienti-
fic literature. Even if there is, it is ludicrous to apply informa-
tion from and about the West to Armenia that I did not even search for the information for this project. I do not want to be tempted to write about it.

I was attracted to this neighborhood in the way MacCannell (1976) believes modern tourists are drawn to social problems. My involvement was limited by distance. I lived in a hotel with power, had enough money to afford what I needed and a driver and translator at my disposal. Therefore I had the freedom to live the Armenian experience up to a point and then retreat safely into the safety of the hotel. I had one other advantage, I knew I was returning home to the United States. This was only temporary for me while it is permanent for the Armenian people.

I wanted to get closer to the Armenian people by living their experience. This was my original intention, but was it possible? I was a visitor on a relatively short trip with a controlled itinerary. I was on a UNDP mission which kept me somewhat distant from Armenia by design, although I did not see this at the time. I believed--actually, I convinced myself--I was close to the people and their experience; that I had gone native, as it were. I thought I was more than a tourist. Clearly I was not.

Lake Sevan

One Saturday in April the Resident Representative of the UNDP in Yerevan gave me a tour of one of the most beautiful areas I have ever seen: Lake Sevan. It is located about 25 miles from Yerevan,
although because of poor road conditions it seemed a lot further away. Armenians consider Lake Sevan a "jewel" of their country. Surrounded by beautiful mountains, it was the place where Armenians took their holidays during communist times. It was a favored resting place for communist leaders, writers and artists, and other elites from across the former Soviet Union. Because of various discussions with people before I arrived that day, I was prepared for the scenery but not to witness the aftermath of four years of social and economic change, as the following (Johnson, 1995) journal entry documents:

Lake Sevan is over 40 miles long and located above 14,000 feet. It is beautiful, with deep blue water that reminds me of the ocean around the Bahamas. The lake is surrounded by snow-capped high mountains. This place looks like a postcard, no matter which direction I look. I understand this lake has been drained over 75 feet to feed a hydroelectric plant. I could see the white lines on the rock where the water level was before the run-off. They have stabilized the lake level now by diverting another river into it. However, this introduced foreign species of fish causing irreparable harm to the trout population. Lake Sevan is supposedly renowned for having the biggest and best tasting fresh water trout in the world. Not anymore. I am told they stabilized the water level and it beginning to gain ground. (pp. 12-13)

The white streaks on the face of the mountains surrounding the lake looked like a giant bathtub ring, providing stark evidence of the communist's lack of environmental concern. The same thing happened to Lake Yerevan, located just outside the city. Because of poor environmental policies this lake too was destroyed (Suny, 1993). According to Johnson (1995),

Lake Yerevan, located just outside of town on the way to Echmiadzin, is completely empty or water. It was drained because of chemical pollution that made it a danger to swimmers
and for drinking. There was a huge, empty crater in the earth where a lake once was. (p. 12)

Lake Sevan is not the only casualty of an absent Soviet environmental policy. Not only was Lake Yerevan drained because it was dangerous, but water from this poisonous lake was used to irrigate crops. The Armenian people ingested food irrigated with poisonous water caused by chemical dumping and DDT runoff from the surrounding land. This was not unusual. Later in this trip I visited the dead zone in Belarus caused by the Chernobyl nuclear accident. All of Belarus consumed radiated food for several years because the Soviets continued production in the area and shipped the poisonous food across the region, without telling the people about their practices.

Just outside the city of Sevan at the northern-most point of the lake is the main resort area. I saw a church sitting high atop a hill at the end of an isthmus stretching into the lake. This isthmus was once an island. When the lake level was drained the island turned into a narrow finger of land. This picturesque area was deserted. It was early spring and a time when it should have been bustling with activity. However, Lake Sevan was quiet. There are rows of unfinished dachas. Rusting and decaying buildings now stand where people once vacationed. After my reaction to the drab and dreary Yerevan landscape, I discovered the beauty of Armenia. Unfortunately, I was enjoying it alone. In more than two hours I saw only five people. They were part of a small wedding taking place at the former communist writer’s sanatorium located a short distance
down the hill from the church. In the journal entry below (Johnson, 1995), I recall my impressions of that day:

Today, the place (Lake Sevan) looks like a scene from a Mad Max movie, completely deserted after a nuclear explosion. The buildings are falling apart and there are no people. On the drive out here I saw large factories and collective farms, once productive, now completely empty and ruined. It is the most surreal feeling, being here. During communist times, these people lived a good life compared to now. The problem for these struggling people now is that in a space of four years, they can now see what they used to have only now they cannot have these things. (pp. 43-45)

Lake Sevan represents yet another part of Armenian life ruined by the past four years. Nothing is untouched and no part of life was the same as it was before 1991. Everything they once had is now gone or out of reach. There was no longer time or energy for a holiday and even if there was the people could no longer afford it.

**Streets and Sidewalks**

Yerevan was a dangerous place in 1995, but not for the reason one might think. The people never posed a threat; I never felt like a target for criminals. In fact I felt safer walking in Yerevan than on many streets in my neighborhood, day or night. No, Yerevan was dangerous because of the potholes. As I describe in the journal entry below (Johnson, 1995), I met a sidewalk pothole up close and personally on Easter Sunday.

Today I twisted my ankle and knee walking from the Metro station. I stepped in one of those monster potholes in the sidewalk and twisted it from the tip of my toes to my right knee. I was able to walk it off fine at the time, but it hurts badly tonight and is very swollen. They have no ice in this country, so I am of luck. (p. 76) I have really been hobbling today due to the ankle sprain that occurred last night.
Really did it well. . . . Black/Blue on both sides, in and out. Whole foot swollen. (p. 82)

A two by three foot hole in the middle of the sidewalk near Republic Square swallowed my right foot. I was walking home from dinner when I spotted a hole directly ahead in the middle of the sidewalk. I stepped to my right to avoid it but instead my foot landed on the edge of an adjoining hole. Down the side I tumbled. All my weight landed directly on top of my rolled-over ankle. There were no doctors, no ice (no electricity for freezing), and no help. I managed to walk home (approximately 3 miles) in minimum pain. I did not take a taxi because I could not give the driver instructions. That night, less than twelve hours before I was to facilitate a two-day community planning seminar, my foot swelled and became grossly discolored. I could not stand up.

In Yerevan it seemed like there were more holes than concrete on the sidewalks and streets. To make walking even more interesting the sidewalks were littered with open sewer drains. Most of the steel drain covers were missing leaving a series of treacherous holes dropping at least six feet straight down. Walking and driving was an adventure in skill and dexterity. Night was an especially dangerous time to walk. The few people who did (including myself) carried a small flashlight pointed at the ground as an early warning system.

The sidewalks were safe compared to the street and road conditions, and the norms pertaining to the relationship between drivers and pedestrians (Johnson, 1995):
The roads are crumbling. There are potholes the size of craters making driving hazardous. We had to literally drive in a crossing pattern over the road to miss them. The roads may as well be out. (pp. 43-44). I saw potholes today that appeared to be 30 feet across and three feet deep. On some trips it seems we spend more time on the opposite side of the road than our own. It's also pedestrians beware. These drivers just drive, full speed and it's the pedestrian's job to get out of the way. Of course the street lights are out because of the electricity shortage. Cars just go where and when they want to. Several people said that even if the street lights came back on now, nobody would obey them. They have been out of order for four years. The Armenians have developed their own system of driving rules, primarily using their horns. I am OK with the driving, mainly because I survived the airplane flight. (pp. 13-14).

There was a small tree growing inside one pothole in the middle of the street near Republic Square. That is how treacherous the roads were. However, after the airplane ride I was not bothered by the zigzag driving pattern although I am glad I did not have to drive. It took a while to get used to crossing the street on foot and riding in a car without traffic signals. Oh yes, I forgot to mention there were no traffic signals. It took me a couple of days to figure this out. I guess I assumed they continued to work even without electricity. Talk about taking certain things for granted! Remember this is a city with 1.5 million people with many cars, not to mention buses and trolleys.

Yerevan is home to over 70 percent of the nation's automobiles. Between 1960 and 1985 the number of private vehicles shot up twenty-five times despite the new subway in 1981 and plentiful public transportation (Malkasian, 1996). By 1995 the streets were packed with cars, buses, and electric trolleys. And, like I said above there were no traffic signals. Interestingly, I did not wit-
ness a car accident in the six weeks I was in Yerevan. Drivers
developed a common language of the road with their horns. One short
tap on the horn signaled an approaching driver. Longer horn-sound-
ing signaled turns. Because of the holes driving lanes were not an
issue. Drivers swerved all over the road while blowing their horn
to miss holes and oncoming traffic. Luckily they did this with
consistent deftness.

Crossing the street on foot was a far riskier endeavor. Ped-
estrians do not have the right-of-way, automobiles do. Walking
across streets is survival of the fittest and cars are more fit for
survival than a walking pedestrian. Without traffic signals it was
nearly impossible to know when it was safe to cross the street. In
fact, it was never safe by American standards. On one occasion I
stood at an intersection for nearly fifteen minutes waiting for
traffic to clear while the Armenian people simply ventured into the
street, dodging cars in order to cross. I felt like a fool. Before
long I too began crossing the street with the same determination and
abandon as the Armenians. More than once I was chased to the curb
by an oncoming car or trolley bus.

I discovered how much I missed a sense of order, the type
which comes from familiar rules, laws, and agreed upon social norms
to determine how daily life should proceed. In the early days of
the trip I experienced Yerevan as disorderly, anarchistic and ir-
 rational. It took time to develop new routines. I believed I was
lost in a city—among a people—without rule and order; uncivilized
by American standards. I felt like I was in the line of fire crossing the street and dodging land mines walking the sidewalks. Similar to other aspects of daily life, traveling forced me into a state of constant awareness of my surroundings. I could not relax lest I be swallowed by a pothole, trampled by a crowd of street-crossing Armenians or run over by a trolley bus. When I eluded the holes, people, cars, and buses I was almost run-over by a bicycle.

As I relaxed and began to notice the environment I saw the comfort in which the Armenian people handled the dangers of daily travel. They were not anarchistic, uncivilized, or unorganized people. In fact, they were calm. This was their routine; their rule of order. To them everything that occurred during the daily commute was rational. The dangerous daily commute was not dangerous at all, but commonplace. It simply was not commonplace to me. Compared to Armenia, American travel is rational. As disorderly as they looked to me I must have appeared timid and afraid to them. I was a tourist among locals trying to figure out how to get from one location to another without being injured or killed. The Armenians were normal and I was out of place.

By the middle of my second week I no longer noticed the uncivilized chaos. In fact after I returned home a car nearly hit me when I tried to cross the street against oncoming traffic. I believe my meeting with the pothole on Easter Sunday occurred because I relaxed in my new environment. I grew comfortable with the conditions and forgot to watch where I was walking. In other words, it has
happened at home, too. My sore ankle was not Armenia's fault, but my own.

Armenian Winter

How can I adequately describe despair and desperation? Are there any words in the English language to capture my interpretation of Armenian winters between 1991 and 1995? In America, for those of us who live where it includes snow, ice, and cold weather, winter can be a dark and dreary season. Yet for most Americans, except the desperately poor and homeless, normal life continues. Businesses remain open and schools in-session. Social life and recreational opportunities abound. One can attend movies, opera, theater, and sporting events in the relative comfort of a heated and well-lit building. We arrive at our destination by heated automobile after driving on plowed and salted streets. When the streets are not cleaned in time, Americans call the local road commission to complain. We expect life to continue normally; nothing else is acceptable.

However, winter can also be a difficult time for Americans. It occasionally disrupts normal life. Snow and ice make the roads temporarily impassable, the electricity may go out during a storm, social and professional events are occasionally canceled and, depending on the air temperature or wind-chill factor, moving around outside is uncomfortable. Also, we might have cold toes and fingers and energy bills usually increase during winter. In extreme cir-
cumstances nature is fraught with danger. Freezing conditions, avalanches, and accidents can turn winter into a hazardous season.

For some people winter causes emotional turmoil. These people--60 percent to 90 percent of whom are women according to the American Psychological Association--develop a mood disorder precipitated by the change of season from fall to winter. Called "Mood Disorder-Seasonal Pattern Specifier" (APA, 1994, p. 389), the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, fourth edition (DSM-IV) describes this disorder as a "major depressive episode" (p. 389) whose onset and remission corresponds to winter (p. 389).

While the DSM-IV claims it is only related to major depressive episodes, the "presentation" may also describe seasonal depressive episodes that "do not meet the criteria" for a major depressive episode (p. 389). In other words, in modern American society when a person feels depressed during the winter it could indicate the presence of a mental disorder despite the fact normal routines continue with slight modification.

I wonder what the Armenians would say about this? Winters between 1991 and 1995 were dreadful, especially the winters of 1992 and 1993. When Armenians speak about those years, their pain fills the room. From November to the middle of March Armenians experience social death. Their days, and lives, are dark and bitterly cold. From late December through February temperatures often fall below zero Fahrenheit. Without heat or light there is no way to escape. People live in three or four layers of clothing. It is unthinkable
to consider changing or wearing less.

To cope, families move in together. Entire apartment build­ings huddle together in one and two room flats to create heat through bodily presence. Often, the only light is generated by candles. Those lucky enough to have kerosene stay somewhat warmer but their lives are still uncomfortable, at best. During winter life is unbearable, boring, and cold yet they pull together, as the follow­ing series of journal entries (Johnson, 1995) demonstrate:

The family of four live in a very small flat. All sleep in the same room. In the winter, the husband's brother and his family--two more adults and one child--move into the flat. Seven people in two rooms [one is the kitchen]. This means they essentially live in one room about 10 feet by 20 feet in size. (p. 47)

The flat is nice and well kept with four rooms [one bedroom, living room, kitchen and bath]. I cannot imagine winter though, closed into one room without heat, literally freezing, without electricity. They demonstrated how they close down the apartment during the winter to cut-down the cold the best they could. (p. 78)

These people have a comfortable dacha, just outside Yerevan on the road to Lake Sevan. The brother, his wife and two children live here during spring, summer, and fall. In the winter, they all move--up to 12 people--into the family's eighth floor flat in one of those look-a-like Soviet era high rise build­ings. (p. 70)

It is hard to imagine what winter is like here. The family and friends in your building are all you have. There is no life outside the building--everything else in this society comes to a stop. That is the Armenian life in winter. It certainly helps explain the togetherness I have seen. The Armenians have literally become My brothers keeper. People rely for their lives on those closest to them. (p. 52)

The whole country shuts-down. Besides the schools; restaur­ants, theaters, and other social pursuits end. Nobody moves. When
the snow is deep the entire city is paralyzed. There is no money for snow removal therefore, Yerevan becomes one big snow drift for weeks on end.

It was difficult to get Armenians to discuss winter. This was their season of death, somehow worse than war. Winter was natural genocide aided and abetted by Turkey and Azerbaijan. The blockade turned winter into a physical and emotional killing field. As someone who knows Michigan winters well having lived there more than 40 years, trying to live without heat, light, or social outlet is unthinkable. I realize our ancestors lived this way, but this was hundreds of years ago before the rest of the world knew what electric light and heat could do for quality of life. In the modern age, having to survive winter like it was the seventeenth century is inhuman.

In the winter of 1995 kerosene and heaters were prevalent. What few resources were available for heating came by way of humanitarian aid to Armenia from the United States. People received their allotment of kerosene by exchanging coupons at various distribution points throughout the country. Yet, like most matters in Armenian life there were rumors of a conspiracy by American and local governmental officials to keep kerosene from the people. According to the rumor, most kerosene ended up on the black market or with government elites and other so-called special people before average citizens received their allotment. Therefore, the average Armenian did not receive enough kerosene to heat their homes throughout the
day and night. During previous winters, so I was told, kerosene was available but there were no kerosene heaters. According to this rumor the United States did not provide heaters, only the kerosene. I tried to get the Americans responsible for kerosene distribution to discuss these rumors, to no avail. This series of rumors confirmed the belief of Armenian citizens about widespread corruption in their government.

My translator often spoke about how her family coped with winter. When she talked about it pain overwhelmed her entire being. It was difficult to watch. She literally doubled-over in physical and psychic pain when she recalled, in agonizing detail, the long, cold, and lonely days and nights huddling with family and friends trying to stay physically warm and mentally alive. On several occasions she contemplated suicide. Sometimes anything was better than one more day of bitter cold and boredom. Johnson (1995) states, she will be one I think often about in the coming months, particularly as winter draws near. When she described her life in winter, I can still see the deep pain etched on her face and in her body posture, like she was punched in the stomach. I almost cry visioning those discussions. (p. 112).

Yet, the Armenian people find ways to survive. Perhaps its their culture or religion? Maybe it is their dogged determination not to allow their enemies the satisfaction of victory? Perhaps this is how people act when they are under siege? I am sure the answer includes part of all three theories. Yet, I witnessed their determination not to let their current living conditions beat them down. The Armenians were not going to be destroyed by what they saw as a
temporary condition. It was a time to demonstrate their strength as
a people.

Armenians blame Azerbaijan and Turkey for their plight. Their historical
desire to beat the Turks and Azerbaijanis developed through genocide, war, and suffering makes winter one more obstacle
in their path to victory. As such, the Armenian community turned in
on itself creating a form of "positive involution" (MacCannell, 1992,
p. 305) where the community "transformed its characteristics into
symbolic resources for its own future development" (p. 306). In
other words, contemporary pain is transformed into a resource used
to bolster their determination in the struggle for survival as a
people with a homeland. Their new nationalism became a positive re-
source from which their survival mentality was bolstered.

Armenians survive by placing the contemporary struggle within the context of their larger historical struggle to survive as a
nation. To the Armenians, winter hardship is a natural extension of
the historical battle against Azerbaijan and Turkey for their right
to exist independently in the world. They were, in effect, able to
connect their private troubles to public issues in a way that would
make C. Wright Mills proud.

My reaction to Armenian winter was different. I was sick
about it. I, too had a physical reaction to their stories. Yet, I
was also very curious. How could they survive winter without heat?
I heard the stories but, at first I could not believe them. Perhaps
they exaggerated their hardship? I got a sense Armenians do exag-
gerate, but mostly about the historical achievement and glory of Greater Armenia, not about hardship. If they did exaggerate, maybe I would have felt better.

The Armenians were not exaggerating. The people I spoke to lived these experiences. Others verified their stories by telling their own similar story about winter. My reaction? I felt guilty. Near the end of the trip I wrote, "My winters are ruined from this day forward. How can a day pass next winter when I won't think of my friends here" (Johnson, 1995, p. 113). Translated, I meant "how can I go home to my heat and light and not feel guilty?" My guilt indicated that I somehow felt responsible. But how?

In the never-ending progression of modernity, as an American I am partially responsible for their current condition. I am a citizen of the country that spent more than forty years exporting modernity's values to the east. In part, the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted from our efforts at, "world-wide containment and control moving always toward...one currency, one passport, one market, one government" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 5) by establishing modern values across the newly free east. The "(modernity's) firm resolve to establish itself on a world-wide basis" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 2) results in a form of neocolonialism designed to create new markets for American goods and, with the discovery of oil in the Caspian sea off the coast of Azerbaijan, new strategic locations for American corporations and military.

Additionally, Turkey is a strategic NATO ally of the United
States. We support—economically and militarily—the historical enemy of the Armenians, and the Armenians at the same time. More than once I was called upon by Armenian colleagues to account for my country’s foreign policy. Our humanitarian aid, in this context, is what Friere (1970/1993, p. 26) calls "false generosity." I witnessed the fruits of our victory in the Cold War and the paradox of our foreign policy in the region. For all this, I felt guilty and ashamed.

The effect of winter is determined by one’s social location and the perspective derived from that location. In America, we develop mood disorders. The lack of sunlight is enough to make some people ill. Normal life is disrupted to the extent some people cannot cope. Yet like I said earlier, winter barely disrupts American life. Perhaps we develop mood disorders because we have time for such things? Since life is normal and stable we have time to worry about our mood and the resources to seek help for such things. In America, normal winter is not life-threatening. Therefore, we get depressed.

Armenians do not have time for mood disorders. They simply try to survive winter. Their normal routines, already severely disrupted by the massive changes in their country, are obliterated when the snow flies and temperatures plunge. For the elderly, young children, and the sick winter is literally a time to die. For the rest of the Armenian people winter means virtual death. Only their religion, culture, and refusal to give in to their oppressors, both
human and natural, keeps them alive for another spring rebirth.

I wonder if this is what MacCannell (1976) was talking about?
I was an outsider, voyeuristically peering at a lifestyle which surely existed in another time in American history. There I was, discovering my heritage--my premodern ancestral past, as it were--by observing, listening, and learning how a foreign people survive ancient conditions at the end of the modern twentieth century. I felt like I was watching a movie about another time and place in the history of the world. Yet, there I was--in 1995--witnessing sheer collective human determination. Once again I wonder, would I--or we as a nation--have the same survival spirit if suddenly faced with the same conditions?

**My Impressions**

To demonstrate my overall impressions of the physical environment I offer--the following journal entry (Johnson, 1995). I believe it reflects my feelings about the overall physical conditions in Armenian in 1995:

Armenia and the other former soviet countries are experiencing oppressive poverty. But a strange poverty it is indeed. The Armenians had a good life not so long ago: and now they don't. It would be different if they had always been a poor society, but they weren't. Everyone has a recent memory of the past, when food, heat, electricity, and work was available and free. When the city was sparkling and cared for, trees grew and kids played in the beautiful parks. Today I saw pictures of Yerevan from ten years ago. This was a beautiful, modern looking city. Now, it is run-down, falling apart, and in disrepair. Weeds are overgrowing the sidewalks, trees are missing, the streets and buildings are crumbling under the weight of forced public neglect. Its as if a neutron bomb fell, killing all people while leaving the city intact with
nobody to take care of it. Weird. . . . one has to see it. (p. 45)

The Economy

When I arrived in Armenia its economy was in shambles. War, blockade, and the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in systemic unemployment and poverty. Between 1991 and 1993 Armenia lost 96 percent of its per capita income (Johnson, 1995, p. 19). The country's production and employment infrastructure collapsed. I heard unemployment statistics as low as "30 percent" and as high as "85 percent" (p. 12). The collapse of the Armenian economy corresponded with the end of Soviet communism. Normal life had come to a complete stop. Goods once received as a right of citizenship were now out of reach for everybody except people in organized crime or government officials. Most Armenians believed these groups were the same people.

Armenia is not an emerging country. As part of the former Soviet system they emerged in years past. Today the country is suffering through a difficult transition. Of course much of their trouble is caused by decisions and actions taken by the Armenian government during the past. Perhaps one could rationalize and say Armenia is suffering the hardships needed to develop a better life in the future. This is the "no pain, no gain" explanation favored by the West. However, explanation and rationalization do not help the average Armenian citizen's fragile psyche. In 1995 they were hungry, cold, and dark. They did not need explanation, the Armenian
people needed answers. Armenians could not afford to plan for the future because they might not live to see it.

Armenians are accustomed to having their daily needs met and now they go without. The comparison of the present to the past and its affect on its people was a major theme of my trip. The following journal entry (Johnson, 1995) summarizes several conversations with people over the course of six weeks:

Several people made interesting observations about the difference between communist times and now. Under communism, consumer goods could be acquired, partly because of state controlled prices and wages, but also because of personal friendships (black market?). Since stores were not profit-based, they provided goods to friends under the table.

In old times, goods were not displayed in stores. Customers had to ask the store owner for whatever they wanted, and then the owner would produce the requested goods or inform that they were out. This gave the store manager a small amount of personal power. The manager determined who received what on a daily basis. This was an important person in society. Although Armenia was communist, people had nice things, as long as they made the right connections.

Some goods are still available, but people cannot afford them. Prices have risen dramatically because of inflation. As such, the Armenians, used to having a good life, now cannot afford it. What's worse, now goods are displayed on store shelves forcing people to see what they cannot afford. One man told me that democracy is rubbing poverty in the face of the people. This has led to hopelessness, crime, and black market activities controlled by the mafia.

This state of affairs helps me understand why I have heard a not-so-quiet longing for the old days. This attitude is reasonable to expect from people who were relatively happy under communism. According to most Armenians I met, if freedom and democracy means starving and freezing, what's the point of it all? (p. 4)

Since 1991 over 800,000 people emigrated from Armenia to foreign lands looking for employment (Malkasian, 1996). Most went
to Russia or the United States. Adults abandoned their families and country in search of a better life. This total represents approximately 20 percent of the pre-1991 population of Armenia.

**Longing for Communism**

Many locals claimed the Armenians preferred communism over democracy. Early in my trip, this attitude tapped my negative stereotypes about communism and exposed my democracy first attitude. The Armenians spoke of the past in almost whimsical terms. They remembered the days when they had everything they needed. Their state wages provided enough rubles to take care of their families. One woman in particular spoke eloquently about this desire. I met her in my hotel where she worked as a floor attendant. Floor attendants worked 24 hour shifts on the hotel floor. They were responsible for the functioning of the floor, from greeting to cleaning.

According to Johnson (1985),

> they have a funny job here at the hotel - floor attendant. Her job is to stay on the hotel floor full time, over night. She checks us in, cleans the rooms, and keeps our room key. I was issued a written pass to prove I am staying here. The room key cannot leave the building. I wonder if this is a left over policy from communist times, to allow people to search my room while gone. It's a little disconcerting, but nothing so far has disappeared. Maybe some things are changing. (p. 14)

In this quotation, written on my third day in Yerevan, my anticommunist assumptions are embarrassingly evident. I assumed the worst indeed. The floor attendant position may simply be a courtesy for the customer on behalf of the hotel but I assumed her job was
surveillance. From my perspective--according to this journal passage--communists were, (a) still present; (b) untrusting of their guests; and, (c) thieves by nature. According to this mindset, real moral reform would happen only with a change to a democratic system. Naturally, if this ridiculous idea were true the crime rate in the United States would disappear. I guess this shows how well I remembered my anti-communist life-learning.

The purpose of the floor attendant was never explained to me. In the past she may have kept track of hotel guests. However these women were very helpful to me indeed. They helped when I needed directions, translation, and other menial things which occurred around the hotel. The languages used in the hotel were Armenian and Russian. There was no English anywhere. Often, the floor attendant's ability to speak broken English was critical. As a lost and alone tourist I relied on the floor attendant for help adjusting to the local environment.

Like I stated earlier, one of the floor attendants spoke at length about her desire for a return to communist times. In the journal entry below (Johnson, 1995), I recall one of our many conversations about the subject. In it, I include my American interpretation of her beliefs and the Armenian people:

Littee was a bright, 29 years old college graduate in psychology. She was very open about her positive feelings about the former communist times. Her feelings were primarily the result of her former ability to have food, nice clothing, and take vacations without having to work. She said the former economy provided a good, normal life for her and her friends and they didn't have to work. Now she was unable to have or do any of these things, and had to work at two jobs to sur-
vive. Her attitude about the past compared to the present poor conditions is a consistent theme I hear from many people in Yerevan. These people have no clue about how to operate or thrive in the new times (emphasis added). These nostalgic ideas represent a significant threat to the future of democracy and the success of any self-help or community grassroots project in this country. (p. 19)

How could Armenians want to return to communist times? Had they not just broken the chains of evil bondage by freeing themselves from a totalitarian nightmare which controlled their minds and sought to take over the world? My opinion was based on the assumption, of course, that communism was bad and Armenians could control their current quality of life. I blamed the victim in the same way American political leaders and conservatives blame the poor in America for their own poverty by accusing them of being lazy. This ideological position ignores the role social structure plays in determining class status.

In fact, the truth about the Armenian people is the opposite of what I wrote that day in my journal. Armenians knew well how to operate in new times, characterized not by democracy and freedom, but hunger, cold and darkness. Their current living conditions were not amenable to a be all you can be mentality. What little personal control they could exert in their lives was limited by the catastrophic conditions caused by environmental, political, and economic events of the scope and magnitude rarely witnessed in world history. These events made victims and survivors of the Armenians. It is only natural they would long for the past. Life was better during the communist period--haven't you ever wished for the good old days?
Listening to Armenians discuss the value of returning to the communist period clashed with my democratic life-learning. Early on I was compelled to argue the merits of democracy and capitalism, overlooking the painful truth: since the end of the communist period the Armenian people have been starving and freezing. It is impossible to rationally argue this point.

Armenians argued for a return to the familiar past and I for a progression to the prosperous future. As such, in effect the Armenians and myself wanted to be somewhere else. They were looking for their home of the past and I was looking for my home in the future. The Armenian argument for a return to the past and my argument against it was a mirror image of the same desire to return home. In an ironic turn of events we were both tourists trying to adjust to a foreign culture. The difference was I was visiting their country. As such, my desire to be home was easily explained. The Armenians however were in familiar-looking surroundings but were nowhere close to being home. Their life was quite unfamiliar to them.

People Watching

Johnson (1995) comments about the people:

The people are interesting. Based on my observation while passing by car and from the hotel balcony, the people not comfortable or used to poverty. They dress very well. The average Armenian man is always in a nice, modern suit with a tie and leather coat. The women wear dresses, skirts or some modern outfit. Their hair is done very well and they are always fully made-up, most wearing heels. They seem to worry about their personal hygiene. It is rare to see an overweight Ar-
menian, which is understandable since there probably isn't enough food to be overweight. There are many attractive women and men here. I am surprised.

I say uncomfortable because, based on appearances, they have not adjusted to their economic and social conditions. I believe this is good. Prior to the collapse, they were one of the wealthier Soviet republics [so I am told]. They seem to expect and demand cleanliness and good grooming. This is a good sign. They may at some point be willing to strive to the level of personal responsibility it will take to be successful in a new system. (pp. 11-12)

There are two issues immediately noticeable in this journal entry from April 3, 1995. The first, I was clearly a distant observer--a tourist. My journal entries were based on observations made at a distance. They occurred early in my trip when I was still wary of venturing alone into the Armenian world for fear of being a victim of robbery or some other offense. Because I still believed the UNDP warnings I received before the trip, I observed from a distance where I was safe. I kept a separation between myself and the Armenian other like I was at the zoo. However, I felt qualified to draw conclusions about the Armenian people and their adjustment to the bad times.

Pertaining to the second issue, I somehow equated nice clothes, good grooming, and personal cleanliness with long-term prospects for social progress. I suppose as an expression of self-esteem, dressing nicely in the face of untoward social conditions is exemplary. However, as an indication of social progress, style of dress and personal hygiene makes no difference.

I learned Armenians dress nicely—even for work in the garden—for good reason. During communist times they lived an active
social life which included the opera, theater, and other events. The Armenians--especially Armenian women--pride themselves on dressing well. Since the collapse of their country they no longer have a social life. They lacked a sense of community which was so important in the past.

By gaining freedom from communism Armenians lost their community. Daily survival and oppressive darkness precluded any effort to participate in a community. Life was reduced to taking care of themselves and their families. The people were isolated within their own apartment buildings. Armenians experienced "rural conditions" in an urban environment. Therefore, the opportunity to wear nice clothing only occurred during the day. It is indeed, a way for the Armenian people to feel good about themselves and to avoid the "madness" which comes from freedom without community (Bauman, 1995, p. 127).

I believe this is indicative of the Armenian's ability to creatively adapt to their current misery and not a bellwether of future social progress. I now understand how badly I misinterpreted this phenomenon. Perhaps I expected something different. Maybe I expected to see Armenians dressed in drab gray work clothing and Russian fur hats, reeking of body odor? As a function of my anti-communist upbringing, I expected to see sameness and not individual expression. Why I was interested in the subject of dress is an open question. Perhaps I had a surprise reaction, based on negative stereotypical learning, to the Armenian people's modern Western
look and personal attractiveness. Whatever the reason for my unusual interest in this subject it simply became another negative stereotype exploded by personal experience.

Only in America, where new is good and new and improved is better, could personal grooming and hygiene be thought to reflect upon a positive social future. My focus on appearance as an indication of deeper positive characteristics—mistaking appearance for reality—gives credence to the postmodern critique of American society characterizing it as shallow and superficial (MacCannell, 1992; Best & Kellner, 1991). My hypothesis about a relationship between grooming and social progress indicates I was a postmodern tourist lost beneath an avalanche of negative stereotypes and new lived experiences.

New Money

In 1993 the money system changed from Soviet Rubles to Armenian Drams. It is the first Armenian money in centuries, and at first it increased national pride and excitement. Similar to the reaction to seeing the national colors on an airplane, the idea of Armenia having their own economic identity was equally exciting. Armenians saw it as another step along the road to independence.

Unfortunately, Armenians quickly realized there was no trade or gold reserves to back up the new money. In fact, the government was forced to issue the money because of the flood of Russian Rubles into the country after Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan changed their money.
The rubles were worthless causing inflation to explode. The Armenian government had to take action. As a result confusion reigned about which money to use. For example, in a one month period in 1994 all hard purchases (kerosene, petrol) could only be made in Russian Rubles. The next week these same purchases could only be made in dollars. A few days later in Drams, rubles or dollars. Finally, the government stepped in and outlawed rubles and dollars, and posted policemen at petrol stations to enforce the Dram-only law. However, on that day there was no petrol anywhere in the country because the Dram was not recognized abroad and the government could not purchase the commodity.

This type of confusion was common in the early days of the Dram. Ultimately the government allowed the three currency system to exist in Armenia. I heard about days when money exchanged at 15 drams per dollar in the morning was spent at 80 drams per dollar later that afternoon. Even the price of bread quickly moved beyond the typical Armenian budget.

The overall effect on the economy was devastating. In 1994 the exchange rate was 100 dram per dollar. When I arrived in Yerevan in March of 1995 it was 420 drams per dollar and climbing. By the time I left Yerevan inflation pushed the exchange rate to 450 dram per dollar. While this may seem like high inflation it was a comfort compared to the nearly 3000 percent annual inflation rate in 1993 and 1994.

The change in money and resulting hyperinflation had a dra-
matic effect on the economy and people. Hurt most were vulnerable populations. For example (Johnson, 1995) the quality of life for the elderly, all of whom lived off a set government pension, was devastated:

Something noticeable here is the condition of the elderly population, the pensioners. Almost without exception, the elderly are dressed like bag people in America. They walk the streets, smell bad, and seem to be ignored. They seem almost like the street people of Yerevan. One reason, I understand is that they were mostly on pension from the former Soviet Union. Unable to work because of their age, they are now without pension or financial support of any kind.

This is very similar to the condition of the elderly in our country prior to Social Security. In those years, the elderly made up the largest percentage of people in poverty. Armenia apparently has the same problem today. It makes me wonder what our country would be like if and when Social Security goes bankrupt. (p. 12)

My original observation was inaccurate. Pensioners did collect a pension in 1995 although it was only about 800 drams per month or a fraction below two dollars in an economy where it cost nearly $100 dollars per month to live. Also, pensioners were not ignored. Most survived by living with extended family or selling soda, vodka, or cigarettes from street-side tables. What few beggars I encountered were elderly citizens.

Public employees including teachers, college professors and city employees were affected the same way. I got to know several public employees, all of whom worked long hours for their 840 dram per month state salary. Many times salaries were not paid on time. Sometimes they were not paid at all. The following (Johnson, 1995) are examples of two people whom I came to know well:
Our driver's wife, Anna24 a high school teacher in the public school system, earned 840 drams take home pay PER MONTH! This is $2 American. Salaries for public employees range from $2 to $5 USD per month in this country. Anna was married with two children. She is a teacher in the public school system where she is responsible for 30 students. She is a committed and professional educator who, because of her salary, was seriously considering a return to the American University of Armenia (AUA)25 to pursue a graduate degree. She can consider quitting her job because her husband—an Armenian UNDP employee—is paid well by Armenian standards. He financially supports his immediate and extended family on his wages (approximately $200 USD per month). (p. 7)

Most Armenians are not this fortunate. Their minuscule salary is the bulk of their family's income. For example (Johnson, 1995), my translator is a case in point:

I met Sola,26 the woman in the city commission responsible for relations with foreign speaking countries. Her English was pretty good. She was young, maybe 27 years old, and had an undergraduate and graduate degree in Russian language and Russian literature. After teaching at Yerevan State University for three years in Russian studies, she took her present job about 1 year ago. She is a very bright woman with a lot of energy, enthusiasm, and hope, yet a seriousness about the living conditions and the problems confronting herself and her people. She served as my translator and advisor in my meetings. (p. 9).

Sola is a deeply serious woman. She has personality troubles with her boss, makes $2 per month, supports her mother, and worries about life a lot. She feels fortunate to have this job, although she admits it does not provide for her unemployed mother. (p. 108)

Sola is like many other talented and educated professionals in Armenia: employed, underpaid and poor. Her mother has a doctorate in chemistry and cannot find work. Mother's research institute closed in 1991. In the post-communist era so-called intellectuals are not in demand. Highly educated people are viewed as hold-overs from the communist period. The contemporary focus is on training
entrepreneurs and business development. In the new era, education and research are less important than production.

Sola's younger sister married a physicist who was fortunate to get a research grant at a German university. They regularly sent money to Sola and her mother in Yerevan. This was common practice in Armenia. Most people have family abroad who provide money and other support to family members in Yerevan.

I wanted to help. My usual response was to offer money. I had UNDP funds to cover my expenses and I could have lived with less money. I tried to pay for some things but the Armenians resisted my efforts. I wanted to buy dinner, subway and taxi fare, drinks, etc. I had the money and they did not. Yet the Armenians, especially Sola, would have no part of it.

This attitude was foreign to me. Their pride was strong. Armenians had no use for the "false charity" or "false generosity" that Paulo Friere (1970/1993, p. 26) claims is a product of a socially unjust and inequitable world order. At the time I believed I simply wanted to help my friends but now I know my need was more personal. I wanted to satisfy the guilt I felt because I had money and an easy lifestyle. My guilt for being from a country which helped bring about the collapse leading to the miserable economic conditions. I wanted to make their lives easier, even if only temporarily. I would leave someday soon and return to my house, job, and car. My Armenian friends had to stay in Yerevan. This was their reality and it made me uncomfortable.
The Armenian aversion to charity was evident in other ways too. A worker for the World Food Programme (WFP) told an interesting story about his early efforts to give away food. He said the Armenians would not accept it unless they were allowed to work in exchange. They wanted no handouts; nothing for free. In these conditions I was surprised there were so few beggars on the street. Perhaps people do not beg because they know that nobody has extra money? Maybe begging is a cultural taboo? My experience (Johnson, 1995) suggests the latter:

Only one woman begged for money and Sola (with everybody else) dismissed her. I wanted to give her something and Sola got angry with me. Armenians get angry when another Armenian begs for a handout. That offends them greatly. Even the implication that I should pay for subway or museum makes Sola angry because she is the host and should pay, although she has little money. I really respect that, but it has taken me awhile to appreciate the attitude. Her character is the perfect metaphor for what I see as a strength of this society. (p. 77)

Don’t get used to humanitarian aid or handouts Armenia, you’ll regret it. Their refusal to become reliant (dependent) on these forms of humanitarian aid is perhaps one reason why this culture persists. They are offended at the notion of being reliant on anybody. If we or any other country squeeze out their self-reliance and identity through humanitarian aid, I believe they (Armenians) will develop problems. I think these people would starve to avoid becoming dependent. You must see how beggars are treated to understand the depth of their disgust for dependency. (pp. 77-78)

One of my goals as a community organizer is to help transform targeted, existing social conditions through local education, empowerment, and praxis (Friere, 1993) while at the same time adapting to the cultural and social conditions I am asked to change. This represents the dialectical relationship between “two poles of modern consciousness: tourism and revolution” as characterized by “a will-
ingness to accept, even venerate things as they are on the one hand, (and) a desire to transform things on the other" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 3).

From a different perspective, Sklair (1995) believes the primary purpose of community development is to extend the materialist and ideological reach of hegemonic countries into underdeveloped economic and cultural areas. Therefore, as a member of an "expert system" (Giddens, 1990, p. 22), my primary task is to ensure the spread of modernization by opening new markets for Western capitalists and to find "sources of raw materials, investment opportunities, and to extend their (hegemon) political and cultural influence" (Sklair, 1995, p. 33).

Sklair (1995) implies the goal of experts from expert systems is to develop new markets (for drug treatment conglomerates?) and make the nonmodern country dependent on the modern hegemon. Thus, the goal of modernization is not the conversion of the nonmodern country into a modern but to maintain a separation between the modern and nonmodern allowing the hegemon to continue its dominance by solidifying the nonmodern country as nonmodern, and dependent on the hegemon. As MacCannell (1976) states, "no other major social structural distinction has received such massive reinforcement as the ideological separation of the modern from the nonmodern world" (p. 8).

MacCannell (1976) takes up this point in his discussion of international aid and community development workers:
Modern nations train development specialists, organizing them into teams and sending them to the underdeveloped areas of the world which are thereby identified as being incapable of solving their own problems. The giving of this and other forms of international aid is sine qua non of full modern status, as dependence on it is a primary indicator of a society trying to modernize itself. The national practice of keeping exact demographic records of infant mortality and literacy rates, per capita income, etc., functions in the same way to separate the modern from the nonmodern world along a variety of dimensions. (p. 8)

I found the Armenians had a natural sense of the inherent dangers of dependency on foreign powers. This makes sense considering they have been dominated, conquered, and oppressed by various world or regional powers since ancient times. In 1995 their independent and defiant spirit was apparent. Armenians know the suffering caused by dependency. It is ingrained in their spirit and attitude toward charity. The question which persists however is how long can they resist the power of the hegemonic west to relieve their immediate suffering? As a nation, Armenia's future hangs in the balance.

My need to give--born of my guilt about their present conditions--is an embodiment of the attitude of the west toward nonmodern countries. We treat these countries like we treat our poor. Charities and government programs give recipients just enough of what they need to survive while convincing them and the rest of the country that charity offers enough for a good life. Paulo Friere had it right; we practice false charity in order to satisfy our guilt and maintain control and domination over the people to whom we give. I (and we) need to find a more productive way to help.
Social Environment

What I have described to this point provides a contemporary context for this section on the social environment. While the physical conditions were hard, perhaps the most difficult transition issue is the realization the Armenians are, in many ways, lost. The familiar local social structure which defined their society and held it together was missing. It's true, by 1995 Armenians had lived under bad conditions for nearly four years. They were still lost.

Actually the Armenian people were visitors in their own home. Life was unrecognizable to them. The structure they knew for more than 70 years was irreparably altered and a workable replacement had not been found. Daily routines were gone and social contacts diminished under the weight of survival. The changes happened so suddenly it seemed like they went away on holiday and returned to find their country gone. They were alone in the world, needing to find their way when everything they once knew was foreign. Charles Lemert embodied the Armenian situation best when he asked, "If things social are different, then who am I?" (1995, p. 38). This was the central question haunting every Armenian in 1995.

In this section I discuss two important issues. These include the new social order, or disorder as it were, and alcohol and drug use in their changing society. Related to social order, as I stated before Armenian life had lost its social moorings. Theirs was a constant daily struggle to regain ontological security. They wanted to recognize their home once again.
Social Order

I met a man who was in Yerevan to lead an international team whose responsibility it was to repair and rejuvenate the Medzamor nuclear power plant. A Hungarian, he was a moderate member of the communist system for most of his 60 years. He spoke about the massive social changes in Eastern Europe with conviction and authority. I immediately got the impression he knew what he was talking about.

At the home of a UNDP colleague one Sunday I had a long conversation with him about the changes. He traveled extensively in Eastern Europe and recently returned from Russia. He said Russia was experiencing a state of near-anarchy although the world press was not reporting it. The Russians are not controlled by law and custom but by organized crime. In this context (Johnson, 1995) we discussed the current social conditions in Armenia:

We discussed the mistakes made in dismantling the communist state. He believes they dismantled the old system too quickly. This left the people without a recognizable structure, system, or network by which to live. He believes they [government leaders] should have left the social structure (party system) in place because it served as the grass roots organization and structure the people relied on to give and receive information. Going from a restrictive social system to one without structure was too much. They are now suffering from the lack of structure. I don't think it would take much of a push to send this country down the slippery slope to total collapse.

We [in America] have the mistaken and arrogant assumption that all countries, regardless of their history and culture, should live like we do. This country must find their own unique system, somewhere between communism and democracy. Full-fledged democracy (if that is what we have), may not ever be workable here.

This country spent 70 years under a totalitarian regime where
everything flowed to and from the center (Moscow). The people were provided jobs, subsistence wages, controlled prices, no utility costs, no medical costs, etc. Of course, the communists decimated the environment and natural resources, and oppressed the people in terms of human rights and personal freedom, but nonetheless the system worked for the average citizen day-to-day. Had we [the United States] been able to stop the runaway arms and ideological contest between our two countries and allowed some measure of Soviet integration into the west, I think this could have been a workable situation for everybody.

The fears and prejudices of a few have totally decimated the lives of millions of people in this part of the world. I now know more than ever that the communist leaders were not the only ones uninterested in the fate and condition of their people. (pp. 48-49)

The Hungarian physicist was talking about the interrelationship of order, routine, and authority in society. These combine to provide the "control mechanisms" (Geertz, 1973, p. 44) communities and people in communities need to govern social behavior. They are crucial to social life because humans are, "precisely the animal most desperately dependent upon such extragenetic, outside-the-skin control mechanisms, such as cultural programs, for ordering his behavior" (p. 44). Without a sense of control people feel lost and afraid. This was Armenia in 1995.

According to Hannah Arendt (1961/1993) authority is whatever makes people obey (p. 103), be it legitimate or illegitimate. Obedience or compliance, the result of accepted authority, brings a sense of order to the social world. As such, through compliance and order flows the necessary social routines--or, "routinization" (Giddens, 1984, p. 87)---that provide people with a sense of ontological security. Under these conditions, people feel secure in their com-
munity because they know how to meet their needs in everyday life. Without this security people struggle, become depressed and hopeless, or resort to extralegal forms of behavior as a way to gain security through alternative means. These factors are the frameworks, or "frames" (Goffman, 1974, p. 35) which order the activities and meanings resulting in the formation and continuation of a secure daily life.

The communist system provided the frames, and thus, context for ontological security in Armenia. The system was the authority at the macro political level and in daily life. Yet I think it is wrong to assume the Armenians obeyed as communists while free Americans act out of our personal and collective freedom. This could not be further from the truth. All societies "find their feet" (Geertz, 1973, p. 13) through systems of laws, rules, norms, and tacit social agreements about how to act and live in a particular social context. I believe it is an ideological, uniquely American belief that its citizens are "free" to act as they like. In fact the United States is one of the most regulated and ordered societies in the world.

Obedience, in common usage, connotes subscribing to overt power or pressure resulting in a lack of free-will and the ability to be creative or individualistic. There is an oppressive-sounding quality to the word, and state of obedience. Yet, it is exactly what people do in society; it is the foundation of society itself. Through obedience to an agreed upon set of norms, values, and systems of interaction people come to trust their environment. Trust
leads naturally to familiarity—or, ontological security—a feeling created and maintained by a system of symbolic symbols (Mead, 1934). As such, people in any local social context, because of their common understanding of these symbols, know how to attain the resources or information they need to survive. Symbolic symbols provide public meaning to the local social environment.

Therefore, I believe the goal of social interaction is to develop a set of routines whereby people experience the security in knowing—or at least believing they know—daily life will be predictable. Geertz (1973) stated humans are "so in need of such symbolic sources of illumination to find (their) bearings in the world because the nonsymbolic sort that are constitutionally ingrained in his body cast so diffused a light" (p. 45). I guess the Hungarian, Geertz, and I agree.

The Armenian people did not know how to find their daily bearings. Like I said earlier, the irony of this trip is that the local Armenians and I experienced daily life in similar ways. I was a visitor in a strange land and so were they. I relied on Armenians to teach me about their life and culture yet, they were lost in their own land. The buildings and people were familiar, but life was different. Many told me they often felt like they were in another country during another time. To be a stranger in your own home is an unnerving thought indeed for people used to being familiar in their city, country, and daily life. Culturally, Armenian life was familiar. But how to go about navigating daily life, was
all too new to them.

**Alcohol and Drugs**

As you may remember from Chapter III, the Letter of Reference for this assignment was based on the premise, "that 50% to 60% of teenagers in Yerevan are abusing injectable drugs such as morphine [emphasis added]" (UNDP, 1994, p. 1). According to UNDP and other officials these statistics were absurd. They agreed that the Armenian culture would not allow it to occur despite systemic poverty, cold, darkness, and lack of hope for the immediate future. In my first meeting with UNDP and the City Commission it was clear they did not understand where the information in the letter of reference came from. I did not believe them at first so I offered to conduct an informal survey to determine the people's perceptions about this subject. They agreed.

Over the next four weeks, I did just that. I met with over 350 Armenians from all segments of Armenian society including children in schools and parks, university students, workers, parents, government officials, law enforcement officers, and international workers. I met with individuals and groups up to 50 people. Responses to my inquiry were the same no matter who I spoke with: no, Armenia does not have an alcohol and drug abuse problem amongst its young. There was not one dissenting opinion, even among the non-Armenians I asked.

Initially I was worried nobody would talk to me. It is,
after all, a social problem the former Soviet system would not admit to, especially to an outsider from the West. In my stereotypically anticommunist wisdom I naturally assumed the Armenians would deal with me--and it--in the same way.

I was wrong. The people were not only willing to discuss the issue, but proud to do so. It seems the letter of reference was very wrong indeed. I interviewed a diverse group of people, in diverse settings, arranged by diverse contacts. Even accounting for blatant national pride--something to which the Armenians willingly admitted guilt--I still came away believing there were few problems with alcohol and drugs among young people. They had problems, many of which I have already described, but alcohol and drug abuse did not appear to be one of them.

Long before my arrival I had developed preconceived notions about the Armenian people and their alcohol and drug use. My assumptions derived from my personal and professional socialization--my normative expectancies--about the former Soviet Union and from the letter of reference. Once I recovered from the shock of UNDP's statement about the perceived prevalence of injectable drug abuse I noticed alcohol was not included in the discussion. It struck me as a glaring omission. I based this opinion on three primary assumptions. First, I assumed the Armenians were part of the larger Russian culture where alcohol problems supposedly run deep. I discuss the impropriety of this assumption in the next section of this chapter.
I discuss the second and third assumptions here. My second assumption was that alcohol was considered a drug like in the United States, so it was silently included in the discussion. Thirdly, I assumed the whole country could be in denial about their problem with alcohol. This trip, therefore, was a chance to enlighten my Armenian hosts to the truth of alcoholism.

Alcohol considered a drug: I think the key phrase in my alcohol considered a drug assumption is like in the United States. Once again, I made a comparison between the United States and Armenia that was inaccurate and unappreciated by my Armenian colleagues. Not only is alcohol not considered a drug, it is not even considered.

To the Armenian's, alcohol consumption is a significant ritualistic practice and an insignificant fact of daily life. Business meetings, public gatherings, family meals, and religious gatherings begin with food and alcoholic drink. Before meetings can begin the host offers cakes, cookies, and alcoholic beverages. In this way, alcohol is important to the Armenians. While there was no pressure exerted by the Armenians to drink, they find it hard to trust somebody who does not drink with them. Since I do not drink, this was a barrier I needed to overcome with my Armenian hosts. I learned that if I claimed an allergy to alcohol they would accept it as a reasonable excuse for drinking fruit juice. So, I had an allergy to alcohol.

As evidenced by this ritual, alcohol consumption is part of
the Armenian daily diet beginning in early childhood. Families teach children how to drink and for what purpose alcohol is used. I discovered a rather potent cultural taboo against drunkenness or the overuse of alcohol. In fact, while I witnessed a lot of alcohol consumption, there were no intoxicated people. I cannot say the same about the United States.

Armenians are quick to point out that, unlike the United States, they have no legal drinking age. Furthermore, they claim there is no need. Armenians, I am told, are people of moderation. One university student said, "Armenians would no more abuse alcohol than Americans would abuse drinking water" (Johnson, 1995, p. 90). The Armenian students with whom I spoke believed only countries that overindulge as part of their general character need legal limits on alcohol for their own protection. This was their way of criticizing American consumer mentality. Yet, almost paradoxically, they have a strict zero-tolerance drinking and driving policy. Any amount of alcohol found in the driver's system results in the immediate revocation of their license to drive for as long as three years, unless the offender has enough cash on-hand to pay off the arresting police officer.29

The Armenian perspective on alcohol consumption is similar to various cultural groups in the United States. In his book, The Meaning of Addiction: Compulsive Experience and Its Interpretation, Stanton Peele (1985), could have been talking about the Armenians when he wrote:
In these groups (Italians, Jews, Chinese, and Greeks), children are gradually introduced to drinking in the family setting, where alcohol is not made to seem a site of passage into adulthood or associated with masculinity and power. Adult drinking is also controlled by group attitudes about both the proper amount of drinking and the person’s behavior when drinking. Strong disapproval is expressed when an individual violates these standards and acts in an antisocial manner (p. 33).

Compare Peele’s comments to the following excerpt from my journal (Johnson, 1995). One cannot miss the power of culture and tradition in Armenia:

One idea suggested by many in this country as an example of how culture can instill values is the non-existence of a legal drinking age. People here, professionals and workers, young and old, all say rather convincingly the need for a drinking age is indicative of a culture that cannot teach their children about alcohol or manage their urges. (p. 73)

Armenians do not have a history of alcohol and other drug abuse like other civilized countries, especially the United States. We have been abusing alcohol and drugs since our nation’s inception. We are predisposed to the idea alcohol and other drug use for pleasure are a right of citizenship. This stems from our European tradition and new cultural practices we developed on our own. Just say no, as a prevention slogan could have been as relevant for the United States in the nineteenth and early twentieth century as it is today.

We didn't just start abusing substances recently. Our ancestors actually did a better job abusing opium, heroin, alcohol, and cocaine as a percentage of the population than present generations. Should anyone wonder why we can't solve our problems? Our culture approves. Alcohol and nicotine kill far more people than other drugs, yet both are legal. As a culture, we have no traditions to inhibit alcohol and other drug abuse. It's part of us, always has been and, I believe, always will be. (pp. 73-74).

This journal entry could be interpreted to suggest I disapprove of alcohol use. That conclusion would be wrong indeed. I disapprove of the double messages we transmit about alcohol use compared to other, statistically less harmful drugs. On the one hand,
alcohol and nicotine are the most life-threatening drugs in American society, yet they are legal. Statistics suggest that alcohol and nicotine cause over 500,000 deaths per year (Levinthal, 1996). Meanwhile, the other major drugs combined result in the deaths of less than 10,000 people annually. Therefore, I believe United States policy is based more on political populism and contemporary morality than on social reality.

Perhaps the most serious conflict occurs in substance abuse prevention and treatment policy. On the one hand, the United States government funds prevention and treatment activities—including anti-smoking programs—while subsidizing alcohol and tobacco producers. Since 1981 United States drug policy has been driven by elected officials trying to appear tough on crime. It is no coincidence that major drug legislation was passed by Congress in 1986, 1988, and 1990, all national election years.

Despite these actions, abuse rates have not changed much over the last 20 years. These policies have only caused an increase in the prison population nationwide. As proof, annual studies of adolescent alcohol and other drug use demonstrates that alcohol use by high school students has remained steady since 1975 (Johnston, O'Malley, & Bachman, 1994). Although this approach is not working to reduce consumption, politicians resist the obvious need to focus on reducing demand because they believe it would be politically unpopular, despite the fact that over 50 percent of Americans believe anti-drug money should be equally divided between law enforce-
ent, prevention and treatment (Falco, 1994).

Nicotine is a classic example. Despite recent attempts to limit tobacco producers the United States continues to subsidize tobacco farmers and encourage the export of tobacco products abroad, especially to second and third world countries. In Armenia I discovered that cigarettes are the most significant American export. A variety of American brand names are popular in a country where the World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 70 percent of all adults, 60 percent of youths between 12 and 18 years old, and 66 percent of all physicians are chronic and habitual smokers (Johnson, 1995, p. 28).

Until politics change, American anti-drug policy will maintain the status quo. In the context of race and class politics, this is not surprising. While alcohol and other drug abuse affects all classes, it is especially devastating to minorities and the poor (Falco, 1994; Akers, 1992). As such, given that the ultimate outcome of conservative policy is to maintain a system rewarding the few at the expense of the many, any movement toward a workable drug policy to provide opportunity for the poor and other minorities to realize a measure of social justice is unlikely to occur. Armenians were quick to point out America’s alcohol, drug, and racial problems and the futile efforts to solve them.

Armenians in a state of denial: Vernon Johnson, a recognized early pioneer in the disease model of alcoholism labeled the cognitive function denial as mental mismanagement, "which erects a se-
cure wall around the increasingly negative feelings" (the alcohol and drug abuser) has about himself (Johnson, 1973, p. 25). The result of denial is that the abuser is unable to "really see what is happening (to themselves) as the disease progresses" (p. 24). This "defense system" (p. 24) serves the purpose, according to Johnson (1973), of allowing the alcoholic to "survive in the face of his problems" (p. 24).

As part of the "lay theory" of alcoholism, Denzin (1987) calls denial "The Thesis of Bad Faith" (p. 122). Denial allows the "alcoholic and his or her significant other to attempt to escape the facticity of alcoholism by denying its existence" (p. 122). This is intertwined with the abuser's desire to have "power" (p. 97) over alcohol, his or her "theory of drinking versus" their "theory of normal" (p. 122) and to blame alcohol for his or her problems, all allowing the abuser to continue drinking.

In the substance abuse profession, denial is a reification. No longer a cognitive defense mechanism which I believe is common when people are accused of doing something personally embarrassing, substance abuse professionals grant denial its own persona. Not only do individuals evince this phenomenon, but so do couples, families, organizations and even countries. It is described as a syndrome with a life of its own as if it were a dark cloud enveloping the abuser like a plague.

Denial is blamed for any negative behavior, especially a return to drinking, by the person with alcohol problems (George drinks...
because he is in denial). I have overheard clients and colleagues talk about it like denial was their house guest (I guess denial lives at my house). It is the subject of funny, yet serious reminder slogans (i.e., Denial is not a river in Egypt). Needless to say, this is the context in which I used the concept while preparing for this assignment.

I was very wrong about alcohol consumption in Armenia. The Armenian people did not want to consider alcohol as a problem because it was not an issue they needed to address. This conceptualization was based on my personal and professional training. I considered these ideas Truths to be discovered, not theories to be tested.

The following comments are indicative of the Armenia people's attitude toward alcohol consumption and public drunkenness, and one I came to adapt myself (Johnson, 1995):

Here, cognac and wine are part of the everyday life from childhood. They don't worry about abuse because they are taught the appropriate amounts, places, and limits to alcohol consumption. I met with many people, college students, youths, professionals, parents, and workers, all who drink some form of alcohol daily, but never get drunk. The Armenian people told me something I shall never forget: laws are needed where culture is lacking. You know what, I fully agree. (p. 74)

The good news is that I learned this early in my trip, before the desire to enlighten the Armenians overwhelmed my common sense.

Communication and Language

Is there a more fundamental issue in intercultural adjustment
than communication and language? This is especially true when the language difference between people is so wide even physical gestures often do not represent Mead's (1934) concept of significant symbols. Interaction is communication and for interaction to occur, people in the interactional context must be able to communicate (Denzin, 1992). This is an interesting paradox for an English-only speaking American in Armenia where English is the fourth or fifth language spoken.

If, indeed language and communication is a "skilled and creative performance" (Giddens, 1993, p. 95), then the role of shared social context in communication is critical. In other words, through the sharing of a social context people gain the taken-for-granted "mutual knowledge" (p. 95) necessary for communication to occur. In this mutually understood context communication is "an ensemble of social practices, social forms, social relationships, and technologies of representation which construct definitions of reality" (Carey, 1989, p. 86).

The problem is, I do not share the same mutual knowledge as the Armenians. My common-sense knowledge includes only what was generated where I grew up and live on a daily basis. However, I was in Armenia where my understanding of the factors Carey alluded to was nonexistent at best. Without this mutually shared social context and the knowledge generated within it, what were my options? Could I communicate effectively without the skill of Armenian language, knowledge of local custom, gestures, and familiarity with body language? I am a consultant who relies on communication. This
was indeed an important dilemma to solve.

The professional literature in this area was not helpful. In fact, I was unable to find examples of how current theory (i.e., sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, symbolic interactionism, cognitive sociology)\textsuperscript{31} accounts for communication in a foreign culture. Claude Levi-Strauss (1968) and Noam Chomsky (1965) concluded there is a universal mind underlying all linguistic and cultural behavior. This notion may be helpful to develop a foundational understanding of language but it does not help formulate an understanding of the theory and practice of intercultural communication. This is unfortunate because in the globalized world my dilemma is not uncommon. It will become even more commonplace in the future as the world becomes even smaller. Only MacCannell’s (1976) application of semiotics to sightseeing is relevant to this subject. I discuss this in more detail later.

My communicative world was one of constant stimulation, translators, mistakes, and misunderstanding. It was a difficult adjustment, learning to be comfortable in a room where I did not understand any conversation going on around me. I practiced "out of frame activity" (Goffman, 1974 cited in Alexander & Seidman, 1990, p. 105) in these instances. This, according to Goffman, is the "capacity to cope with a range of disruptions" (p. 112) while giving the speaker minimal attention. I wanted to give the appearance I was interactionally competent (p. 112) even when I did not understand anything spoken around me.
I even made an unsuccessful attempt to learn certain fundamental Armenian phrases and words, although I had little success as the following journal entry (Johnson, 1995) suggests:

Today I tried to learn to say hello in Armenian. I’ve got some work to do on Thank you!!! Barev (hello) Barev Tsis (hello to group or respected elder). I find I am embarrassed to use these words, although I am told that people respect foreigners trying to learn their language. I was taught other words, but I can’t remember them. I’ve never known myself to be so self-conscious. (p. 37)

I could not grasp the most simple Armenian words. I mastered hello, but I was afraid to use it in public. When I did try to speak, whoever I greeted smiled brightly and returned the greeting. Yet, I was so self-conscious when it came to using their language I usually resorted to the greetings I knew best (hi or hello) or simply grunted inaudibly in the person’s general direction.

As I reflect back I realize how overwhelmed I was with new stimuli. I lacked the mental capacity to concentrate on learning a new language. It was difficult enough to find a place to eat. There was so much to learn and assimilate that language was the least of my worries. My inability to remember Armenian words and phrases was directly related to my level of uncertainty and unfamiliarity with the culture. I was a visitor--a modern tourist--in Armenia. I was preoccupied with seeing everything around me I could not retain even the smallest words. Early in the trip I was interactionally incompetent and dependent on others for guidance.

Later in this study I demonstrate how increased familiarity with the social context affected my ability to learn the language.
When I returned to Yerevan in 1997 I was able to quickly learn and use Armenian words and phrases without being self-conscious, and remember them months after I was no longer surrounded by Armenian-speaking people. Therefore, learning language and communicating effectively in a foreign culture is directly proportional to one's status as modern tourist.

Making Comparisons

Fortunately, I had understanding and patient colleagues in Armenia. Otherwise, I would have lost all credibility very early in my trip. The following journal entry (Johnson, 1995) is an example:

I had a discussion with the Women's project coordinator about domestic violence in Armenia. I am told women are beaten regularly here. Yet, because of patriarchy, they do not report their husbands. Therefore, the statistics make it look like there is no problem. Another issue is that Armenian women whose husbands die are unable to ever remarry. This is especially relevant in the wake of the Nagorno-Karabakh War. I made a verbal comparison to domestic violence in the United States (emphasis added). For this, the coordinator verbally scolded me for doing that. She says there can be no comparison, and she is correct. (p. 31)

The Armenians deeply resented any comparison to America even if the comparison was informative. They did not care how things were in the United States. They were not interested in becoming like the United States. Once again the predominance of my reference group--home--made adjustment and communication difficult.

Their resentment resulted from experience with previous consultants, a history as an oppressed and assimilated country, and
their need to be unique as a culture and people. More than once people informed me they were not pleased with UNDP consultants. In fact, they were quite angry with them (us). On my second day in Yerevan one person in the City Council wondered aloud if I had already written my final report for the project. Apparently many UNDP consultants actually wrote their report before arrival leaving room at the end for a contemporary conclusion. Then, during their time in Armenia they acted like a tourist visiting museums, parks, and historical sites. In the end the Armenians were always left with a series of meaningless reports and unusable projects. I could not find one tangible UNDP project in Yerevan which survived the consultant.

The last two reasons they resented comparisons interlace. Armenia is used to being subjugated and marginalized by other countries and peoples. Like I stated earlier they have a long history of oppression and imposed assimilationist efforts, most recently by the Russians. They are used to being ignored. During the Soviet period the Armenians were invisible to the outside world. Only during the immediate aftermath of the 1988 earthquake did the worldwide spotlight fall on this small minority republic.

Most people, including myself, believed Armenians were in fact Russians, because they were part of the former Soviet Union. American propaganda--our master narrative about the Soviet union--defined them as one ethnic and cultural monolith. In the context of modernity we recognized only one culture, people and evil ideology toward
the West. The metanarrative achieved its goal of legitimizing America's Cold War strategy (Lyotard, 1984). It was part of our strategy to "control through defining identities and social norms" (Seidman, 1995, p. 3). In other words the American propaganda establishment did to the Soviets what positivist social sciences did to American society by ignoring difference in order to privilege a universal definition of society (Seidman, 1995). Russia and the Russians are synonymous with the Soviet Union and Soviet people. We also used communists to refer to the Russians and therefore, the Soviet people. By considering the Soviet Union as Russia and Soviet people as Russians my beliefs were consistent with the dominant American ideology. Therefore, to stereotype the Soviet Union as Russia and the Soviet people as Russians is not only inaccurate but offensive to the Armenian people.

In fact, the Soviet People did not consist of one culture, heritage or value system. The countries of the former Soviet Union are remarkably rich in ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity despite 70 years of Communist Party assimilationist efforts. According to Hedrick Smith (1990), during the height of the Communist regime "roughly 63 million Soviet citizens were living outside the frontiers of their own national republics; they were ethnic minorities, living in regions dominated by and legally under the control of other nationalities" (p. 345).

The countries located in the Transcaucasus region including Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, were the least assimilated nations
of the former Soviet Union (Smith, 1990). There are vast cultural, political, and religious differences between the countries of this region. More importantly, Armenia is a Christian nation and Azerbaijan is Muslim. This became one of the major underlying factors in the Nagorno-Karabakh War (Suny, 1993).

While the countries in the region are different, internally they are among the most ethnically homogeneous of the Soviet satellites. In 1995 ninety-seven percent of Armenia's population were ethnic Armenians (UNDP, 1994). Therefore, the historical presence of homogenous countries trying to coexist in a diverse region fanned the flames of hatred and spawned conflict for centuries. These conflicts were put on hold during the Soviet era and exploded near the end of the Soviet regime.

It is true—in the former Soviet Union, Russian was the state language and communism the political system but the cultural and ethnic similarities between republics stopped there. In fact Armenians like to say their "brand" of Communism was different because of their distance from The Center (Moscow). Moscow could not exert the same type of control and force in Armenia because of the geographical distance, nor were the leaders as interested in the small country of Armenia as they were in other regions of the Soviet bloc, as long as they remained dutiful and silent.

As I described earlier in this chapter, this changed after mass demonstrations erupted in Armenia and Azerbaijan over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. Because of the unrest both countries were
temporarily occupied by the Soviet military in 1988 (Malkasian, 1996; Smith, 1990). These events began the political and social movement that culminated in the Nagorno-Karabakh War, the energy blockade, and Armenia's declaration of independence from the Soviet Union in September 1991. Like the rest of the former Soviet Bloc, these small countries in the southwest are different. Therefore it was a mistake to assume all people living under Soviet rule were Russian.

Not only was Armenia invisible during the Soviet period, but so too were their social problems. They have a need to be recognized, listened to, and appreciated for their unique conditions, culture, lifestyle, and problems. Armenians liked to say they were the first or best at many things. For example they produce the best cognac, were the wealthiest Soviet republic, and had the least oppressive form of communism. They were even the best at having the worst conditions after the collapse. Their desire is understandable after living as silent and invisible people for centuries. The last thing the Armenian people wanted to hear from an American was a comparison to a country other than their own. They wanted, but more importantly, needed to be unique.

In the journal example used to begin this discussion I compared domestic violence in Armenia to the same in America, trying only to show how hard it is to address this problem at the societal level. Had the Women's Project Coordinator allowed me, I would have said that Americans do not do a good job protecting women either. I
was not favorably comparing the United States to Armenia, in fact I was saying the United States experienced the same problem; we are no better at handling this issue than the Armenians. The coordinator was having no part of my logic. She said it was not right to compare Armenian problems to a country as advanced as the United States. According to her Armenians do not care about the United States, only Armenia. She said whatever may work in the United States will not work in Armenia. She was correct and I was being unfair.

I made comparisons because America was the only reference group I knew. What I saw in Armenia, I compared to home. I was still a modern tourist trying to make sense out of a new world. I had no other reference group to use, but the Armenians did not know that. They were leery of me becoming another foreign consultant who believed their problems would be solved if the Armenians would be more like Americans. Yet, at the same time many Armenians were quick to point out America's many unsolved social problems like racism, alcohol and drug addiction, and youth violence. While the messages were often contradictory and confusing, one thing became clear—they wanted to be recognized as an unique culture with unique problems and possible solutions. They were tired of being considered the same as everybody else.

As such, a major barrier to intercultural adjustment is overcome when a person's reference group changes from home to whichever culture they are living or working in at the time. In other words
when I stop comparing Armenia to the idealized memory and experience of home—when Armenia becomes my primary context for the development of attitudes and beliefs—I will be of Armenia instead of in Armenia (Bauman, 1995). I will no longer be a tourist.

**Translators**

I was assigned a translator in Yerevan. Sola, the young woman I introduced earlier, was my Armenian eyes, ears, and voice. I also worked with other translators, some official and some not, depending on the situation.

Listening and speaking through an unknown third person is an interesting experience characterized by trust, repetition, and patience by the translator and translated. The relationship, if it is effective, involves more than verbalized speech. It encompasses all forms of communication including hearing, sight, smell, and social custom. In my case, Sola translated and interpreted the entirety of my surroundings. She was at once guide, teacher, interpreter, and coach. She told me what people said and what they meant by what they said. She let me know if my audience was receptive to my message or if I was falling on deaf ears as it were. She helped me order food, hail a taxi, talk on the telephone, and find the correct toilet. In short, the relationship between translator and translated was the most important relationship in my cultural adjustment process.

The following series of journal entries demonstrates my varied
experiences with translators. Until then I never realized how difficult it is to communicate through a third person. For example, are you used to speaking one sentence--pausing--and then speaking another sentence? The journal entry below (Johnson, 1995) recalls an early meeting with twenty police officers:

I had a meeting in the City Council chambers with about 20 local law enforcement officers and youth coordinators from the eight administrative regions in Yerevan. A woman rambled on in an angry tone of voice for quite a while. I thought she was angry at the project. She must have talked for 20 minutes, in Russian. Come to find out, she was very supportive of our efforts. I wish I could have understood her. The language barrier is most frustrating to me. I am never sure if I get the story accurately. (pp. 56-58)

In these conditions short, concrete comments are needed. Long explanations, the use of subtlety, comedy, or abstract messages do not translate. I am completely at the mercy of how my translator hears and understands my message, speaks my message to the audience, and whether or not there are any words or phrases in Armenian that correspond to what I said in English. I am not good yet at speaking through translators. I speak too quickly, for too long, and in descriptive phrases. The Armenians say I have a melodic speech pattern. It is clear to me that body language and tone all have different meanings here. At home I rely on my ability to read my audience. These skills are useless here. (pp. 58-59)

Speaking through a translator takes skill and trust. Early in the trip, I had neither. In addition, for me to use a third person as a conduit removes my perceived strengths as a public speaker: the use of stories, humor, and immediate audience feedback determined by body language. In Armenia I had to retire my strengths and rely solely on my words (actually my translator's words) and often inaccurate interpretations of my audience's feelings and moods.

My speaking style is not easy for translators. I consistently frustrated them, especially early in the trip. I speak quickly, but
I need to speak slowly. I speak in metaphor and story while I need to be concrete and direct. I speak in melody but I need to maintain an even vocal pace. Needless to say I received a lot of quizzical looks from my translator and audience. Sometimes I would forget someone was translating and continue speaking. When that happened I had to stop and repeat what I said, one or two sentences at a time.

Like I said before, trust is a big issue in translation. I placed my emerging reputation (in Armenia I did not have one as yet), acceptance, and hope for success in the hands of somebody I did not know before my first day in country. I had no idea if she understood my words, translated them correctly, or translated other's words to me correctly. What if she did not like what I said, would she change it? It is an exercise in faith and being comfortable not having total control over one's own message. This was difficult for an American male used to being in control.

For example, I arrived in Yerevan early on Sunday morning. On the first Monday, about an hour after I met people at UNDP, I was hurried to a national conference sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) on drug and tobacco use in the Republic of Armenia. The agenda included major public presentations by WHO and local drug treatment officials in the morning followed by a small group work session in the afternoon. I was invited by the WHO Director to participate in the work session which included the national directors of the Narcological Dispensary (drug treatment) and psychiatric hospital in Armenia. I was joined by another American working for an
international foundation and several other people whom I did not know.

In my journal that night (Johnson, 1995) I recalled the gist of the meeting followed by what now looks like a comedy of communicative errors, one right after the other, until I was angry at the doctors and they with me:

We had a group discussion about drug and alcohol treatment in Armenia. There were interesting dynamics in this meeting. The Director of the Narcological Dispensary and the head of the psychiatric Institute were clearly Communist. The current treatment system, a holdover from Soviet times, used registration. In this system a person needing alcohol or drug treatment was publicly registered and faced social and legal sanctions as a result. She (Director) stated they had difficulty getting patients to ask for treatment. No wonder official statistics listed only 900 drug addicts in the whole country over the previous five years.

I questioned registration and suggested a treatment system based on confidentiality. Then, I mentioned that this was similar to our system (emphasis added). The Director bristled at my comments. Her investment in the past makes her the voice of status quo. On the one hand, in the morning seminar she talked about the need for secret treatment. I took that to mean confidentiality. On the other hand, she would have no part of the idea during the working session. Was it me, or did she not understand that confidentiality and secret treatment meant the same thing. Was I having translation problems?

They seemed to want registration to continue. The other American suggested drug problems should be addressed by a community-based approach instead of state-run hospitals. This got a rise from the doctor. Ignoring the other American and addressing herself primarily to me, the Director said there were no problems in Armenia that families couldn't handle. She said a community-based approach would not work because neighbors will not pry into others business. In the next breath, she said that neighbors are quick to help during times of crisis. I couldn't figure out what her problem was with me. (pp. 21-22)

During this meeting my relationship with the doctor ended.
Through a translator I listened in the morning while she wondered aloud why the hospital did not have more patients. At least this is what my translator said she wondered aloud about. The translator also said the doctor was interested in developing new treatment policy. Yet, when I spoke during the afternoon session she denied the need for secret treatment. I thought I was simply contributing to the discussion when the doctor vehemently took exception to my comments.

I believe I made a mistake by assuming the morning session was translated accurately. I naively believed my translator was accurate. I did not know my translator at this conference, I had been in Armenia for less than thirty-six hours at the time. Perhaps the translator did not understand the doctor or maybe her translation skills were not developed enough to handle the nuance of this topic in translation. After all, my translator was not a drug treatment specialist. Maybe she did not understand what the doctor was saying? Another possibility is the doctor was not mistranslated at all. In yet a final possibility, perhaps the problems I experienced in the afternoon meeting were my fault and not hers?

There are three issues I did not attend to in this context which contributed to the problem I experienced. First, I failed to establish my credentials according to Armenian social custom. I learned this lesson early in the trip (Johnson, 1995), but after this meeting,

Armenians want to hear from me first. I am expected to begin every meeting by telling my background—educational, profes-
sional, and personal—in great detail. They want to hear very specifically and concretely about other examples of programs that have worked, my experience with people, my impressions of Armenia, and especially, will I ever return to Armenia? I have come to appreciate this as the way to establish my credentials. They dislike braggadocio, but want to hear the facts. After I speak, then the Armenians are willing to participate and it is my turn to listen. When I don’t establish myself, I have no credibility. (p. 13)

There I was in a meeting with high level Armenian bureaucrats making suggestions about their system. I remember assuming the Armenians would be grateful for knowledge about America, in this case knowledge of the American drug treatment system. I already discussed why this was a wrong-headed assumption. In this context, I was an outsider acting like an “ugly scholar” (Rakowski, 1993, p. 56). Relations between the ugly scholar and the host country—like the spread of modernity (MacCannell, 1976; 1992)—are characterized by “opportunism, dominance, and dependency at the level of country relations, inter-institutional relations, (and) interaction among individuals” (p. 57). I played the ugly scholar by assuming that Armenian professionals wanted and needed my advice about drug treatment even though they had no idea who I was, what my qualifications were, or why I was invited to the meeting. I was a stranger. I guess I believed all they needed to know was I am American.

Second, I compared the Armenian system of registration with the American system of confidentiality. Objectively, the comparison was relevant. Realistically, it was offensive. I tried to establish authority for my suggestion by mentioning the United States system. The doctor did not appreciate nor recognize this as a source of
authority like I believed she would (or should?). I miscalculated my reception as an American and United Nations representative. I believed these credentials—one by birth, the other by contract—provided instant credibility and authority in Armenia. I soon learned this assumption was grossly inaccurate. As an American professional, my reception was paradoxical, bearing similarity to Rakowski’s (1993) description in the following quotation:

United States and other Western Sociologists who conduct field work in developing countries are confronted alternatively by generalized negative perceptions (deserved or not) of neocolonialism on the part of American scholars, anti-American sentiment, resistance, and—in seeming contradiction—a perceived superiority of U.S. scholarship by host country elites. (p. 58)

In Armenia I needed to earn personal and professional credibility since nobody was going to bestow it on me. Essentially my career was starting over. Although I was selected because of my so-called expertise it meant nothing to the Armenian people. I needed to establish myself through my ability to work with the Armenians in their environment. To accomplish this, it became clear I had to become of Armenia instead of in Armenia. I needed to move beyond my role of modern tourist and adjust to a new culture, style, and custom. What I (or we) do in America was of little value to the Armenians. I wish I could have realized this at the time, life would have been much easier indeed.

The third issue concerns my reaction to normative expectancies. In this meeting I jumped to conclusions based on negative stereotypes. In reading my partial account of this meeting, as soon
as the doctor disagreed with me I accused her--in writing, not in person--of being, (a) a communist who was invested in the past; and, (b) interested in maintaining the status quo. Unfortunately the speed by which I dismissed the doctor is reflected accurately in my journal. My socialized negative stereotypes flooded my consciousness. I immediately decided the doctor was a communist and inappropriate to lead the drug treatment system in Armenia.

The power of life-learning, including the depth of my negative beliefs about communism and the former Soviet Union surprised me, but not at the time. I remember believing that my assessment was correct. She--or anybody else who disagreed with the American way--was a communist, and I was suspicious of communists. I battled my stereotypes throughout this trip. They hit at surprising times and with stunning immediacy. I had no defense against them until I exercised home from my consciousness and simultaneously stopped seeing the Armenian people as former communists.

Luckily, this meeting was my worst professional experience in Armenia. I learned how to communicate respect for the Armenians, their customs, and lifestyle. I never got the chance to communicate this respect to the drug treatment director. She refused to meet with me again.

Improvement

As time passed I found myself able to communicate more effectively, although I did not know the Armenian language any better
than before. What changed as a result of my lived experience in Armenia?

The most simple and immediate changes occurred in the relationship between my translator(s) and myself. As we came to know each other trust developed. She learned to understand my melodic speech patterns, thus she was better able to translate my words into Armenian. But, more importantly, she learned more about what I was trying to accomplish. She gained an understanding of the social context of my remarks. She understood me.

Likewise I learned to control my tendency to speak quickly and in melody. I slowed my speech pattern considerably. I got comfortable speaking in one-sentence blocs instead of rambling on with example and metaphor. I adjusted my speech to her needs. I also learned more about the Armenian social context. I understood better what and how to present myself and my information. I began to understand gestures and body language. I learned vocal tone and facial expressions. Most importantly, in my work I utilized Friere's (1970/1993) liberation pedagogy instead of the "banking concept" of education (p. 53). In other words I developed my information "with" and not "for" (p. 30) the Armenians. I stopped approaching them like they were "containers" or "receptacles" waiting to be "filled" with knowledge and information, as if I was making a deposit into an account (p. 53).

I also learned to trust my translator. I grew to believe she translated others and myself accurately. I developed faith that
Sola was honest and forthright in her work. I developed the belief, over time, I could count on her to reflect accurately and forthrightly what I was trying to communicate. Our trust was contingent on my trusting that she translated my audience correctly so I knew my dialogue was formulated and stated in accordance with the ongoing conversation. In other words the longer I was in Armenia the better I became at communicating. By the third week I was moving around town without a translator. I could manage most of daily life on my own. Often, it took awhile to communicate what I wanted, but I managed. In the next section I hypothesize about what actually occurred to make me better able to communicate. What was it about lived experience which opened the Armenian daily life to me without a knowledge of their language?

**Semiotic of Tourism**

MacCannell (1976) adapted semiotics, or the "science of signs" (p. 109) for use in his study of tourism and their relationship with tourist attractions. I utilize the concept of "sign" which "represents something to someone" (p. 109); "marker", which indicates information about the attraction or in this case, the social context of the conversation (p. 110); and "sight involvement" or the degree to which the participant "meaningfully experiences" the attraction (conversation) (pp. 111-112), to construct an explanation of what occurred to transform my ability to communicate. As such this model applies to this discussion.
I was a tourist in Armenia, especially in communication and language. Conversation was my "attraction" or "cultural experience" (p. 23). According to MacCannell's definition of cultural experience, conversation is comprised of a "model," which through a "medium" has "influence" on the participants (pp. 23-24)\(^3\). Conversation is a cultural production in that it is an active product of people and unique to the culture where it occurs.

In this model I use sign to represent the joint construction of meaning that is transmitted during efforts to communicate. In other words learning to communicate with people who speak a different language is an effort to jointly construct a common meaning of signs. The medium could be verbal conversation through a translator, directly between the other and myself, or through a system of gestures.

A marker represents the immediate social context of the communicative effort. A marker therefore, refers to information about the purpose of the conversation as defined by the setting or agenda, the topic of the conversation, and the social positioning of the people involved in the conversation. This use of the term corresponds to MacCannell's definition of "on-sight" markers, or information about the conversation which is contained in the immediate context of the involvement (p. 111).

Sight involvement refers to the degree to which participants are interested in the conversation. I use interested in a broader sense than is implied by common usage of the word. Here, interest
has little to do with attraction although that certainly does play a role in the social construction of signs. However, at least from my vantage point, this common-sense description of interest does not apply. I was interested in everything in Armenia. In this discussion interest is defined as a person's ability to understand a marker influenced by a number of extraneous variables which are part of being in a foreign culture. The degree of sight involvement is therefore, determined by the person’s cognitive, emotional, and physical ability to focus on the information comprising the marker. It is directly related to a person's comfort and familiarity with the totality of their surroundings allowing them to concentrate on the immediate social context.

Based on these concepts I can construct a model that describes this communication process in a foreign country. I recognize this is a simplistic linear construction. However, it demonstrates the importance of lived experience in learning to communicate in a foreign culture: sign [understanding] = marker [social context recognition] + sight involvement [ability to attend].

Simply knowing the native language, in this model, would not be enough for effective communication to occur. In fact, I met a group of Armenian-American students in Yerevan who each experienced similar difficulties understanding and communicating although they spoke the language. They spoke Armenian but still had problems understanding conversation. This is similar to teaching social work students about cultural diversity without a practical exper-
ience component to their education. Whatever information is learned in the classroom does not necessarily translate into effective behavior in the social world.

Therefore the ability to communicate and understand in a foreign culture is directly related to the interaction of social and cultural adjustment and understanding the local communicative context. A person cannot learn to communicate in a foreign culture (mutually construct definition of signs) until they recognize the social context of the conversation (marker), which is determined by their ability to attend to the conversation gained through familiarity with the social-cultural setting (sight involvement). Since communication is ongoing; it does not wait for cultural adjustment. This model presents the individual with an interesting and difficult paradox: sign definition cannot occur until the person understands the marker which is determined by the degree of their sight involvement. At the same time an individual's inability to understand signs and markers exacerbates the problem of sight involvement, which serves as a barrier to mutual sign definition.

In my case, I believe lived experience was the only answer to this paradoxical dilemma. Through constant experience along with the help of Armenian colleagues whose comments allowed me the opportunity for the "reflexive monitoring" (Giddens, 1992, p. 90) of my behavior I was able to increase my sight involvement and marker identification allowing me to communicate more effectively in certain prescribed social contexts. I learned that while people are
not the same "underneath," cultures are "composed of similar elements in different combinations" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 2). Therefore, I was able to begin to use hand and body gestures, certain words, facial expressions, and other non-verbal means to communicate. I became comfortable enough to ask for help from other English-speakers if I was not with my translator. I never would have done this early in my trip. Many times we struggled—an Armenian speaker and myself—over words and concepts in order to understand. Going to a restaurant or the market was an adventure. Yet, I discovered I could survive without a translator. I was still lost when the marker was ill-defined or the person spoke at length but for the most part, I developed the capacity to understand.

Concluding Remarks

As a prelude to my brief concluding remarks about this chapter the following sequence of journal entries—uninterrupted—best describes the change in attitude I experienced during my six weeks in the Republic of Armenia in 1995.

Feelings About Armenia

At the end of each week I wrote a short summary of my feelings about Armenia. By reading the following quotations it is evident that my attitude changed over the six weeks. Somewhere on my journey to Armenia I found my way beyond the negative stereotypes and beliefs I once held about communism and Armenia. Lived experience
challenged my prior learning about America's role in the world. I met my Absolute Other and discovered the Other I had come to confront did not exist. The Armenians were people, citizens of the world, trying to craft a life for themselves with dignity, courage and a uniquely Armenian style that belied the old American ideological myths about people in this part of the world. Johnson (1995) goes on to comment on his feelings about Armenia.

Day One

My room is old and musty smelling. We burn candles to freshen the air. My partner didn’t bring enough money for separate rooms so he lived with me in a nine by twelve foot room, with two single beds, a desk, bathroom and door to a balcony overlooking Mt. Ararat and the cund neighborhood. We decided this is an acceptable [legal] size for a federal prison cell. Everything here is brown and gray. In fact, the whole place is depressing. The water is drinkable, contrary to UNDP warning, although I still don’t trust it. I have never ingested so much carbonated mineral water and cola in my life. The coffee maker doesn’t work so boiling water for safety, or tea, is not an option. It is my first night in Yerevan and already I don’t think I am going to like this place. (p. 10).

As I began to unpack, I suddenly got so homesick I was almost in tears. I cannot explain why I was overcome like this. I could only think there was no cutting short or turning back, I was 12 hours away from home by airplane, in a totally different and foreign culture, and I have to stay here for six weeks. I really feel trapped and cut-off. I can’t be homesick already. (p. 14)

End of Week One

I have been in Yerevan for one week and I feel better than I did last week. Only five weeks left. It still feels like an eternity, although these people are beginning to grow on me. I wonder if I will be sad to leave here. (p. 47)
End of Week Three

The beginning of week four and I thought this would be a long trip. In fact, just two weeks ago I thought this would last an eternity. Now, I am tempted to postpone my flight another week, or perhaps even skip Russia all together. Maybe I will stay here a while longer. Aren't I the person who couldn't wait to leave the dreadful place a while back? (p. 76)

The past weeks have brought me more in touch with this country, the people, and Yerevan as a community. I have seen and experienced the dedication of the young and old to their culture and traditions. I talked to University students and former communist workers who essentially say the same thing: Armenia is proud, strong, and traditional. This may be a bad time but we will prevail. I cannot find a reason to doubt this conviction. (p. 71)

End of Week Five

Can you believe it? This is the beginning of my last week in Yerevan. I cannot believe how quickly this trip has gone. I don't want to leave just yet. Has my life and outlook on the world changed? How about my attitude toward work, and even my personal life? I don't know but I have a feeling it has. (p. 96)

"Getaway Day" Reflections

I've heard Americans here complain because they are started at and excluded from conversations and meetings. What really makes them angry is when Armenian people speak Armenian in front of them. How dare they speak their own language in their own country. Maybe the Armenians haven't been free long enough to understand that when Americans show up, we must be their primary concern. (p. 97)

I am amazed at this reaction. In a small way, Americans here are treated a lot like WE treat people different than us, all over the world! Whether it be our stares of mistrust at African-Americans at home, or our laughter at people who speak different languages, wear different clothes, have a different smell, or their own ethnic or cultural ideas. At home we insist people speak English or they should get out of the country. We close our borders (unless we need cheap labor), triple-
lock our homes, cut off financial support, and treat people who are not white, like they cannot be trusted, as if they are a threat to America. We demand they do things our way, in our country. From what I have seen, I guess we demand they do things our way in their country too. (p. 97)

I have been treated very well. Yes, I get stared at. I am not sure if it is because I am a foreigner or if it is unusual to see Americans on their streets, or their hold-over fear of speaking to foreigners. I assume part of it is human nature, people gawk at things or people they don't understand. I also have very long, light, and wild hair while Armenian men have very closely cut dark hair. I wear running shoes and blue jeans (both are not available here). I'm told these two items are a dead give-away for Americans. In other parts of Eastern Europe I would probably blend in as long as I did not speak English. But here, I stand out. So what would I expect? Don't we often stare at blacks in the wrong store, handicappers, women and men dressed in traditional Indian or Pakistani garb, or any other foreign get-up?

I have not felt any ism here. Certainly being male helps, and not Turkish or from Azerbaijan. People have opened their homes, hearts, and kitchens. I think my American compatriots that laugh at or get angry with Armenians who are being Armenians ought to remember their own behavior at home. We are in their country now, why should it be any different for us abroad where we are different? (p. 98)

Final Thoughts About 1995

At the beginning of this chapter I was interested in the degree to which my ability to adjust to the Armenian culture was affected by two dominant issues: my normative expectancies and Armenian history and culture. In other words how did my normative expectancies, derived from years of life-learning in the United States, affect my thoughts, feelings, and behavior in the Republic of Armenia? Also, how did living in the presence of Armenian history and culture impact the same? These questions are answered in this chapter.
In response to these questions two relevant themes emerged which are important for this discussion. Taken together, they respond to the questions I intended to answer. The most dominant theme was my use of reference group comparisons. I demonstrated, in a variety of situations and contexts, how I automatically compared experiences in Armenia to events at home. My reference group was comprised of the totality of life-learning, all I learned prior to traveling to Armenia. At various times I consciously and unconsciously relied on my preformed attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and stereotypes—my normative expectancies—as the standard by which I evaluated the entirety of my experience in Armenia. Like many of my Armenian colleagues insisted, this was not a fair comparison. In my mind Armenia always came up short. But, more importantly my struggle to adjust to Armenian life was delayed by each instance of comparison.

Throughout the chapter as I recalled and analyzed my lived experience, I raised the issue of reference group comparison because of its relevance to the topic of intercultural adjustment. For example, my shock and fear surrounding the flight from Amsterdam to Yerevan was based entirely on what I understood were proper airline practices based on lived experience in the United States. I compared Armenian Airlines to any major carrier in the United States, evaluated it based on my normative expectancies about how airlines should be operated and, based on my evaluation, made the decision Armenian Airlines was unsafe. Because of this conclusion, I spent
six hours in a state of panic when objectively, the flight was a good one. I have never read nor seen a report about Armenian Airlines ever having a major accident while United States airlines kill hundreds of people every year in crashes of one kind or another. In the end it did not matter the flight was safe. What mattered was it appeared to be unsafe compared to the ideal airline of my cognitive reference group. The act of comparison limited my adjustment on this airplane like it did throughout the entire trip.

Early in this trip I compared all experience to home. Time after time, whether I was discussing living conditions, time, domestic violence and alcohol and drug use, or religion and culture I compared every experience in Armenia to my reference group. How I perceived and then reacted to any and all events was based on what I defined as normal based on what was normal at home. Home embodied my socialized attitudes and beliefs about the world, communism and communists, and Armenia. It was comprised of an odd mixture of prior life-learning and false and improper information given by UNDP prior to the trip. Almost everything UNDP warned me about turned out false. For example, I could drink the water, I was never unsafe on the streets, and there was, in fact, food to eat on a daily basis. This trip was an extended exercise in exploding stereotypes and myths about Armenia and the former Soviet Union. As time passed and I began to settle into my new environment I discovered that much of my life-learning was wrong. This realization was at times freeing and at other times quite disturbing.
In this chapter I theorized that my degree of intercultural adjustment was related directly to my loss of home as a reference group. I believe this is born out in this chapter. I was in constant struggle with myself and my beliefs, a fight that was not resolved by the end of this trip. At several points in this chapter I commented on this phenomenon, so I return to one of these moments here (Johnson, 1995) because I believe it best describes the central theme of this argument:

The power of my upbringing and the depth of my negative beliefs about communism and the former Soviet Union surprised me, but not at the time. I remember feeling that my assessment was correct. She—or anybody else who disagreed with the American way—was a communist, and I was suspicious of communists. I battled my stereotypes throughout this trip. They hit at surprising times and with an immediacy that was stunning. I had no defense against them, until I exercised home from my consciousness as a reference group and simultaneously stopped seeing the Armenian people as former communists, but contemporary people. These developments seemed to slow down my anticommunism. (p. 126)

So, was I in fact a modern tourist? I believe the answer is clear: yes, I was. I went to help the Armenians but what happened when I arrived is the Armenians helped me in more ways than I was able to reciprocate. While my conscious focus was to learn about Armenia, I actually learned more about myself in the process although I did not understand this until much later. As I watched, learned and experienced Armenia I found myself bouncing between MacCannell's two poles of modern consciousness: tourism and revolution. On the one hand, I desperately wanted their lives to change while on the other I was drawn to their struggle in a way that now makes me wonder about my motives. Did I want the country and people

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to change or forever remain static so I could return to the site of this experience and find things again the same as they were in 1995?

To me therefore, Armenia was a tourist attraction where I could simultaneously witness the premodern past and the potential post-epochal future of the United States. Perhaps, I witnessed how we once were and how we could be sometime in the future. I learned at once the strength of the human survival spirit and the unimportance and fragility of the United States on the timeline of world history. For six short weeks I left the present for a trip through time and space. What I found was at once thrilling and depressing indeed.

When this journey began I believed my trip to Armenia was in fact, my journey to meet America's (and my) Absolute Other. While I did confront our Cold War past and the negative stereotypes I accumulated over the years, when I finally met our/my Absolute Other I did not find what I expected. What I learned was much more personal and moving. I discovered that confronting the hang-over of the Cold War was, in the bigger picture, meaningless. What I found instead was a context for exploring the limits of my own persona. In other words, in Armenia, I met my Absolute Other and it was myself.

What's Next?

In the next chapter, I recall and analyze my return to Yerevan, Republic of Armenia in August 1997. I returned to the scene of Chapter IV for three weeks, on a mission to determine the impact
of further lived experience on my social adjustment in Armenia.
Since the time of the first trip in 1995 my international experience
has grown. In the next chapter I again use my journal to explore
whether it is possible for one American to become resocialized into
another culture. In effect, was I able to change my reference group
from home in America, to home in Armenia?
CHAPTER V

RESOCIALIZATION - 1997

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 been crumbled, literature is unread, music is unheard, and prayers are no more answered. Go ahead, destroy Armenia. See if you can do it. Send them into the desert without bread or water. Burn their homes and churches. Then see if they will not laugh, sing, and pray again. For when two of them meet anywhere in the world, see if they will not create a New Armenia. (William Saroyan, 1995, taken from a poster in Yerevan)

Introduction

Like Chapter IV, this was primarily written in Yerevan, Republic of Armenia. I returned in August 1997 to determine the extent to which I changed as a result of the first trip in 1995, and subsequent lived experience. I once again use journal entries as primary data. This time I include data gathered through group interviews with 36 Armenian citizens who participated in five informal focus groups. Their willingness to speak openly and honestly about the impact of the Armenian Genocide on contemporary life makes up a significant portion of this chapter.

While Chapter IV provided a broad look at Armenian history, culture, and everyday life this chapter is more focused. Here I focus on difference; what in Armenian life was different, and how were my reactions different in 1997 versus 1995? Throughout this chapter, I examine the extent of my overall adjustment to the Ar-
menian culture, and whether this adjustment fits the definition of resocialization as I use it in this project. In other words, was I able to alter and/or eradicate longstanding attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes acquired through life-learning in the United States, so that I could not only understand, respect, and accept the Armenian culture but replace the no longer useful aspects of my life-learning with knowledge and practices gained through lived experience. Therefore, this chapter looks at whether I learned the ways of the Armenian culture by acquiring the "physical, intellectual, and most important, the moral tools needed to function in (Armenian) society" (Durkheim, 1922/1956, p. 71).

Learning Across a Lifetime

In Chapter III I defined two aspects of socialization--life-learning and critical situations--which provides the foundation for the ensuing discussion. After a brief recap of life-learning I utilize Giddens' (1986; 1984) concept of critical situations as the basis for defining a second important component of life-learning.

As you will recall, in Chapter III I redefined socialization as life-learning or the sum-total of the knowledge or wisdom a person accumulates and utilizes over the course of a lifetime to navigate their everyday social world. In this study life-learning is a multifaceted process encompassing many of the discrepancies I perceive in standard socialization theory. The life-learning model combines human agency--action, and reflection on action--and an in-
individual's subjective interpretation of social knowledge with their situated environmental and the larger social systemic influences to form a comprehensive perspective on the socialization process.

Implied in life-learning is the centrality of action and time. The knowledge and skill comprising life-learning is accumulated over the course of an individual's lifetime, never reaching completion as long as the person is alive. This process is not static and there is no end-place to reach, no "self" to discover. Over time and through action and reflection on action, individuals learn about and simultaneously live life in unique and subjective ways. Life-learning is a constantly building and ever changing body of knowledge comprised of attitudes, beliefs, subjective social facts, and a repertoire of routine behaviors that fit the conception of the social world in which they live and interact. In the discussion below I discuss how individuals, over time, supplement or change the content of their life-learning through involvement and mastery over novel and challenging contemporary events.

From Critical Situations...

The second issue introduced in Chapter III and one I build upon here is an extension of Anthony Giddens' (1984; 1986) concept of "critical situations" (p. 61). Giddens defines critical situations as "circumstances of radical disjuncture of an unpredictable kind which affect substantial numbers of individuals" (p. 61) which create a state of "radical ontological insecurity" by threatening...
or destroying the "certitudes of institutionalized routines" in everyday life" (p. 61).

In his work on critical situations Giddens specifically referred to examples of group level phenomenon like war, genocide, or natural disaster, caused by forces beyond the group’s control which disrupt or eliminate routine social life for large numbers of people. In an analysis of the effects of concentration camp internment on victims during the Holocaust, using Bruno Bettelheim’s book The Informed Heart (1960) as data, Giddens stated that Jews who suffered a long exposure to life in concentration camps followed a similar sequence of stages ultimately leading to the appearance of "childlike," or regressive behavior (p. 63). The regressive behavior stage led, according to Giddens, to the victim’s "resocialization" where "an attitude of trust (limited and highly ambivalent), involving identification with authority figures, is re-established" (1984, pp. 63-64).

Giddens believes the sequence characterized by "heightened anxiety, regression, followed by a reconstruction of typical patterns of action" (p. 64) appears during critical situations in many different contexts although he failed to cite further examples. In this project, I am only interested in the third stage of the sequence: the ‘reconstruction of typical patterns of action,’ or resocialization.

While his definition of critical situations applies to Armenian life (i.e., Genocide, Nagorno-Karabakh War, and collapse of the
Soviet system), in this context I extend the definition to include individual-level critical situations, both negative and positive, which create what I called earlier a psychic emergency in the individual. This type of situation can lead a person to radical changes—either coerced or chosen—in the content of their life-learning. It is through this type of critical situation, defined below as life-lessons which individuals, over time, use to modify or change the content of their accumulated life-learning.

... to Life-Lessons

Building on the previous discussion about critical situations and its potential impact on life-learning, I define the second part of life-learning as life-lessons. Life-lessons are subjectively defined critical situations occurring periodically in an individual’s lifetime. As such life-lessons cause a person, by coercion or choice, to radically alter their life-learning. Therefore, over time life-lessons radically affect the conscious and unconscious content of an individual’s life-learning.

In this context a lesson represents an experience, example, or observation which imparts beneficial new knowledge or wisdom to an individual or group. Throughout life individuals routinely confront nonroutine and/or novel situations which challenge longstanding beliefs and attitudes accumulated as part of their life-learning. Yet, most lessons go unnoticed leaving the individual’s attitudes and beliefs intact. These situations would not be considered
a life-lesson because the individual's life-learning was not affected by his or her involvement or participation.

Other situations create an environment where the affected person, over time, changes as a result. Any new or challenging social situation which leads to fundamental life-learning changes is called a life-lesson. The degree to which a life-lesson affects an individual is related to their subjective interpretation of the situation, the context in which the situation occurred, and the degree of self-critical reflexivity practiced by the individual.

As such, I believe a sufficiently reflexive individual in a new, unstable, or rapidly changing life-world can change significant aspects of their life-learning despite the effects of a structuring and influential social environment. By applying Paulo Friere's (1993) definition of praxis--action and reflection on action--a person can resocialize themselves in the wake of important and life-changing events (life-lessons) which are either painful or exhilarating. A life-lesson may come from events forced upon an individual or as an unintended consequence of a chosen course of action like my Armenian experience. The specific situation is not as important as the subjective impact the event has on an individual. Therefore, it is conceivable any novel event challenging longstanding life-learning can, depending upon the individual and its affect on the individual, be classified as a life-lesson.

Life-lessons come in many forms with different meanings. Some life-lessons cause significant pain like the loss of a job, divorce,
life threatening accident or illness, alcohol and other drug depen-
dency or the death of a loved one. Because of the disruption to
normal everyday routines--or, radical ontological insecurity--an
individual involved in this type of life-lesson experiences the
three stage sequence of heightened anxiety, regression to child-
like behavior and resocialization. This is similar to the descrip-
tion Giddens used when referring to Holocaust victims interned in
concentration camps and can also apply to victims of any group or
societal level oppression or natural disaster or to individuals
experiencing a negative event which creates the context for con-
scious or unconscious changes in their life-learning.

Life-lessons may also represent positive challenges to an
individual's world view. These events may include marriage, birth
of a child, job promotion, graduation or a first international work
assignment. In these circumstances individuals experience a simi-
lar sense of radical ontological insecurity to the extent that they
too experience heightened anxiety and a form of behavioral regres-
sion leading to resocialization. In other words, people involved in
a positive life-lesson may also change their fundamental social
perspectives as a result of a new and challenging circumstances.

The resocialization process works two ways, regardless of
whether the critical situation is positive or negative. In fact it
is inappropriate to assign either a positive or negative label to a
life-lesson. I use these labels here only to organize the discus-
sion. A life-lesson, regardless of the circumstance, is a change-
agent in the life of an individual. In the realm of actual lived experience, it is simplistic and misleading to assign such labels to life-lessons.

One way the resocialization process occurs is through coercion. A life-lesson can force an individual to change their world view, as happens during a significant group or society-level event like a riot or war. Because of the nature of the situation and its impact upon the person they may have, or believe they have no reasonable choice but to change. Over time these changes can lead to resocialization resulting from powerful social, economic, or political pressure on the individual involved in the lesson.

A common example of this occurs when a young teen is placed in an alternative high school where they face consistent daily negative peer pressure to use drugs or commit criminal acts. Objectively, the child has behavioral choices. However subjectively it more often appears to the child as if they have no reasonable choice but to conform to the pressure and change. If unchecked, over time this type of situation leads to resocialization where the child adopts the fundamental world view and behavior of the group exerting the pressure on them to conform.

Also, an individual may choose to change aspects of their life-learning if the life-lesson leads to a context where self-critical reflexivity can act back upon the social perspective or behavior of the individual. In this type of life-lesson an individual is faced with a situation where their current world view or behavior
is exposed as irrelevant, wrong, or ineffective. In this case, assuming the individual is critically self-reflexive, he or she may seek to change the attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors they deem inappropriate or undesirable. It is important here to note, the process of resocialization occurs over time; it is not a quick or immediate change to a person’s life-learning. However the critical situation which led to the desire or need to change is immediate and usually quite shocking.

For example, an individual who abuses alcohol or drugs is arrested for the first time. As a result of this shock he or she reflexively analyzes their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors and decides to make changes which do not include the abuse of alcohol. Again, while these changes take time to occur, the triggering critical situation came as a shock and one which caused an immediate state of radical ontological insecurity leading to the self-critical reflexivity he or she needed in order to begin the resocialization process.

As I stated above, an important issue in resocialization is time. Individuals who experience a life-lesson do not immediately change as a result. On the contrary, resocialization is a longer process triggered by at least one--and often multiple--critical situations occurring in a particular social context. Resocialization is a multifaceted and complex process which takes time and significant reflection and further action on that reflection in order for change to occur at the life-learning level. Immediate behavioral
changes in the midst of a life-lesson represent immediate efforts at impression management in order to save face (Goffman, 1959) rather than changes at the fundamental level of knowledge, attitudes, or beliefs.

Knowledge gained through a life-lesson—whether caused by single or multiple critical situations—can either replace existing stores of knowledge in a person's life-learning or add to their knowledge base, increasing the individual's range of knowledge and/or behavior in the social world. By adding life-lesson(s) to life-learning I extend the definition of socialization to include knowledge gained and applied throughout an individual's life course.

Which events signify a life-lesson is determined by the impact it has and the unique perspectives and social location of the individual involved. For example, a divorce may indeed be a life-lesson to one person while not to another. How and to what extent an event affects a person's life is subjectively determined and entirely dependent on an individual's previous lived experience, life-learning, phenomenological experience of the event and the specific nature of the event.

Social structure, whether it consists of the family, community, culture, or society partly determines how an individual will react or adjust to a life-lesson. Because the social structure is both constraining and enabling individuals have the power of agency to influence their own life-learning in the social world (Giddens, 1984, p. 24). Like I stated earlier, members of non-dominant groups
like the poor or minorities in the United States; and people in small and impoverished countries throughout the world do not have this ability to the degree most Caucasian members of America's middle class and above enjoy. These people, because of their social and/or physical location in the world, are dominated and oppressed by the social, economic, and political structure. As a result individual members of these groups are often unable to act effectively in their own behalf regardless of whether they are self-critically reflexive or not. Often, life's occurrences are outside their sphere of control or influence. This discussion brings to mind a women and mother who, while attending her son's graduation from Harvard University said to a well-wisher commenting favorably on her skills as a good mother, "Where were you with your kind words when my other son went to prison?"

As such, my first Armenian experience, described in detail in Chapter IV, was a life-lesson which provided me the opportunity to change my life-learning about Armenia, the former Soviet Union, the United States, and most importantly, about myself. Over time, I was indeed resocialized.

Republic of Armenia--1997

In August 1997 I again traveled to Yerevan, Republic of Armenia for a three week visit. I had remained in contact via e-mail with several colleagues. They periodically mentioned that conditions were improved over 1995, but never did they provide a full description of
the actual changes. Therefore, I was again unsure of what to expect when I arrived. One thing I did know for sure, daytime temperatures are stifling hot in August and men do not wear short pants in public although temperatures often exceed 100 degrees, Fahrenheit. Aside from this, my normative expectancies were based on what I remembered about Yerevan in 1995. I was prepared for an Armenia in 1997 resembling the Armenia I had come to love in 1995, including the hardships of life under siege.

New Experiences

While I did not have a clear understanding about what to expect in Armenia, my experience in foreign countries was substantially different in 1997 than it was in 1995. I was no longer the inexperienced modern tourist of 1995. Following my six week stay in Armenia in 1995 I traveled to Brest Belarus, via Moscow and Minsk, where I worked for 14 days with an NGO in this mid-sized city on the Polish border. A man I had met in the United States in 1993 was starting a health care information center in Brest. I arrived in early May to help plan, organize and locate funding for his fledgling organization. This experience was difficult from its outset, punctuated by ill feelings and uneasiness as I struggled to adjust from the Armenian culture to the Belorussian culture when I had not fully adjusted to being away from home in the first place. My experience in Brest served as a life-lesson in its own right and in hindsight, made excruciatingly clear my lack of intercultural ad-
justment to either culture in 1995.

In addition, beginning in January 1997 I spent five weeks in Tirana, Albania as a visiting professor of social work where I taught classes to undergraduate students and assisted local faculty in the development of a research and funding strategy. When I arrived in January the economy was apparently booming and social life was stable after more than 40 years under an oppressive communist dictator. As I soon discovered the appearance of prosperity was just an appearance. What economic prosperity the Albanian people enjoyed resulted from several illegal pyramid schemes, which had been paying high interest rates to local investors for the previous three years. On my fourth day in the country three pyramids went bankrupt and within twenty-four hours a fourth followed suit. Within minutes it seemed, the Albanian economy totally collapsed leaving a majority of the people completely broke. What social order they had attained in the six years since the end of dictatorship soon collapsed as well.

I spent the next four weeks under martial law. I watched as the country assembled in mass demonstrations against the presiding government. These demonstrations ultimately led to months of anarchy, social chaos and death. As part of this experience I was followed and, on my last day in the country, accosted by the secret police and accused of being a foreign journalist and spy. I was nearly arrested on a rooftop watching local police and the Albanian military violently attack citizens assembling for a peaceful demonstra-
tion against what had become an oppressive dictatorship operating under the guise of democracy.

Obviously a full description of these events is not within the scope of this study. However, this brief description is important as part of the discussion that follows. When I returned to Yerevan in August 1997 I was a different person, armed with new lived experience in an international context. Both experiences—Belarus and Albania—were life-lessons although they were different. In Belarus I learned the limits of my cultural adjustment and in Albania I learned how resourceful I was in an intercultural setting. Two different life-lessons—one painful and one exhilarating—which served to expand my lived experience and confidence heading back to Yerevan in August 1997.

Dialectic: Tourism and Revolution

When I boarded Armenian Airlines once again in Amsterdam this time I knew what to expect, or so I thought. I knew Armenian Airlines and I believed in my heart I would find Yerevan in the same condition as I left it two years earlier; dark, hungry, and filled with pain and sorrow. I wondered if the Armenian people had found home or whether once again, we—the Armenian people and myself—would be tourists in their once familiar homeland. I quickly learned once again, how troublesome normative expectancies can be for an international traveler. Additionally, to my dismay I came face-to-face with Dean MacCannell’s (1976) dialectic of the modern tourist.
According to Johnson, (1997),

Eda has been to Yerevan three times since 1995, the last time in December 1996. She said I would be surprised by the changes since my last trip. Although I learned last time not to believe anything until I see it, when I heard about the changes I felt a strange sense of sadness and loss. I am embarrassed to admit that something about the Armenia I found in 1995 appealed to me. Perhaps it was my sense of finding, in 1995 and losing, in 1997 the place where I could fulfill my role as modern tourist, where I could find myself by observing and (partially) living like people in nonmodern countries. I guess a part of me liked the experience of poor, backward, and deprived 1995 Armenia. That is an ugly feeling indeed. MacCannell would probably smile.

When they began on the airplane, these mixed feelings took me completely by surprise. Of course I want Armenian life to improve; to have electricity, heat, food, and jobs. Naturally I want my friends to lead a good life--don't I? Yet, my mind keeps drifting back to the thought that it would not be the same...this time, maybe not as interesting or special to tell stories about. I want them to change, but I also want them to remain the same.

Has my desire for adventure overtaken my sense of humanity? How about my need to be seen as special. Am I that interested in being the wealthy American whom everybody wants to emulate? I wonder if I ever have that motive or desire as a social worker at home? Maybe I think that if they get better, I will not be needed any longer? Whatever was the reason for this, I don't like it. I have friends here and I want them to be happy. These feelings are not strong, but a quiet and disturbing nag that occasionally creeps into my consciousness long enough for me to force it out of my mind. The whole idea repulses me. (pp. 2-3).

I was ashamed of myself. Of course, I could not tell anybody how I felt at the time. How could I? I am a social worker who, according to the values and ethics of my profession, strives to enhance people's ability to enjoy a better life, improve their conditions and to achieve their right to self determination (NASW, 1997). Yet, here I was flying into the Republic of Armenia quietly hoping the Armenia of 1997 would be my Armenia of 1995. Was I being sel-
fish? Dean MacCannell (1976) claims I was behaving normally for a modern tourist. I had a "willingness to accept, even venerate, things as they are on the one hand, a desire to transform things on the other" (p. 3). Okay, this is fine but I still wanted an explanation for the paradoxical emotions I experienced.

I again consult MacCannell for possible answers to this personal dilemma. As I stated earlier MacCannell (1976) believes modernity is "alienating, wasteful, violent, superficial,...unstable and inauthentic" (p. 2) with a "firm resolve to establish itself on a worldwide basis" (p. 3). Going further he states:

For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles. . . the concern of moderns for naturalness, their nostalgia and their search for authenticity are not merely casual and somewhat decadent, though harmless, attachments to the souvenirs of destroyed cultures and dead epochs. They are also components of the conquering spirit of modernity--the grounds of its unifying consciousness. (p. 3)

MacCannell believes these factors are at the root of modern tourism. I believe they are perhaps, at the root of the paradoxical emotions I experienced as I flew from Amsterdam to Yerevan aboard Armenian Airlines on that August night in 1997. I speculate about possible explanations immediately below.

There are two prominent explanations I wish to consider. One is related to the questions I asked myself in the journal passage quoted above and refers to the unconscious sense that I need to feel special, important and needed by the Armenian people. Perhaps I needed to see myself in the role of the "hero" (MacCannell, 1976, p.
5) returning to Yerevan to help save the poor Armenians from the fallout of Soviet oppression? I wanted to see the Armenians trying to modernize themselves, but not without my help. On the first trip I was after all, part of an international aid package designed to maintain the "ideological separation of the modern from the non-modern world" (p. 8). In other words, the goal of moderns is to help while simultaneously ensuring the help is not substantial enough for a nonmodern country like Armenia to achieve independence. Could it be true that I unwittingly adopted the hegemonic mentality based on the idea that "the giving of international aid is a sine qua non of full modern status" (p. 8)? This mentality is designed, in the end, to maintain the opposition between modern and nonmodern societies by keeping the latter fully dependent on the former. Perhaps therefore, I was nothing more than an instrument of the capitalist and colonialist desires of the West seeking to develop one more outpost to help the drive toward "world-wide containment and control moving always toward the ideal of two economic classes (local vs. multinational), one currency, one passport, one market, one government, i.e., global fascism" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 5).

Another possible explanation is far more personal. Perhaps I anticipated feeling a sense of "touristic shame" (p. 10) should Armenia not present the challenges and problems of 1995? MacCannell (1976) believes modern tourists and social scientists are equally open to criticism about their "superficial view" of what they see or
study, their desire to be "purveyors of modern values the world over" and their interest in "primitive peoples, poor peoples and ethnic and other minorities" (p. 5). As a result, modern tourists like social scientists, participate in a critique of the depth and naturalness of their experience. In this case, I fit into both categories: modern tourist and social scientist. I may have been worried about having a real and productive experience worthy to tell about later.

If so, this is purely a selfish motive although one shared by tourists, social scientists, and social workers alike. As a social scientist, was the experience real enough to base stories upon or produce quality data? In my role as a social worker, was this case difficult and serious enough to warrant discussion, a presentation at a conference, or a journal or book publication? Each of these concerns were personally relevant at the time I experienced these confusing emotions. Much of my current standing is based on my work in Armenia whether professional, personal or academic. Obviously, my dissertation is based on this work. I teach classes and make presentations about Armenia. Friends and colleagues treat me with high regard because of my international work and the stories and presentations I make about it since 1995. As such, having a good trip to Armenian was important to me.

These explanations are examples of two of Pierre Bourdieu's (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) three "biases in sociological research" (p. 38). My feelings about Armenia as I approached in 1997, were
bound up in the fact I was concerned about my professional (and personal) position and was susceptible to the "unthought categories of thought" (p. 40) which ultimately determine the beliefs, activities and findings of a social researcher. The same issues apply to modern tourists and social workers. My needs, some personal and some professional, were involved in feeling like I wanted Armenia to still be troubled and desperate in 1997. I believed at the time this would have given me what I needed most, an interesting and worthwhile professional and personal experience in a nonmodern land.

Whether I had a need to be an important person, to have a worthwhile social scientific experience, or whether it is some of both I do not know. It is apparent I experienced these mixed and embarrassing feelings because I was afraid my needs would not be met on this trip. My selfish personal and professional interests determined my mixed feelings and had I ignored them, would have shaped my behavior in and interpretation of Armenia. In other words, the "aboutness" of my work, in this case my feelings about Armenia, are ultimately the product of my interests (Hall, 1990, p. 26). Had I not reacted against my mixed feelings on the airplane, I ran a greater risk of becoming Rakowski's (1993) ugly scholar. Obviously, I had much more at stake in this trip than simply the well-being of the Armenian people.

Changes

The theme of this trip was change and difference. As I discuss
below, life in Yerevan had changed since 1995. In fact, many people in the city now lived what appeared to be a normal life. Walking the streets of Yerevan was quite different this year. Parks, fountains, and cafes were active. Homes were lit at night, street-side commerce appeared healthy and the smell of Armenian barbecue was everywhere. Armenians seemed alive again. Communities were rebuilt, networks reestablished and a sense of hope for the future was apparent in many people I met. Quite a contrast to the Yerevan I knew in 1995.

Yerevan was not the only site of change. I, too was different on this trip. I was not the same tourist I was in the past. In fact, I believe I may have abandoned my tourist role altogether. These changes were partially caused by the new experiences I discussed above, but not entirely. In 1997, Yerevan was a familiar place. When I arrived I felt like I was at home among friends and colleagues with whom I had shared a difficult experience. In 1995 they allowed me "in" their lives near the end of the most difficult period in their history, besides the genocide. So, while I was privileged to participate in their difficult time, they too participated in mine.

In this section I discuss change and changes. The first section reviews changes in my approach and adjustment to their history and culture primarily related to the historical and contemporary connections between the 1915 genocide and the Nagorno-Karabakh War with Azerbaijan. The second section presents the most noticeable
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297-299

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referring to the Turks recent military foray into Iraq after one faction of Kurds. They also claim that Iraq’s attack on the Kurds after the Gulf War was aided and abetted by the Turks. (p. 38)

I have come across no professionally written evidence which suggests the Turks have an innate desire, either biological or socially, toward the commission of genocide. This is an interesting and collectively self-serving view of history mixing fact and fiction. The truth is the Turks committed the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and attacked the Kurds in Iraq in recent years. It is pure speculation the Iraqi attempt at genocide against the northern Kurds following the Gulf War was done with the complicity of the Turks. I find this hard to believe given the United States was seeking to intervene in the situation--albeit in a shamefully ineffective way--from their military bases located in Turkey.

The fiction is the Turks have a natural tendency toward genocide. It is true, at different points in history the Turkish government has acted brutally towards groups of people. However, this belief confuses wartime actions with specific acts of genocide, as it is defined the United Nations Convention on Genocide (See Chapter IV). I am not defending Turkish actions at anytime during their history. I am only concerned here with the issue of whether genocide is in their blood. The Armenian Genocide occurred in the midst of a confluence of events including a crushing defeat of the Ottoman military by the Russians during World War One near Baku, in what is now Azerbaijan (Malkasian, 1996; Suny, 1993). After this defeat, they turned their attention to the Armenians living in Eastern Turkey.
where they proceeded to murder more than one million Armenians in a few short years. They found an enemy they could create and defeat, although this enemy was comprised of mostly women and children.

Armenian hatred of the Turks runs so deep it is reasonable to expect them to believe such things. I believe an atrocity like genocide is beyond reasonable human explanation. The Ottomans were weak and brutal people who exercised their power over a defenseless people. Yet, contemporary Armenian ideology is self-serving because it helps maintain the hatred and loathing of the Turks by the populace. It also serves to make sense of this senseless event in Armenia’s long history. From the Armenian perspective, if the Turks are naturally predisposed to genocide they are people to be hated and ultimately destroyed. Had I lost my ancestors in the Genocide, I would probably agree with the Armenians too.

It is hard to describe, yet easy to understand the depth of Armenian hostility towards Turkey. In fact, I met many Armenians who believe any personal or official contact with the Turks should be considered treasonous. These Armenians would rather starve than deal with Turkey. Yet, another faction of Armenians—the majority as best I could surmise—is willing to negotiate with the Turks in order to relax the blockade so trade routes can reopen. Despite this somewhat conciliatory attitude on the part of many Armenians, their historical hatred for their enemy persists. Johnson (1997) states that

most colleagues said they cannot stand to hear the Turkish language. They hate them with all their soul. They now say
that even an official apology by Turkey will not settle the account. Most I met say they are in favor of her government’s recent open trade policy with the Turks—we have to eat—but would rather have nothing to do with a Turk personally. Sola said her sister feels the same way. I guess in Germany, she was confronted with Turks who were colleagues of her husband. One day they came to her home for something, and she (Sona’s sister) asked them to leave. This attitude is pervasive here. Sola said that her great-grandparents on both sides of her family were killed in the genocide in 1915. My guess is that there are very few living here today that did not lose family to the Turks. (p. 15)

Genocide and War: Historical Connection

In 1997 the Armenians were limited trading partners with the Turkish government and there was a commercial air connection between Istanbul and Yerevan. This is new since my visit in 1995. Many Armenians, including their central government, adopted a more pragmatic approach to relations with Turkey out of necessity. Yet the hostility between the two countries has not ceased. In my discussions with Armenian colleagues (Johnson, 1997), the importance of the Genocide in their history was made crystal clear time and again.

The most overriding theme of this conversation was that the 1915 genocide is the most important event in the life of an Armenian. It defines them, and it is a contemporary issue as well as an historical one. It cannot will not go away, lest it were to happen again, according to the group. It is in the hearts, minds, and daily conversations today. One member stated—and all others agreed—that the genocide has, in fact never stopped. (p. 37)

Even when we discussed the Nagorno-Karabakh question participants began talking about the Turks. No matter which question I asked, they moved the discussion from war to the Turks. While almost everyone agreed the Nagorno-Karabakh situation was the most
immediately threatening issue to their national well-being, they discussed it in the context of their hostility towards Turkey.

Obviously, I still was not making the connection between these two events. So, I (Johnson, 1997) asked the inevitable question,

"OK, so that’s the Turks. But your war is with Azerbaijan. I don’t understand the connection, other than the Turks and Azeri’s are allies. It’s the Azeri’s who killed Armenians at Sumgait. What’s the Turks got to do with it?" (p. 38)

I only asked this question in one meeting. The participants looked at me with a look somewhere between astonishment and recognition. I was finally getting the clear picture. They knew at that moment this American was ready to listen and learn. Their answer, after a few minutes of laughing and discussion in Armenian so I was unable to understand what they said about me, was "Don’t forget Jerry, you must remember history" (Johnson, 1997, pp. 38-39). Oh yes, history. The most important aspect of Armenian culture. No wonder I could not understand, they wanted me to look at history when at home I am used to ignoring it. I never made the connection between these events. While this is only one aspect of Armenian life and culture, in their eyes, I was simply another American tourist on assignment in Armenia until I understood it.

Before telling me what I needed to hear the group told about an historical Islamic desire called the Greater Tehran movement. In my research since I returned from Yerevan I have been unable to find any literature documenting this movement but the Armenians believed it was an historical fact. According to the Armenians the Muslims, based in Iran, have embarked on a slow and deliberate movement to
take over central Europe in order to form Greater Tehran. Their goal is to make all of eastern and central Europe one Muslim brotherhood. As such, the efforts by Turkey and Azerbaijan to conquer Armenia is but one step in the process of the greater expansionist goal. Accordingly, Armenia—along with the Republic of Georgia—is one of two lone Christian holdouts in the Transcaucasus region standing in the way of the realization of Greater Tehran. According to this group Armenia's ultimate victory over the Azeri's serves a bigger world purpose, to stop the Iranians from establishing an Islamic foothold across the region.

For this reason the war with Azerbaijan is also a war against Turkey and Iran indirectly. Yet, there is a more significant and, in my opinion, real reason for the direct connection between the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the Armenian Genocide. This is related to conditions in Nagorno-Karabakh and its similarity to the social and political conditions in Turkey just before the 1915 genocide. To Armenians the conditions are astonishingly similar. The connection is made stronger between the two events by the pogrom in Sumgait in 1989 just before the war began. Johnson (1997) goes on to say, yet, I understand how they feel, and why. This is a remarkably similar situation to conditions in Western Armenian just prior to the 1915 genocide. Karabakh is an area separated from Armenia, mostly inhabited by Armenians, that is under threat from Muslim people (Azeri's) whom the Armenians claim are simply Turks by another name. In other words, it is not a real homeland, only an extension of Turkey as part of the Greater Tehran movement. Because of their long history and the importance the Armenians place on homeland, they look down on the Azeri's as a real people in their own right as
nothing but re-settled Turks. I don't know if any of this is true at all, mind you! I haven't read this in history. I am after all talking to a very partisan group of people. . . . In fact, what they (I mean everybody I spoke with about this) say is that the Karabakh question calls to consciousness memories, fears and hatred of the Turks remaining from the genocide. (pp. 33-34)

To the Armenians, this war is an extension of their historical battle with Turkey. It also brings forth memories of the Genocide and for good reason. According to my Armenian colleagues and friends, the Karabakh Armenians are poised to become victims of a new genocide; perhaps the first genocide of the Twenty First Century. In fact (Johnson, 1997) the Sumgait massacre is called the New Genocide by Armenians:

Today, the Nagorno-Karabakh War is the issue, and they reference this in wide ranging discussion, because it touches every part of their being. It is the continuation of the 1915 genocide, to them, in very real terms. They believe it has not only occurred again (Sumgait, 1989), but that it could reoccur at any moment, either in Karabakh before the settlement, or after a settlement. (pp. 37-38)

Armenians feel they cannot escape history. It is past, present and future; like a boomerang always circling back upon them. This war is the 1915 genocide coming back to their everyday lives. It never ended and, like I said in Chapter IV, the Armenians have never forgotten. The sense I got was the Armenians believe they are standing on the tracks about to get run over by a speeding train and they cannot move out of the way. These feelings are inevitable given the current situation. They were slaughtered in the first genocide of the twentieth century and now believe they ironically, will become the first genocide of the next century as well. They feel their
death coming and are helpless to do anything about it. As such, because of history the Armenians have no faith the international community will help avert this historical certainty—they never have in the past.

The Future

If the current situation is primed for genocide, what would a satisfactory settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh question be according to the Armenians? I asked this direct question of each group (Johnson, 1997) and received essentially the same answer from all participants:

For the Armenians, there is no solution to the Karabakh question. If Karabakh is left with Azerbaijan, Armenians will be persecuted. If it is left alone as an independent state, the Armenians will feel persecuted because they are sure the next genocide is coming, and they will demand protection from outside. If Karabakh is given to Armenia, they believe they will be attacked and slaughtered, and because of world politics, nobody will help them like in 1915. (p. 32)

This is an example of the fatalistic world view most Armenians have about the war, and life. They believe nothing can or will be done to protect them. Why should they believe otherwise. As I documented throughout this study Armenia is often a victim of adverse international politics and decision-making. The last six years of independence are the longest since ancient times where they have not been conquered by an oppressive and dominant world power. They are a small and weak country, immensely vulnerable to the ebb and flow of regional and world politics. Armenia has little diplomatic power and no loyal allies. From a geopolitical perspective, since
the collapse of the Soviet Union Armenia has little to offer any
country. They have few natural resources and little else to offer
a world power. The United States does not need Armenia, we have
Turkey as our outpost in the region. Perhaps only Russia—if they
want a border presence with NATO—could find strategic benefit
through an alliance with Armenia. Yet, this is just what I believe
it will take for Armenia to survive—a loyal and protective ally.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union the United States
has provided aid and assistance to Armenia. Yet recent trends sug­
gest, at least to the Armenians, their relationship with our country
is unstable at best. Recently large oil reserves were discovered in
the Caspian Sea off the coast of Azerbaijan. Almost immediately the
United States government, along with Russia, began putting diplomatic
pressure on the Armenians and Azerbaijanis to settle their dispute
(Noyan Tapan News Service, 8 August 1997). It is clear both coun­
tries want the oil, and the war stands in the way of achieving their
goal. Where does this leave Armenia? Not in very good shape I fear.
They have no oil; only history and grievances.

Often, I was called upon to discuss American policy toward
Armenia and Azerbaijan; to try and explain why the United States
government would suddenly begin talking to a country—Azerbaijan—
who for years has been unable to receive American foreign aid be­
because of the blockade. I tried to explain American pragmatism and
the unending drive of capitalism but the Armenians would not hear of
it. They, you see, stand on principle. The United States does not.
This is a point I did not wish to argue with them because I fully agree with their position.

In my view (Johnson, 1997), after coming to understand the Armenian perspective the future of the Nagorno-Karabakh question is bleak indeed:

So, as you can see, there is no solution for Armenia. What next? The Americans and Russians have presented a plan and they are working hard to solve this question. All Armenians agree there will be a solution very soon. See the problem? There will be war again here, in my opinion, and very soon--in fact, anytime now. There continue to be bomb attacks along the frontier, in fact, there have been two since I arrived. The war will begin after the brokered solution and it will be started by Armenians, probably after many rumors and false claims are made (I assume false) about the beginning of genocide. Very soon I believe, within 1 year. (p. 34)

I sincerely hope I am wrong about this. Yet, despite these challenges to their future, looking at Armenian history gives one a sense of hope they will survive in some way, whatever might befall them in the near future. Johnson (1997) goes on:

Yet, here is Armenia. Conquered and starved--murdered and then murdered again. Lost, surrounded, and largely forgotten by the world. Yet, they retain a depth. They are like an iceberg, with great depth below the surface to stabilize their existence in uneven waters. So, when the weather changes, some ice melts but there is enough below the surface to survive. When rough waters arise, they may rock and even tip over, but spring back upright because they are balanced. Some even was broken off by Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Russia, they just continue to float. (p. 26)

In the remainder of this chapter I discuss the changes which have occurred in Armenia since my trip in 1995. In many respects this was not the same country I visited two years earlier. The changes in their life and routines was, at least on the surface, remarkable. There were other changes too which I discuss below;
changes in myself occurring as a result of my 1995 life-lesson in this country. Before I move on to this discussion I offer the following journal entry, written in a moment of reflection after one of the three discussion groups where I finally became a student of Armenian history and culture. My Armenian friends and colleagues finally got me to understand their world view. I (Johnson, 1997) was left with the following thoughts:

I wonder, how long will this all last here? These days of seeming improvement, relative prosperity and light. Are the Armenians on the road to progress and progressive modern life, or are they destined to fall back like I saw the Albanians do? History suggests that it is inevitable they will fall back into poverty as a conquered nation. I hope I never see or hear about them again as starving Armenians. (pp. 35-36)

Daily Life

The engines were whining, straining to carry the twenty or so passengers from Amsterdam to Yerevan. Once again I was flying Armenian Airlines except this time I was different. Rather than be afraid, this time "gallows" humor took over. Something about wondering when the wings would fall off kept my new friends from Switzerland and myself from worrying about the strange noises coming from the engines. I happened to look through the small round window in the cabin to see something quite shocking, albeit something one would expect to see during a night-time approach to a city where 1.5 million people reside. The first thing I (Johnson, 1997) noticed, as we prepared to nose-dive for a landing were city lights! Lights were everywhere, across the frontier and the city. As we flew over Yerevan toward the airport, was beautifully lit up. Electricity! People had told me that since the
power plant began operating 18 months ago, most Armenians have 24 hour electricity. The airport was brightly lit and I could see the city. Certainly different from before. (p. 4)

The lights came back on in Armenia in late 1995, courtesy in large part to the resurrection of the Medzamor nuclear power plant. Since that time electricity has been available in most areas in and around Yerevan for a flat-rate monthly fee. People who have the money to afford the monthly electric bill have electricity twenty-four hours per day. Those who do not are still in the dark much of the time unless they have a left-line. Flying overhead, Yerevan actually looked like a city instead of a sea of nothingness. Also, the people I saw after landing looked different. It was immediately noticeable in their countenance and activities they counted themselves among the living again. After landing and making my way quickly through customs, I found my colleagues (Johnson, 1997) and began the 30 minute ride to the hotel:

I am amazed at the activity on the streets. There were cafés and lights and groups of people everywhere. When I was last here, nobody was out after dark. There were no lights, anywhere. This place was evacuated after dark. Not now. There are people and families walking around, groups gathered under street lights and in outdoor café's talking, laughing, and drinking. Barbecues were smoking everywhere, especially on Horovatz, or barbecue street. My hotel is on this street. It gets its nickname because it is famous for the row of BBQ pits that line the streets for what seem to be miles on end. In fact, as I sit here in my 6th floor room writing, I smell barbecue wafting through my open balcony door--and it's well past midnight. The people on the streets, reminds me of Tirana Albania before all their problems began last winter. Social activity is about walking and visiting friends and family each night. It's a great way to maintain a sense of community. (p. 5)

Life was back in Yerevan. At first glance the differences
were astounding. Everywhere I looked people were out and about. Parts of the city, which before were empty and desolate, were now full of social life. There were cafés everywhere. And of course where there is a café, there is America: Coca-Cola, Marlboro, Fanta, L & M cigarettes, Mars, and Snickers bars. Consumerism arrived in Armenia and was running rampant. Because of the Armenian appetite for American junk food, this phase of consumerism is called the snickerization of Armenia (Reuters News, 16 March 1994). This assessment certainly appeared accurate. Signs of American capitalism in the form of brightly colored umbrellas and lighted signs are scattered everywhere and anywhere there is room. Over one stretch of landscape on Barbecue street I counted nine consecutive outdoor cafés filled with customers.

Arriving at the hotel sometime well after midnight I was surprised to see an outdoor café next to the large water fountain spewing multi-colored streams of water into the air. There was music cascading over what appeared to be about 200 people sitting, standing, and walking around the fountain. In 1995 this area was overrun with knee-high weeds and the fountain was dry and rusted from lack of use. There was no café, no music and most of all, no people. Occasionally I would go out and walk around the large, empty fountain to relax or exercise after dinner. I was always alone on these jaunts. During that trip the fountain was filled only during the weekend of the Genocide commemoration. Even then it did not spray water like it was this night, in fact, all the fountains in
the city are filled, working and well-lit at night. They are large and beautiful fountains, each encased in stone and filled with water used by the children for swimming during hot daytime hours. One fountain near the center of Yerevan is over three city blocks long. In and around Republic Square there are two fountains which serve as a main gathering site for people and groups of all ages. The people walk, drink coffee, soda or beer, and play an Armenian version of the game backgammon. The kiosks at every fountain look the same wherever I go across the city. Cafés and fountains play a significant role in Armenian social life, as I observed in the journal passage (Johnson, 1997) below:

Armenians love water fountains. They are everywhere and really draw a crowd when they are filled and working. These appear to be the main gathering points in Yerevan. There is at least one in every section of town and they are packed. During the day, small children swim in them (never adults of course).

There's this social ritual that goes on every night at the fountain that is quite interesting. Women of all ages come to the fountain every night. They get dressed up and either sit and talk to the men that go by or walk around and around the fountain, parading like models on a runway. I wonder if it is a mating ritual, mothers trying to marry off their daughters, or hookers trying to make a buck. I have received at least five marriage proposals from mothers of single women, during my nights at the various fountains. There is a café at the fountain in front of the hotel. Only men and escorted women seem to sit here. The other women parade by. Its quite comical if you ask me, but it is what happens in most singles bars in at home At night, it is a real fashion show.

Sola says there is an unofficial dress code for women. Since they cannot buy big houses or take trips, women spend their money on nice clothes. They are expected to dress nicely in public. She says it's not for men, and I agree with her to a point. But others have said that this is a code developed for and by men. (pp. 20-21).
Throughout the city, every night of the week, the ritual is the same. Wherever there is a water fountain there is a gathering like the one I described in the journal entry. It reminds me of an open-air singles bar. Lively music is the backdrop for single women and men trying to meet each other. Yet, on the Armenian nightly singles scene mothers make and enforce the mating rules. Mothers, dressed equally as well as their daughters, sit off to one side talking amongst themselves while maintaining a close watch over their daughters on the one hand and the men on the other. They are always on the look-out for a likely marriage candidate for their daughters. Like I said earlier, I received five marriage proposals in three weeks. Every so often a woman with her daughter and an English-speaker in tow, approached to politely ask if I would consider marrying her "innocent and beautiful Armenian daughter" (Johnson, 1997, p. 22). I admit it, I was flattered.

These are relatively quiet gatherings which include the whole family. The mating ritual is only one part of the social scene. Small children also race around the fountain. Most of the young boys swim while the young girls walk in their own groups, mimicking their older sisters. The next generation is being trained to carry-on this community ritual, providing an excellent visual example of life-learning in the Armenian family. The atmosphere is happy and upbeat in stark contrast to 1995.

Having electricity provides an interesting contrast between Yerevan in 1995 and 1997. As I stated earlier, Yerevan was dark,
quiet, and devoid of social life in 1995. They had no sense of
community nor outlet at days end for socializing or mating. Every
hour of each day was spent trying to survive the harsh reality of
the blockade and economic collapse. Life was serious. There was no
time nor energy for social life or community. They had to survive
harsh living conditions the best they knew how at the time.

In 1997 conditions could not have been more different. Lights
shone everywhere. Colorfully lit fountains, street lights, traffic
signals, and rows of apartment buildings all glowed against the
night sky. Kiosks, cafés, restaurants, and bars were open for busi­
ness and fully stocked with the latest cold or hot beverage, food,
and ice cream. Music blared from sidewalk boom boxes announcing the
site where cassette tapes could be purchased; flowed outside from
disco bars or the latest craze, karaoke bars featuring sing-along
videos of Elton John. There was no music in Yerevan before unless
it came from a local minstrel on a street corner playing a small
wooden flute. Life appeared, at least on the surface, to be normal
again.

One night I heard a song emanating from outside of my hotel
room at the fountain café. I commented in my journal (Johnson, 1997)
about this particular song:

Interesting - as I am writing this, over the music system near
the fountain in front of the hotel is a Louis Armstrong ver­
tion of an old Negro spiritual--Let My People Go. I guess
applies here more than the people may know. (p. 10)

I found it ironic a historically oppressed people sang and
danced to a song by a member of an oppressed minority group calling
for and end to oppression. If the Armenian people at the fountain knew what Armstrong was singing they would broadcast it loud and clear toward the Turkish and Azerbaijani frontier. Yet, because of language the meaning of the spiritual went unheard although I could not ignore the symbolism.

Electricity also provided relief in another important area of Armenian life—winter. Looking back, the stories I heard from friends and colleagues about winter were the most painful for me to hear. Perhaps I was affected most by these stories because I live in a part of the United States which experiences harsh winters? Or, like I stated in Chapter IV, perhaps I felt guilt for "not having done enough to prevent or ameliorate the negative consequences of the modernization process" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 303). Whatever the reason, when I re-experienced their stories while writing this study I was again emotionally affected by the thought of a whole country huddled together in small rooms where even clothing and being indoors provided no relief from the bitter cold of winter.

Yet, since the return of electricity and the opening of limited trade with Turkey, winters are no longer the tragedy for all people they once were. In communist times homes were heated by electricity. Now that it was available and affordable for most, they had heat again. There are still parts of the city without electricity for periods of time, especially in the poorer parts of the city. In this way, life is becoming more like the United States. If one can afford to pay the bill, electricity plentiful. However,
if not they remain in the dark and cold during the winter. Social classes have begun to emerge in post-1995 Armenia.

As I will discuss in more detail later, I was most pleased on this trip because I was no longer a timid and distant observer. I was out in the Armenian world talking, walking, and interacting throughout this trip. I was not protected by my assignment and status as UNDP consultant. I had no driver, translator or schedule. I had to get around on my own. When I was with friends I resisted their desire to help me communicate. They were happy to comply with my wishes. They had many moments of laughter at my feeble yet determined attempts to communicate on my own. Hotel life provided little lifestyle advantage on this trip because most everyone had electricity and hot water. In fact, only once did the elevator work properly so I was forced, like the locals, to climb six flights of stairs to and from my room several times per day. As I reflect in the passage below, I (Johnson, 1997) suffered adjustment pains only this time it was a physical emergency, not a psychic emergency:

The differences in lifestyle here are significant compared to 1995. Even with electricity however, this is a physically difficult, yet in some ways a healthy lifestyle. I eat better (less food and chemicals, and more vegetables and fruits), and walk, walk, walk. But, this soft American is not used to the physical exertion. Not to mention, it is HOT here, most days temperatures hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit. Did I say it is taboo for adult males to wear shorts, even in this oppressive heat? I am hot, tired, and the foot I injured here the last time is swollen and sore again. I cannot believe how out of shape I am. On the average day here I must walk seven to ten miles. Tonight I was talking to Eda, my Swiss friend, who said they also walk and ride bikes most of the time, so they are able to stay in shape, like the Armenians. She then said that Americans have to spend money to do what the others do as a natural course of life--exercise. (p. 17)
This was a new type of adjustment for me, but one I was more comfortable experiencing. As a former athlete, I am use to pain in my legs. A little physical discomfort is easier to adjust to than the emotional adjustment issues I dealt with in 1995.

In 1997 I did not experience the first two phases of resocialization described earlier. I had no sense of heightened anxiety or behavioral regression. In 1995 I was anxious and timid, unconsciously (I never realized it) afraid to venture out into the Armenian community alone. My behavior--needing translators, drivers, and help wherever I went--regressed from that of a confident professional adult to a dependent, timid child.

I felt immediately comfortable with daily life; having and knowing the routines I needed to thrive in their community. The physical pain I experienced was a reminder of 1995. The foot I injured in the pothole near Republic Square became sore and remained that way throughout this trip. However, like I stated above, I would rather suffer physical pain in my foot than the adjustment pains of 1995.

On the surface, primarily because of electricity, it appeared the Armenians had a good and comfortable existence. Compared to 1995 this is true. But underneath the apparent happiness there was talk of problems. Literally everybody I spoke to in Yerevan said the same thing: the changes are superficial and did not make life easier or better for the average Armenian.

Below I update various issues I discussed in Chapter IV, by
providing a sample of comments from my journal in 1997 regarding
many of the issues I mentioned in-depth earlier:

Drugs

If you remember, my first trip to Yerevan was in response to a
reported drug problem among Armenian youth. However, after I arrived
and met with several hundred people I--and they--concluded there was
no significant problem with drug abuse in 1995. With the changes in
their lifestyle and economy, I was interested to know how the same
people felt about this issue in 1997. Below is what I wrote (Johnson,
1997) summarizing these conversations:

The same people who, in 1995 said there was no way a drug pro-
blem existed in Armenia, now say otherwise. They didn't come
out and say, beyond a shadow of a doubt, there was growing
problems. But, many people said unequivocally, that adults
were using far more illegal drugs in 1997 than in 1995, and
that drug problems are not far off, if not already prevalent.
(p. 32)

This revelation surprised me. However, I was not surprised
that the people now believed a drug problem was beginning. I was
surprised because so many people admitted it so freely and openly.
During communist times admitting the existence of social problems to
foreigners was not permitted. Any hang-over from those times now
appeared gone. This confirmed for me they people were probably tel-
ling the truth about their condition in 1995 as well. The Armenians
reported that while alcohol use has not changed, in their opinion
the improving economy and increased number of foreigners was respons-
able for what they believed was a steady increase in adults using
and abusing drugs in Armenia. Most people still believe young people are not significantly involved. In fact, two former UNDP colleagues believed the project I started in 1995 was more relevant and needed in 1997 Yerevan than it was two years earlier.

Education

In 1995 I visited several schools and spoke with university students about the importance of education in Armenian life. At the time Armenians believed they were the most educated of the former Soviet republics. In fact, the literacy rate for people over the age of twelve was 99 percent and more than 56 percent of women were university educated (Suny, 1993). Clearly (Johnson, 1997), over the last two years this priority changed:

Several people told me intellectuals are passé. Engineers, chemists, professors, social scientists, etc., are all out of work. Simultaneously, they say that early schools now are so badly run that students only learn Armenian and mathematics. This is surprising since, the last time I was here education was a hallmark of Armenian pride. They say that the main indication of this is that books can be purchased very cheaply. This is new and, according to my friends, indicative of the fact there is no emphasis on academics. I guess book prices are like the Dow Jones Average for the worth of intellectuals. (pp. 36-37)

In 1995, Armenians took pride in their educational system and were worried not to allow new changes to negatively affect the education of their children. Apparently their worst fears are being realized. In these times of rampant, unfettered attempts at capitalism the Armenian culture supported people finding ways to make quick money for their family and not education. They did not see the con-
connection between the two: education and income. Many told me about efforts to send their children out of the country for a better education. This was a remarkable admission for people so proud of quality education. As I will discuss more in the next section, unfortunately people tried to make their fortune selling soda, coffee and pizza instead of through production.

**Status of Women**

Johnson (1997) comments,

she told me about the problems she faces because she moved into her own apartment. She lives alone, away from her family, as a single woman nearing 30 years old. Her mother calls on the hour (2-3 times while I was there), and people constantly ask how she dared to move out on her family. She said its time for a revolution in Armenia for women. According to her, parents still often make relationship decisions for their daughters.

She faces gender discrimination at work too. She is a director in a predominately male company, the only telephone company in Armenia. She is the only woman in a director-level position and that she is left out of all decisions that are important. The men, I guess, treat her second-class, like she is not able to make business decisions. This is an American company, in partnership with Armenian government. So, I asked whether the Americans or Armenians treat her worse. She said it did not matter. All of the men in the company treat her the same way. (p. 8)

Conditions for women had not changed in the two years since my last trip. Although I sensed there was less acceptance by many women of their second-class status. Yet, like in America and elsewhere around the world, Armenian women were still working a double shift. At least the return of electricity ended their need for a third shift. Armenian women are still expected to remain home until mar-
riage, marry the man chosen by their family, and keep the family stable and healthy.

One of the NGO's which evolved from my work two years ago is called the Center for Gender Studies. In 1996 they completed the first intensive study of living conditions for women in Armenia. The results were written and disseminated informally throughout Yerevan. This became a controversial report and caused my colleagues in the Center a number of problems. Local governmental officials withdrew financial support of their efforts and at least one women claims she was threatened with jail for her activism. Yet, this group is preparing to expand the study in 1998.

Political Instability

Johnson comments (1997) about political instability by stating that

the daily lives of the people here are more determined by the macro sociopolitical, economic, geopolitical, and military factors than they are by the local, daily everyday life-world issues. This is a very small country, standing on very fragile economic, social, and political ground. The turmoil around the last presidential election is an example. There are claims it was stolen by the president, which caused a riot by the opposition resulting in a period of martial law. This is evidence of why I believe this country has much more upheaval and turmoil to come before it finds its way. Anybody who wins an election here will be accused of corruption and vote stealing. For these reasons, politically, Armenia has a tough road ahead, in my opinion. In addition, the Nagorno-Karabakh issue is looming very large on their immediate horizon. With the recent discovery of new oil in Caspian Sea off the coast of Azerbaijan and our (U.S.) apparent willingness to host the Azeri president, this could be a killer in the very near future. (pp. 30-31)

Armenians, like Americans, love a scandal. The Presidential
election of 1996 is the latest political football in their never-ending search for a good conspiracy. People with whom I spoke are convinced the President, Levon Ter Petrosyan, stole the election by political means because the opposition actually won. There were a few days of rioting after the announcement of Ter Petrosyan’s victory including street violence by opposition party supporters. This type of action, along with impending movement on the Nagorno-Karabakh question and the economy, suggest that Armenia is on very unstable political ground in 1997.

An ideological battle is still raging in Armenia between the forces for democracy and a return to communism. While conditions have changed for the better they are still sufficiently bad for the communists to influence a significant number of people to believe a return to the past would bring about a return to their previous lifestyle. The communist party fared well in the 1996 parliamentary elections.

Yet, there are forces at work to improve the acceptance of democracy as well. Another small group of Armenians from our original planning group in 1995 started an NGO called the Democracy Union. Their goal is to publish written materials to educate the people on how to participate in a democratic election. For the 1996 election they published and distributed over 5000 copies of two books; one which describes the platform of all the major political parties in Armenia, and one giving voting instruction and the location of polling places throughout Armenia. The push and pull be-
tween the past and present continues in this still young democratic country. It will be interesting over the next decade to see how government and politics in Armenian evolve.

Needless to say, despite the obvious changes in Armenian life this is a country with many significant social, economic, and political struggles left to fight before Armenia can be considered a stable country. However, in the short term Armenia looked, sounded, and felt like a reawakened country in 1997. Of course, they really had no choice. Conditions could not get much worse than they were in 1995.

Economy

Besides the obvious affect of electricity on the appearance of change, the number of renovated stores, kiosks, and other businesses was striking. At first glance, it looked like Armenia had experienced an economic boom in the last two years. It reminded me, in many ways, of Albania in January 1997 before the collapse of their pyramid economy. Stores are open where once empty and ruined buildings stood. Food is plentiful, the main streets are repaired, and there is a new fashion district near the Republic Square. According to Johnson (1997),

even the Armenians want the glitz of capitalism. The have a street here (Abovian Street) that they call our Rodeo Drive. On it are new stores like Rafael, Armani, etc. The locals say they never see anybody shopping or buying from them. Nobody can afford the clothes, yet they are open. As more than one Armenian quipped, could they be washing money in these stores? (p. 36)
Throughout my stay, the Armenians I spoke to consistently said the actual conditions were not as good as they appeared. The economy in fact, was not much better in 1997 than 1995. For people in the mafia, with supportive relatives in the Diaspora, and relatives of government officials life had improved. In fact, several people said the only people not still mired in poverty were criminals or those with rich relatives. Everyone else is still poor. The only money being made is through food and beverage services. Many Armenians joke that Armenia has more pizza restaurants and cafés than any other country in the world. Upon closer examination most of the new businesses were in fact cafés, restaurants, and small kiosks. As I stated (Johnson, 1997) at the time,

most people believe the apparent economic improvements are a charade. There still are no jobs. Didn’t I see that in Albania? It is strange that all this has happened, yet the Dram is lower against the dollar (500 vs. 400 per 1 USD) than it was in 1995. I guess the World Bank infused capital into the country that has artificially kept inflation down. I wonder what will happen here in this small country? I keep remembering the false hope in Albania--only to be dashed by pyramid schemes. (p. 15)

I was struck by the comparison between Armenia in August 1997 and Albania in January 1997. I witnessed the same characteristics yet the Armenians were different in one critical way. They did not believe in their economic improvement. They were not impressed. The Armenians seemed aware of how fragile and unstable their present economy actually is. Whereas in Albania the people believed they were on economically solid ground. They dismissed any question about the worth or safety of the pyramid schemes and would not en-
tertain discussion laced with even the smallest amount of skepticism. This is one reason why the collapse became so socially and politically catastrophic.

Armenians seem skeptical. In surveying their history, I believe typical Armenian life-learning prepares them well for the world in which they live. Very little in their history suggests that conditions today will last much past tomorrow. This is a message I (Johnson, 1997) consistently heard during my trip:

She said Armenians have a deep respect for history and the past. They are quick to forget bad times, if those bad times are about things like living conditions. She also said that Armenians do not put much stock in the present, because their lives change so much it does not pay to do so. (p. 24)

There are so many barriers to economic stability in Armenia it is no wonder the people are skeptical. Only a very few government and mafia elites are reaping the benefits in 1997. For the masses life remains much as it was in the past. Most are without work and there are few prospects on the horizon. Foreign investment is minimal because of a poor business climate. One factor making it unlikely foreigners will invest any time soon is corruption in the form of financial bribes and pay-off’s. At all levels of society problems are solved and favors won through bribes. Whether bribes are used to avoid a traffic violation, customs inspection, or to open a local business everyone wants payment. It is how I learned to avoid trouble. On several occasions I paid to be left alone or get what I wanted or needed. I learned that $20 USD could solve problems with customs officials, get services at the hotel, and
avoid a police inspection when my friend was stopped for speeding.

In the following journal passage I discuss the overall business cli-

mate as I (Johnson, 1997) interpreted it at the time:

Yet, there are obvious holes in this improvement. All busi-
ness is service: I sell you soda, you sell me pizza. People
are simply passing around the same money. In this way, things
really haven't changed much. There are just more of them. I
took a tour through the industrial section today, its dead.
Factories that produce goods and employ people are nonexist-
ent. They are not making anything here. They have to get
business investment or this will all collapse someday soon,
like when the World bank stops loaning millions to keep the
Dram afloat. I doubt things will change soon.

I agree with Eda, the Armenians will not have businesses
generating jobs here until the corruption problem is solved.
No outside enterprise will invest here until they don't have
to pay-off administrators, mafia, and every small and broke
bureaucrat between Yerevan and the Airport just to open a
business in Armenia. The head of KLM terminal here told
horror stories about pay-off's. The people in power cannot
or care not to see the net effect this has on outside invest-
ment. Until now, the world bank and humanitarian aid groups
have been carrying them. Soon, this will stop. I see this
week in the newspaper that Armenia is no longer considered a
hungry country so they have been removed from the World Food
Programme's priority donation list. As these things stop,
reality may set in. (pp. 27-28)

In the new world order the Armenians are trying to find their
place. After living as part of a closed, command economy for so
many years they are struggling to grasp what it takes for prosperity
in a free market global economy. At this stage I see them as still
trying to overcome the years of darkness and destitution through
short-term, highly unstable economic means. My impression is there
is nothing to their economy and an Albanian-like crash could occur
at any moment. The biggest risk now to the Armenian economy comes
from risks and uncertainty in the political realm, especially relat-
ed to the Nagorno-Karabakh question. Depending upon how and when this issue is settled, and the role Russia and the United States play in that solution, will greatly determine Armenia's economic future and therefore, their future as a sovereign nation.

**Final Thoughts on Conditions**

Armenians have good reason to be pleased with their living conditions in 1997. The availability of electricity and water along with superficial improvements in the economy has eased the immediate burden for most Armenians. Life now involves more than basic survival. They have re-established a sense of community through social life which in turn eased their collective sense of depression and hopelessness. The atmosphere in Yerevan in 1997 is dramatically different than it was just over two years earlier.

Yet, the Armenian people also have a sense the difficult times are not over. They understand that with improvement comes a new set of social problems, often caused by relative deprivation. In 1995, everybody was poor. In the past the masses received their living as a right of citizenship in the Soviet system. In 1997 most are still poor while some prosper beyond the Armenian imagination. As social classes develop and solidify through capitalism, the Armenians will face many of the social inequities so familiar in the United States and other capitalist countries. For the first time in generations Armenians must see people--other than government elites--who are rich compared to themselves. Just how the Armenian people and their
government respond to inevitable class conflict will be interesting to observe over the next several years.

The Republic of Armenia continues in a state of transition and there is little agreement about exactly where they have come from and where they are heading. It is impossible to predict their economic, political, or social future, especially given the long history of rapid change in Armenian life. Yet, after five years of free markets and the promise of the good life under a capitalist system, Armenians still face the realization their post-communist state is worse at providing necessities—not to speak of luxuries—for the people as a whole than the communist regime it replaced. While I do not believe this is any longer a call for a return to communism is strong enough to threaten the existing form of government like it was in 1995, according to Sklair (1995) this state of affairs "is a stark reminder of the hollowness of capitalist triumph" (p. 257).

As an American inclined to expect the future to be brighter than the past, coming to understand the Armenian psyche is unsettling. The Armenians live with day-to-day instability and uncertainty. They do not know what tomorrow, or next month or next year may bring. Can they count on having their place in the world in the year 2000? Certainly history suggests not. Therefore, because the future is unpredictable and the present is unpleasant they live in and through history and tradition, including the pain and suffering. In my life, the future is stable. In theirs, the past is certain.
Quite a different perspective for an American in the midst of the process of intercultural adjustment. Armenian society, in this way, stands modernity on its head in a way which is difficult for an American to grasp.

Yet, my impression is the Armenians are home again. In 1995 I believed they were strangers in their own land. In 1997 enough normalcy had returned to daily life to make the Armenians feel a sense of community which is so prominent in the cultural identity. As such, home had returned to the people; they were no longer tourists in their own country.

**Personal Changes**

I returned to Yerevan, Republic of Armenia in 1997 in search of an answer to the question, "As a result of lived experience, is it possible for an American citizen to become resocialized into a foreign culture?" In this particular study I wanted to determine whether my 1995 Armenian experience was indeed a life-lesson leading to important changes in the content of my life-learning.

Moghaddam et al., (1993) state that successful intercultural adjustment involves three elements: positive feelings and satisfaction with one's situation; the development of positive interpersonal relations with members of the host culture; and, some level of effectiveness in carrying out the necessary task at hand. As such, according to this definition intercultural adjustment means "learning to live in a new culture" (p. 137).
Similarly, Bochner (1982) calls this process culture-learning which involves the acquisition of the appropriate social skills and behaviors necessary to carry-out successful day-to-day living in a foreign culture. Brislin, Cushner, Cherrie and Yong (1986) believes this process should be broken into two categories to distinguish between the development of social skills for positive interpersonal relations and the demonstration of behaviors that result in effective accomplishment of necessary daily tasks.

The end result of this process is to move beyond the point of understanding and respecting the attitudes, values, and beliefs of the Armenian culture to a point where one comes to hold them as their own; to develop a form of "additive biculturalism" (Taylor, 1991, p. 141). As such, should I reach this stage in my adjustment process I not only will know intellectually what behaviors are appropriate in the Armenian culture but act upon this knowledge without conscious aforethought or planning (Moghaddam et al., 1993). In other words, I would shed the label of modern tourist and be of instead of in the Armenian culture.

In 1995 I was a lost and confused modern tourist. Yet the two stage process of returning to Yerevan in 1997 and reflecting upon my experience in 1995 while writing Chapter IV was at once an embarrassing and enlightening process. I was embarrassed to realize just how confused and lost—in fact, unadjusted—I was on the last trip. I honestly believed otherwise. Yes, my level of adjustment improved over the six weeks, but now I look back and understand my-
self differently. I understand that unwittingly my efforts were part of modernity's consistent attempt at the "empirical and ideological expansion of modern society" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 5). I evaluated Armenian society by American standards, observed and assessed social problems based on American knowledge, and assumed Armenians would be best served by American practices.

Personally, I was intimidated by the magnitude of difference between American and Armenian culture. In public, I tried to maintain face by acting like I was adjusted while privately I felt opposite. I lacked confidence, security and trust. I experienced a psychic emergency caused by a constant state of heightened anxiety or, radical ontological insecurity. My behavior regressed from being a confident social adult male to a dependent child in need of guidance and assistance.

I was a visitor, a tourist in unfamiliar territory expected to be an expert in my field. I tried my best to act the part, but I did not fool the Armenians. I fell victim to the positivist fallacy that I could separate my personal discomfort and uncertainty from my professional expertise, so that regardless of how insecure I was, my professional behavior would not be affected. I tried to understand the culture but ended up practicing a method of verstehen which MacCannell (1992, p. 8) says refers to "those situations in which social superiors project a singular viewpoint upon, or demand it, from social inferiors." I knew none of this before I returned to Yerevan in August 1997.
I (Johnson, 1997) speak about my project from 2 years ago. I appreciate the honest feedback from my friends. They said that the idea, while a good one, was naive at the time and that it would work better today. By naive, they meant that at that time, to think that they had the energy and desire to start a youth center was foolish. They were worried about survival in those times. The original project—a TV anti-drug campaign—was even more foolish. They said that in many ways, the reasons it didn’t last more than one year were a combination of the idea and my naiveté about Armenians and Armenia. I arrived like most Americans, with big ideas that did not fit their needs at the time. They also said that my efforts to meet with people was better than any they have seen, but I still came up with a project that I wanted, not necessarily one they wanted. Interesting feedback from friends being honest with me. (p. 9)

In 1995 I acquired one of the three elements of successful intercultural adjustment. I was able to develop close and trusting interpersonal relationships with people in Armenia. These relationships survived my two year absence and, in both 1995 and 1997, were characterized by our ability to be honest and open with each other. This is a critical first step in successful intercultural adjustment and perhaps the most difficult to accomplish. Benson (1978) and Richardson (1974) believe the development of close personal relationships with members of the new culture is closely associated with successful intercultural adjustment.

While there is further research to suggest this is a difficult accomplishment due to ethnocentrism and uneasiness on both sides (Furnham & Bochner, 1982, 1986), somehow, amidst all that occurred I managed to accomplish this task. Without my friends' and colleagues' willingness to be honest, to take me aside and teach me
appropriate behavior and communication and to teach me about their culture and history I would have lost all personal and professional credibility. As such, our relationships would have died along with my chances for intercultural adjustment.

The journal passage above demonstrates one way our relationships grew even closer in 1997. Another way was through the intensive small group discussions about the Nagorno-Karabakh War and Armenian Genocide I referenced earlier in this chapter. In the end, we—my friends and I—overcame ethnocentric differences, language barriers, cultural mistakes, and offensive remarks to develop close personal friendships which survive today. In fact I received two messages via e-mail just today while writing this part of the study. Perhaps, as an accomplishment in 1995 this became a good beginning toward my ultimate intercultural adjustment in 1997.

Comparisons to Home

Before I was homesick, but did not want to go home. I lived like I missed home; as if there was, "a homely and cozy place, indubitably one's own, to go to when the present adventure is over, or when the voyage proves to be not as adventurous as expected" (Bauman, 1995, pp. 96-97). As a modern tourist I searched for a mindset where I could "imagine roaming widely without losing_(my)_place or identity" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 2). I wanted to be in and of Armenia, but not lose home. In 1995 I was the "poster child" for the paradox of the modern tourist.
I demonstrated this by my constant comparison of Armenian life to my familiar American life. I used my routine standard of living as the reference group to evaluate Armenian life and culture. As such, with each comparison where Armenian life did not live up to my internal and idealized standards, I expressed an unconscious desire to return home where I felt safe, familiar and secure. Home, where I could be myself and relax in the comfort of knowing I was proficient at living in my routine social world, without the need for conscious thought. Or, as Bauman (1995) states, "whatever has happened to my face here, in the tourist land, or whichever mask I don, my real face is in safe keeping, pristinely clean, stain resistant, unsullied" (p. 97).

Once again it took a return to Yerevan to make this process conscious. In 1995, I did not realize the effect this had on my level of intercultural adjustment. I created a situation where my "positive feelings and satisfaction" (Moghaddam et al., 1993, p. 138) was limited by my desire to be anywhere, past or present, where I belonged. I recorded the moment (Johnson, 1997) when I realized the deleterious affect reference group comparison had on my adjustment to the Armenian culture:

In 1995 I remember comparing everything I saw here, with home. I even got scolded for doing so. Doing this caused problems for me, with my colleagues and friends, and in my local comfort level. I believe it really impeded my adjustment progress. This time, my reference group is Armenia in 1995, mixed with Albania as well. I do not compare anything to home. This definitely marks a change in me. (p. 7)

Discovering the depth of my maladjustment was slow and method-
ical. It revealed itself during conversations, lived experience, and journal writing sessions in 1997. I had a vague sense of this phenomenon in Belarus during the three weeks after I left Yerevan in 1995. I got a further sense of it in Albania earlier in 1997. Yet, it took a return to the actual scene of the first trip, in a now familiar context and around familiar people to realize the depth of my false consciousness. Before, I convinced myself I had been more than a modern tourist when in fact, I was the quintessential modern tourist who left "home secure in the knowledge that... (my)... home would always be waiting for... (me)" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 4).

Writing the journal passage above triggered another realization which became part of my conscious awakening about 1995. Johnson (1997) goes on to say,

I was thinking today about how protected I was the last trip. I was driven everywhere and always had a translator. I didn’t have to fend for myself at all. This trip is different. I find myself far more fulfilled and enlightened indeed. I want to walk this whole city, talk to people, and live without assistance the best I can. I noticed recently I have very few pictures of the city and people, like I do from Albania. That is because I was always in a car before. Not this time. This is an example, perhaps, of just how culturally unadjusted I was at the time. I remember now, I was insecure and unsure of myself. I remember worrying that my knowledge and experience wouldn’t apply here, that I was somehow unsafe although I never actually was. (pp. 6-7)

I thought I discovered myself in 1995. How wrong I was indeed. While that trip was enlightening and became the primary life-lesson triggering later change and personal development, it was my trip in 1997 that really signaled my personal self-discovery. It took a return trip to Yerevan to realize how significant a life-
lesson my 1995 trip had been. In fact, I learned it was the most important and influential life-lesson of my adult life. By pain­fully and embarrassingly discovering the depth of my turmoil and intercultural naïveté, I was on the brink of a new discovery; one which forever changed my life-learning. I learned I had indeed, through lived personal intercultural experience, been resocialized into the Armenian culture.

Achieving Personal Satisfaction

On the return trip I was on my own. I had no driver or translator, no official assignment or standing. In fact many of my friends were not aware I was even in the country because I was unable to contact them before I left home. This is how I wanted it. My experience in Albania proved the extent to which I could adjust without protection. This realization was a significant life-lesson which prepared me--along with my struggles in 1995--for this trip. In Albania I achieved the three elements of intercultural adjustment mentioned earlier. I achieved personal comfort and satisfaction, developed several excellent friendships with Albanian colleagues and students, and performed the social tasks needed to live in the Albanian social world.

In that country I learned a valuable lesson which proved useful in Yerevan too. The more open I was with colleagues and friends about my lack of culture-learning, the more quickly I was able to gain it. By eliminating the need to appear competent I actually
gained competence. Take the following journal passage (Johnson, 1997) as evidence of what I mean:

Armenians like it when I admit that now—in 1997—I realize how maladjusted and culturally naïve I was in 1995, although at the time I did not think so. I have no trouble admitting it, because not to admit it would be really naïve. They know it—I know it—and I would be diminished in their eyes if I were to deny this truth. Besides, they tell me that they don’t get a chance to see an American humble and eager to learn from them very often. (p. 10)

There was no sense acting like I was competent when everybody knew otherwise. This attitude, lacking critical self-reflexivity, is what Armenians had come to expect from Americans. By opening myself to the realization I was a foreigner in a foreign land, I was able to learn and integrate what I needed in order to adjust to their culture. This effort not only enhanced my culture-learning but reduced my sense of anxiety and discomfort at being in a new culture. I was able to expedite the process of turning radical ontological insecurity into ontological security, simply by being personally reflexive and admitting I was confused in their culture.

To the Armenians I was someone they could educate; not force-feed the cultural knowledge they knew I needed, but was unwilling to learn. Instead of a being a modern tourist trying to, "consume countries... (by attempting) to identify not with fellow tourists but with the sedentary people encountered along the way" (MacCannell, 1992, p. 4), I became a student of Armenian life and culture willing to listen, learn, and integrate everything they had to offer. The local Armenians were the experts and I was the novice.

As such, very early in this trip I accomplished the second
element of intercultural adjustment to go along with my close personal relationships: I achieved personal comfort, positive feelings, and satisfaction with myself in the Armenian culture. I believe these two elements must occur before the third, demonstrating effective local behavior, can be accomplished. Bochner (1982) and Moghaddam et al. (1993) did not address this issue sufficiently leaving the impression intercultural adjustment across the three key elements happened simultaneously. My lived experience suggests that without the development of personal relationships one cannot gain a sense of personal satisfaction with the host culture. If these issues are not resolved the individual cannot expect to gain mastery over and demonstrate the behaviors needed to effectively interact on a daily basis in the new culture. In my opinion there is a temporal order to this process which is unrecognized in the earlier literature on the subject.

Time

If it is true that developing interpersonal relationships is the most difficult task in intercultural adjustment, then this might explain why Moghaddam et al., (1993) suggest intercultural adjustment and "true acceptance of a new culture usually requires a prolonged--or even permanent--stay in the new culture" (p. 140). Without personal relationships which are open, honest, and critical an individual cannot gain the "intensive immersion in the new culture" needed for intercultural adjustment to occur (p. 140). Yet, if an
individual is able to develop close interpersonal relationships in the new culture, I believe it is possible to achieve intercultural adjustment in a much shorter time. This highlights the significance of having a local guide or teacher to assist with the process of adjustment. I believe my experiences in Armenia reported in this project supports this claim.

I made close interpersonal relationships in 1995 but realized later I was not open to their assistance and teaching to the degree I needed to be at the time. This changed in 1997, leading to the achievement of a feeling like I was in a familiar place where I no longer had the urge to leave, to find my home. Very quickly I felt my identity changing from an ethnocentric American tourist to an individual able and willing to accept the Armenian culture, lifestyle, and history as my own. The following journal entry (Johnson, 1997) exemplifies this fact:

I am comfortable here. Unlike 1995, I am out and around, walking and interacting. I remember (although it is not reflected in my journal) being afraid last time. I was sure I was going to get attacked because I was a rich American. I was afraid of the language and, I guess, the Armenian people. I was afraid of what I didn't know and of new cultural experience. Looking back, I was happy to be sheltered. (p. 34)

I feel very different this time upon arrival. Before, I was terrified. This time, I couldn't wait to get here. Even the customs ritual, with all the waiting, sweating, and examining that occurs, is no problem. No problems with lines, the people...no fear. The customs guy again looked me over, but I did not imagine the worst like 1995. (p. 4)

I discuss the third element, demonstrating appropriate local behavior, in more detail later in this section.
When I first traveled to Armenia I became smitten with their culture, people, and history. I was amazed by everything I heard and observed. I believed what I heard and turned a blind eye to anything negative. I became defensive when other Americans or internationals criticized Armenia or Armenians taking it upon myself to vehemently disagree and blame it on their ethnocentrism, or in the case of Americans, arrogance. Certainly the Americans I met were often guilty of displaying cultural arrogance towards the Armenians. Yet, I unconsciously overlooked any truth to what any American or other international worker said that was unflattering or negative about the Armenian people. I did not want to hear it. Armenia became my first love, as it were. Because this was a new experience I did not see the warts, wrinkles, and bulges in the Armenian profile. I saw beauty, courage, and perseverance—period!

I believe that once I began learning how wrong my previous life-learning had been, I went from having almost total negative stereotypical attitudes about the Armenians to the opposite extreme. I saw all Armenians the same; honest, hard working, and totally committed to their religion and cultural heritage. I overlooked human desire, vice, greed, and corruption. Yet, I based these beliefs on relatively little experience and knowledge about Armenians and their culture. Once I discovered much of my life-learning was inaccurate I decided everything negative must be wrong too. In an example of the outgroup homogeneity effect (Ostrom & Sedikides,
1992), I continued to stereotype the Armenian people by using positive" instead of negative stereotypes. According to Meyers (1996), this phenomenon often occurs when a person is unfamiliar with a particular social group.

While the 1995 trip was characterized by exploding life-learning myths and stereotypes, 1997 was the trip where my 1995 myths and stereotypes ended. I recognized, almost immediately, the diversity present in Armenian society. I learned Armenians, like any other peoples, were not all the same. As I became more familiar--better adjusted--to the Armenian culture and its people I could see difference at all levels (Brown & Wootton-Millward, 1993; Linville, Gis cher & Salovey, 1989). Johnson (1997) goes on to say,

I guess the shade begins to lift as part of the cultural adjustment process. At first, I idealized this culture. Everybody and everything was good--almost too good to be true. Then, as time passes and the idealized cover begins to lift, I can see they have the same desires, vices, and temptations we have in America. (p. 22)

My ability to recognize diversity, to discover that Armenia was not a cultural utopia is directly related to my degree of inter-cultural adjustment. As I gained a sense of ontological security through my personal relationships and my personal sense of belonging I could recognize difference at a more fundamental social level. In 1995, because I compared everything in Armenia to America, the only differences I could recognize were the obvious differences between the Armenian people and myself; between Armenia and the United States. My status as modern tourist allowed only a myopic view. I was never able to see beyond how I was affected by the Armenian cul-
ture. I had cultural tunnel vision that saw only the differences between Armenia and my home. I did not reach the point where I could see past the fact that both the Armenian people and I were "culture-bound," and these two cultures were different (McCall & Wittner, 1990, p. 80).

In 1997 I emerged from the protective covering provided by UNDP and got involved in the Armenian community. I listened to people and observed with a new clarity not possible in 1995. MacCannell (1992) states the "community is always and inevitably the site of human difference which is suppressed on both the theoretical and practical levels" (pp. 303-304). The protective distance I was both forced and allowed to maintain in 1995 kept the Armenian community at a theoretical and practical distance. I was never forced to look beyond my stereotypes, to confront the fundamental differences which exist in the Armenian community. I was a distant and unfamiliar observer free to form an utopian view of the Armenian culture by relegating the Armenians and myself to social categories. MacCannell (1992) addresses this phenomenon in the following quotation:

The community is not of men and women, of Chinese or Mayan, of guerrillas and government soldiers, etc. It is the ground of the problematical encounter between them, and between classes, religious and ethnic groups, totemic clans, etc...this is a dialectical, if not always dialogic, view of the community: it is only when we come to view the community as the site of not mere difference, but essential difference, that sub-communities can flourish in their distinctiveness. (p. 304)

I became an active agent (Giddens, 1991) in the Armenian social world, a direct result of the life-lessons gained in my first
Armenia trip and in Albania. As I adjusted to my social surroundings and became comfortable interacting and living in that setting I learned although the Armenian state was ninety-seven percent homogeneous, within the sameness existed the same diversity as anywhere else in my lived experience. I learned many Armenian people were greedy, headstrong, and unbending in their beliefs and attitudes. When a woman friend whom I thought was the quintessential representation of the pure Armenian woman introduced me to her married lover I recognized the expectations on women were not interpreted equally by everybody. I admit this was a refreshing discovery indeed.

In short, I began to see the Armenian culture for what it truly was: a nation of people with desires, habits, and similar self-defeating tendencies as is found in any American city. We were more alike than I first realized, or was willing to admit. The Armenians were not perfect and my realization and recognition of this fact represented the degree to which I had finally arrived in Yerevan as an adjusted human being; not as a mystified and enamored modern tourist (Johnson, 1997):

While I love Armenia, as I adjust to their culture, some of the charm wears off. Not in a bad way though. Today, Yerevan is a more interesting place than a dream-like fantasy experience, which is how I remember seeing it the first time. Does this mean I have somewhat adjusted? I believe so. Am I fully adjusted? It is hard to tell. I reserve judgment until later. But my mind set is so different. I think less about daily life, get around well, and life here no longer strikes me as odd, different, or strange. I don't spend time comparing what happens here to home. This is Yerevan, not home. I don't notice smells, garbage, unlit stair wells, bad cars, roads, or hardship like I did in 1995. (pp. 33-34)
Communication and Language

Since communication is a skilled and creative performance, during my 1995 trip I was unskilled and not very creative when I communicated. What communication I had with people always occurred through a third person translator. My dilemma was to develop the trust and style necessary to best utilize my assigned translator in social situations. I was unable to learn even the simplest of Armenian words or phrases despite being immersed in the culture and surrounded by the Armenian language for six weeks. I sat in meetings where, instead of picking up language and studying how better to communicate in Armenian, I learned to tune out what I could not understand. Which unfortunately, in my case was nearly everything being said at all times. If my translator chose not to interpret a discussion or I failed to ask for translation, I was lost. I grew comfortable with this state of being.

Like I stated in Chapter IV, I was too overwhelmed with the social context and various and sundry stimuli invading my consciousness at every moment. As a result, I was so distracted trying to observe and integrate new knowledge and occurrences I did not have the cognitive capacity to learn their language. As such, I kept to myself most of the time. I know now that whenever I was alone I actively avoided social situations where I might have to attempt communication. I never allowed my eyes to meet people passing on the street, I avoided restaurants, stores, or cafés. Even when I needed something I waited until I had a translator. Similar to
other circumstances I have mentioned throughout the chapter, at the
time I honestly believed otherwise. Now, I know better. The fol-
lowing journal entry (Johnson, 1997) responds to these issues:

Last trip, I did not talk to many people outside my profes-
sional engagement. I didn't talk to people on streets, serv-
ers, even the hotel staff for that matter. I maintained, what
I now remember as a stone face, almost like I was looking down
on the people, when in fact, I was afraid of them. It was
almost like I was trying to intimidate people so that they
would not make me face my fears, by having to talk. There-
fore, because of my demeanor, people routinely did not talk
to me. I was safe. This time I am taking a different ap-
proach. I am saying hello to strangers, talking with servers,
and all the hotel staff, and working with locals to forge a
mutually understandable conversation. I am smiling and awake,
inviting discussion, comments, smiles, or even frowns if that
is what I get. Its working. More people are talking back,
even when we cannot communicate through language. (p. 12)

This trip, I learned rudimentary Armenian. A colleague spent
some time, like in 1995, teaching me certain important Armenian
words and phrases. I am sure she thought I was hopeless, but this
year something happened: I remembered to the extent I could comму-
icate in certain contexts in an elementary, yet understandable man-
ner. I by no means became conversational in three weeks, but I be-
came communicative. The use of one word, or short phrase, or greet-
ing, salutation, and words like please and thank you transformed me
from a mute tourist into an individual learning to speak in a for-

eign culture. Each day my friend and I worked together to learn
new words build phrases. When I began using these words in public
she was quite surprised. I found my earlier fears about how my Ar-
menian sounded was needless. As soon as the locals heard me attempt
to speak Armenian they became even more friendly and helpful than
before, if that was possible. Nobody made fun of my pronunciation, in fact strangers would stop and correct me when I pronounced words inappropriately, misused masculine or feminine word endings or when I used the wrong word in a particular situation.

While I improved greatly in this capacity sometimes, despite my efforts to learn to speak and understand simple Armenian, it was no help. In these situations life got quite comical, as the journal passage below (Johnson, 1997) recalls:

I had a translation incident at the café near the fountain today. It was a real laugh. I had been here earlier in the day, purchased and paid for 2 cokes, and left. Now, here it was about 4 hours later and I returned for another cola, waiting for a meeting to begin. A server (the same woman as earlier in the day) approached me and said check. She said it in Armenian, but this was a word I knew. Now, I immediately thought she meant she thought I didn’t pay earlier, which I did. So I reached for my money, and she said no check. I held my hands up in a way that said I don’t understand you. Then she said something in Armenian that I didn’t understand, tried to say it again, I tried to use some of my bad Armenian, then stopped. We weren’t getting anywhere at all.

Then she went to get her boss. He walked up to me and said check. I again reached for money and he stopped me. We then went back and forth for a while, before I called out to a young boy, asking if he knew English. He nodded, and came over. His English was as good as my Armenian in this situation. By the time we stopped recruiting potential translators, I had at least 15 people around my table trying to translate us...nobody was mad...we were all laughing with each other. Finally, I found out what check meant. They wondered if I had the actual bill--the piece of paper--from this morning? They needed the number on the bill for accounting purposes (no, I did not). Oh...check. I shook hands with everybody, and left. (pp. 34-35)

Obviously, as this story indicates very clearly, I did not learn fluent or even near-fluent conversational Armenian. I still had to speak English and use a series of gestures, including point-
ing and sometimes grunting, to try and get my point across. What is important in this discussion is I had the cognitive and emotional capacity to learn even the simplest Armenian words and phrases. In addition, I was willing to work at communicating without a formal translator. This situation would not have occurred before. Either Sola (my translator) would have been at my side or I would not have been in the café alone in the first place. Like I stated in Chapter IV, I could not remember anything except hello (Barev) and I was too self-conscious to use it in public. This represents a fundamental difference in my level of intercultural adjustment in 1997.

What changed? By again applying the adaptation of MacCannell's (1976) semiotic of tourism I proposed in Chapter IV, these changes can be explained. To review briefly, I believe sign definition (understanding) results from recognition of and familiarity with the social context (marker), combined with the cognitive and emotional ability to attend to the context and conversation (sight involvement). As a reminder, in Chapter IV I diagrammed this process as follows: sign [understanding] = marker [social context recognition] + sight involvement [ability to attend].

I also postulated that simply knowing all or parts of the native language was not enough to guarantee effective and competent communication, because an individual needs the ability to understand the social context and utilize the mutual knowledge gained through familiarity with the situation in which the communication is occurring.
On the previous trip I was trapped in a paradoxical relationship between the marker and sight involvement. In order to sufficiently recognize the marker I needed the capacity for a high degree of sight involvement. As such, the newness and uncertainty of being unadjusted to a foreign culture lowered my ability to achieve a reasonable degree of sight involvement which, in turn, made marker recognition nearly impossible. Without these two processes in place, understanding communication, language, or communicative intent in any social situation was impossible.

In other words, because I experienced radical ontological insecurity in Armenia in 1995, I was unable to attend to my environment. My attentions were tuned to other factors and not the person and communication occurring in the immediate social context. I was lost in a spiraling process that culminated, as I stated earlier, in tuning out anything but the English language. Without the ability to recognize my environment it was nearly impossible to accumulate the mutual knowledge necessary to effectively communicate in the Armenian culture. The journal entry immediately below (Johnson, 1997) goes exactly to the point:

I find it hard to carry on a long conversation here. I did in Albania too. This, I believe, is because of the lack of common cultural reference points for conversation. At home, it is easy to carry a conversation--talk about sports, work, the weather, or politics--because most everyone has at least some mutual knowledge and experience. In fact, I'd bet that 90% of daily conversation, from simple greetings to lunch time conversation, is essentially thoughtless--almost unconscious. (pp. 12-13)

Here, even the simplest conversation is needs conscious concentration. For example, a simple greeting raises questions
that must be answered. Does the person speak English, make
eye contact (women do not here), does a nod of the head mean
the same thing here as at home (acknowledgment of their pre-
sence) do I say Hi, hello, or Barev, or Barev Tsis? Can I
say it in Armenian and should I be embarrassed if it comes
out sounding like mumbo jumbo, or should I just go ahead and
say it, hoping they will not make too much fun of me? (p. 13)

Because I was different in 1997, my ability to communicate
improved dramatically. The main reason is that I could pay atten-
tion, understand, and attend to the communicative context. My con-
scious mind was not awash in unfamiliar cultural stimuli and uncon-
scious mind not comparing this context to home. In other words, my
familiarity and comfort in Armenian life allowed me to relax and pay
attention to whom I was communicating with and the context in which
our communication was occurring. Therefore, I was able to accomp-
lish the third step in Bochner's (1982) process of cultural adjust-
ment by performing the routine and necessary tasks--alone--in the
Armenian culture.

I escaped the marker-sight involvement paradox by gaining a
high degree of sight involvement because of my new familiarity with
Armenian life and culture. I had a sense of well-being in their
world and was able to accumulate enough mutual knowledge, in addi-
tion to my minimal language gains, so the content of my life-learn-
ing now included the life-lessons of my 1995 Armenian experience.

As a result, I could concentrate on communicating at all times
because again, I was not distracted by the newness of the Armenian
daily world and I no longer felt out of place in their world. I no
longer blocked out the language and people, but listened to what was
being said and done. In this way, even when my language skills were not sufficient—which was most of the time—I was able to establish lines of communication with the other person with whom I was trying to communicate.

As a result, I gained additional mutual knowledge about the meaning of gestures and customs within certain contexts. I demonstrated sufficient mastery over daily life in Yerevan. By this I mean, along with a sense of well-being and close personal relationships within the culture, I was able to behave in culture-appropriate ways to accomplish the daily tasks necessary to communicate and live in the Armenian culture. I no longer required constant assistance. I moved freely in the Armenian culture and around the city to get the goods and services I needed to live comfortably. I met strangers on the streets and in cafés. I learned about the lives of people outside my immediate friendship group and I got other opinions and beliefs about the critical issues of the day. In short, I became a functioning temporary citizen in Yerevan. Armenia was no longer the strange and new culture it once was. I began to feel as though I fit, however marginally, in the Armenian culture.

Adjustment and Resocialization: Final Thoughts

One night, after a day spent with a group of colleagues in professional meetings and socializing I received the biggest compliment I (Johnson, 1997) could ever receive from the Armenian people:

After dinner and our intense discussion about the genocide, I overheard one friend on the other side of the room say to
another that I finally had made it in the Armenia world. She said--this was secretly translated for me--that I was as close to Armenian as an American could get, that I understood them and seemed to be comfortable in their homeland. I would not have put much stock in this if it hadn't been said out of my immediate presence. (p. 41)

In the final analysis, I believe the data from my journal indicates I successfully adjusted to the Armenian culture. As a result of the life-lesson in 1995 and the additional intercultural experiences in the interim, the content of my life-learning changed to the point where I can confidently claim that I was resocialized into the Armenian culture. I made friends, felt comfortable and performed the daily tasks of living in Yerevan. This was made possible, in large part, because I stopped comparing Armenian life to my home in the United States. In effect, Armenian life became my home when I was in Armenia.

In addition, by recognizing the diversity of the people and country and by gaining a new and deeper understanding of their culture and history, I also gained a new kind of respect for the Armenians. Before, I respected them in a patronizing manner. Now, it was different. Johnson (1997) goes on to say that

respect for the culture--its a different respect than what I had before, because they suffered so much. That was the respect (last time) of a tourist. Isn't it amazing how they endure or aren't we lucky at home--that kind of thing. Its not respect, but patronizing American arrogance or guilt at its best.

The respect I am talking about now is respect for them as people because they are unique and interesting with their own life, lifestyle, and heritage. Yes, I do respect their courage, yet, they had no choice. I respect their pain and historical suffering, yet, they had no choice. I believe most any culture would do the same--think of the Jews and Native
Americans—yet, I don’t talk of them in this way. These people have their ways of doing everything that is fascinating to me. They are Armenians and I respect them for that.

They will continue to be Armenians, with the same culture and traditions, historical memory and idiosyncrasies, whether I respect them or not, whether we Americans give them advice, or, given their history, whether they are conquered, slaughtered, or left alone in the future. They deserve respect for all for that because they are people of the world, and not for any other reason. (p. 14)

By the time I boarded my Armenian Airlines flight for the return trip to the United States in late August 1997, I felt as much a part of the Armenian culture as a non-Armenian foreigner could, I suspect. In order to finish the job of adjustment I need become conversational in the Armenian language. There are, I suppose, places I cannot go alone and tasks I cannot accomplish. Yet, I did not confront those limitations.

I love and respect the Armenian people and culture—warts and all—as if they were my people. Moghaddam, et al., (1993) summarize best what I intended this chapter to convey:

Successful adjustment would be demonstrated by someone spending time and sharing personal information with members of the host culture, by demonstrating respect for the new culture and its members, and by performing culturally appropriate behaviors necessary to gain the respect and liking of members of the host culture. In this case, successful adjustment would result in members of the host culture feeling the newcomer fit in well and got along with others (p. 138).

I achieved this level of adjustment because of the integration of new life-lessons through lived experience in a new culture, into my life-learning. As such, it is possible for an individual from one culture to become resocialized into another culture. This is only possible provided he or she has significant personal exper-
ience, over time, in the new culture in order to accomplish the
three elements of intercultural adjustment: establish close inter-
personal relationships with members of the host culture; achieve a
sense of personal well-being and fit within that culture, and de-
monstrate the ability to perform the needed daily social tasks with
the host culture. By the time I landed in my hometown, more than
thirty-six hours after leaving Yerevan, I was ready to return home
again.
CHAPTER VI

WHAT WAS I DOING IN THE ARMENIAN CULTURE?

Armenian Memories, Part I

To begin the final chapter, I include several short vignettes from my experience in 1995 that were not included in Chapter IV.

Sharing

They have an incredible sense of family and support, of neighborhood and fellow citizen. It shows everywhere in the big and small gestures. Give a gift of food and they (Armenians) cut it up and pass small pieces on to strangers. I'm not talking about isolated incidents here, it happens all the time. I've witnessed people consistently give up theirs to share with others. People helping people. Even if a stranger needs something, they'll get it. Crime is minimal. I have walked around during the day and night with no fear, no threats, no words besides greetings, and no problems. (p. 28)

School Without Books

Then, the teacher showed me her world map. It was at least 30 years old, all torn and worn. America is represented BACKWARDS on the map. I looked around and suddenly realized that there were no books or magazines. The kids asked if I could find a new map to help them learn more about the world. Of course I will do everything I can to get a good world map sent to her. (pp. 34-35) [I took two world maps to her classroom in 1997]

Jerry@Arminco.com

Hooray!!! Got hooked to the Internet today. I paid $100 to be hooked to Arminco, a commercial on-line service based in Yerevan. While the local phone lines are real bad, Arminco
has good access to the Internet and is easy to use. I find that amazing that I can't call across the street, but can send e-mail home, when a local line is working. I'm now jerry@arminco.com. Sent off e-mail to everybody and I am eagerly awaiting responses. It is exciting. (p. 24)

A Different Kind of Culture Shock

As I spoke to the director (Zatik Orphanage) through an interpreter we were talking about kids and our joint struggles and similarities in our programs. Suddenly he raced over, embraced me in a huge hug and he gave me a kiss on the mouth. Just when I thought I was ready for anything...wham...a hug and kiss! I was quite surprised and taken aback. You know, good old American safety zone needs and all. Close men greet by kissing on the lips here. I guess I'll get used to it. (p. 39)

I also include the following vignettes from 1997 that were not included in the discussion in Chapter V.

Ordering Food

I am getting out to do my own food ordering. It is interesting trying to communicate with servers and store clerks. We do manage, but it can be quite comical. For instance, last night I ordered dinner; one weenie and cheese thing, 1 pizza, and 2 cokes. The girl brought me 2 weenie and cheese things, 2 pizzas and 4 cokes. Oh well, maybe one in American is two in Armenian. (p. 15).

I ordered from menu. Pizza and spaghetti seemed to work, but we missed each other on the salad. I got a salad but not the one I ordered. She brought some kind of creamy cheese thing with grass in it. Oh well, 2 out of 3 ain't bad. (p. 19)

Armenian Airlines, 1997

I cannot talk about Yerevan without first discussing the airplane ride. Once again I flew Armenian airlines from Amsterdam. This time, the plane seemed in somewhat better condition than before. It was a Tupolev 154 again, anyhow, at least the...
carpet was all matching and glued down. There was water in
the bathroom and they served food on this flight! The plane
is still without luggage racks, the seats fold down, and the
seat belts do not work - but hey, whose being picky. (p. 1)

Laundry

I washed my clothes in the bathtub tonight and hung them on
the rail outside on the balcony. There's a new one for me.
I let them soak, used shampoo, and rung them as dry as I
could. Let's see if they ever dry! Why not be industrious.
I saw am Armenian women doing this today at the hotel. This
is also how the floor attendant would do it if I gave my
clothes to her. Why not. I am here. What would I do if I
were in a flat? (p. 20)

Culture-Learning

Before they began answering this serious and volatile question
about the genocide, the group expressed their happiness and
gratitude at my interest in hearing about them, understanding
them, and learning about them in a serious manner. They said
this is so unusual for outsiders, especially Americans. Ac­
cording to this group, Americans already think we know what
they want and need. Americans think their history stands in
the way of modernization. If they only knew how I wish I had
done this the last time I was here. I cared, but not enough
to ask them how their lives were and what it is I should un­
derstand. (p. 37)

Introduction

I begin Chapter VI like I began Chapter I, with memories from
afar. Yet, the memories I recall here are different from earlier
memories. They are based in lived experience amongst a people, cul­
ture, and heritage which is unique and worthy of understanding and
respect. They are a lasting part of my Armenian life-lesson and
more importantly, a lasting part of my life. This particular life-
lesson began one spring morning in March 1995 and ended in late August 1997. My next trip to Yerevan signals the beginning of the next phase of my Armenian life-lesson.

My earlier memories are based in a different kind of lived experience; created by the American, ethnocentric propaganda machine determined to infuse its citizens with a hatred and fear of the former Soviet people (Fried, 1997). They were born of false propaganda, lies, and half-truths designed to maintain the Soviet Union—of which the Republic of Armenia was a minority republic— as America’s Absolute Other. In America’s efforts to nullify the power and impact of the Soviet Union they, paradoxically, expanded the Soviet impact to one of world cultural domination. As an unintended consequence of America’s policy of containment the Soviet Union and communism had more effect on American culture than any other factor in history. While America may have won the war, the Soviets likely won the battle.

Early in this study I posed a question by Prattis (1985), to be used as an overriding theme for my work in Armenia, "Just what was I doing in the Armenian culture?" I intend to answer this question here. As part of this answer I engage in speculation taking me beyond the methodological limits I imposed on this study to look at general themes suggested by this compelling philosophical question.

In contemporary America, intercultural adjustment does not refer exclusively to adjustment in international settings. As a result of massive immigration and the diversity movement (Johnson,
1995; Thomas, 1991), it is now likely most people will face the demands imposed by intercultural adjustment in their daily lives. This is especially true for sociologists and social workers engaged in professional activities in field settings. Every day social workers and sociologists engage people from "foreign" cultures, ethnicities, and races living in the United States. This may involve a Caucasian middle-class social worker visiting the home of a poor, African-American family, a community development worker from the suburbs trying to organize neighbors in a poor inner-city neighborhood, or a white male sociologist studying street gangs or prostitutes. Whatever the arrangement, these workers face a dilemma similar to the one I encountered in Armenia.

While I cannot use the findings of this study to speak authoritatively beyond my own experience, speculation about the similarities between my experience in Armenia and these scenarios is part of the larger question posed earlier. As such, in its entirety this chapter answers the research question, "What are the ramifications of this study for individuals working and living in an intercultural setting?"

Questions and Answers

I believe the most important question addressed in this study is, "Is it possible to become resocialized in a foreign culture?" The rest of this chapter is organized to respond to this larger question about resocialization. As part of this response I also
directly answer the rest of my research questions regarding the impact of life-learning on normative expectancies, the effect of daily living conditions on resocialization, and the affect of history and culture on resocialization. These questions are, by definition, part of the larger issue of whether resocialization in a foreign culture is possible.

Resocialized in Armenia?

The short answer to the question of whether I was resocialized is yes. As I demonstrated in Chapter IV and V and summarize here, I consider myself resocialized because of the lived experience— or life-lesson— I gained in the Armenian social and cultural context over a two year period. The combination of action and reflection on action, facilitated by critical assistance from my Armenian friends and colleagues led to this experience becoming a life-lesson, or life changing event.

To evaluate first the existence and then extent of my intercultural adjustment in Armenia, I combined the work of several authors whose ideas on this subject overlap into one coherent model (Giddens, 1984, 1986; Moghaddam et al., 1993; Bochner, 1982). As a quick review from Chapter V, Anthony Giddens claims resocialization occurs in three stages which individuals must experience if they are to change their routine behavior and knowledge, or life-learning. As you may recall Giddens considered only group level crises as critical situations but I expanded his definition to include individual
life-lessons as well. According to my definition a social situation is only defined as a life-lesson if it causes an individual to change the content of their accumulated life-learning as a result of action and reflection on this action over time.

Accordingly, people in critical situations experience a sense of heightened anxiety—what I call a psychic emergency—followed by a period of child-like regressive behavior which leads to the formulation of new social routines, or resocialization. Within the context of these stages, others (see above) believe an individual's degree of intercultural adjustment can be evaluated by the extent of their demonstrated mastery over three additional elements. These evaluative elements include the development of interpersonal relationships in the host culture, attainment of a sense of well-being about their fit in the new culture, and the ability to perform routine tasks of daily living in the host culture (Moghaddam et al., 1993; Bochner, 1982).

A large part of the remainder of this chapter applies this model to my experiences in 1995 and 1997. The first part of this discussion is devoted to how I experienced the first two stages of resocialization; psychic emergency and regressive behavior. The second evaluates my claim of resocialization by looking at the three elements of intercultural adjustment mentioned above. I conclude with an overall justification for my claim of successful intercultural adjustment in Armenia.
Psychic Emergency

As I demonstrated in Chapter IV and discussed in Chapter V, in 1995 I experienced the first stage of the resocialization process—psychic emergency. I was afraid, nervous, and timid upon arrival that first year. I felt lost in a foreign world where everything was new and unrecognizable in daily life and living. While these feelings subsided over the course of the trip, my psychic emergency never receded to the point where I could achieve a meaningful degree of intercultural adjustment my first year in Armenia. This did not become apparent until I reached Belarus, and solidified in my consciousness when I began writing Chapter IV of this study. In 1995 I believed: (a) I did not experience a psychic emergency, (b) I was calm and well-adjusted, and, (c) I needed little help in achieving what I believed was my successful adjustment. As my journal clearly suggested in Chapter IV, I was wrong.

One would reasonably expect some level of anxiety given the intensity of the trip, the professional responsibilities of the assignment and my unfamiliarity with the Armenian culture. These factors are a given in a situation like this, but not enough to create a life-lesson. I consider this low-level anxiety similar to what modern tourists experience traveling most anywhere foreign in the world. However, for resocialization to occur the anxiety needed to make an individual amenable to change is significantly greater. Tourists do not regularly experience a psychic emergency that disrupts their fundamental beliefs and attitudes about the world. Nor
do tourists normally change their routine knowledge about social interaction in daily life following a vacation. There is a significant difference between these two states of being.

In addition to normal anxiety described above, there were four interacting factors involved in the creation of my psychic emergency. Two of these factors occurred prior to the trip and two after I arrived in Yerevan. It is important to emphasize the interaction of these factors in lived experience. I discuss each separately in this context for clarity, but in real life they occurred simultaneously. The two factors preceding the trip were my prior life-learning in Cold War America and living condition reports from UNDP. They set the stage for my state of mind by helping create false normative expectancies about what I would find when I arrived. The two factors after I arrived were my reaction to the actual living conditions and the depth and prominence of the Armenian historical and cultural memory.

**Life-Learning**

This discussion addresses the first research question in this study, "What is the impact of American socialization on a priori expectations about life in the Republic of Armenia?"

Like I described in Chapter III, because my primary life-learning occurred during the 1960's and 1970's, I was unconsciously prepared to be wary, suspicious, and mistrusting of the Armenian people. After all, Armenia was once a minority republic of the
former Soviet Union and our enemy. They also lost the Cold War. I assumed they would be just as wary and suspicious of me for the same reasons I was of them.

Besides the obvious affect of Cold War propaganda, my life-learning included knowledge of routine social practices about daily life at home. This knowledge also played a central role in the development and maintenance of my psychic emergency. In Armenia it provided the cognitive reference group by which I evaluated Armenian life and my experiences in their life. I speak more about reference group comparison later however, here it is enough to say my cognitive obsession to compare novel Armenian social customs to familiar American life was part of my American life-learning.

Americans--and I--from our earliest days learn that our lifestyle is the best in the world and social practices normal. Anyone not living up to American middle class standards, whether they be in a foreign land or across the street is looked down upon as unusual, eccentric, or underdeveloped, perhaps even tribal. As such, the combination of these two aspects of life-learning--Cold War suspicions and normative cognitive comparisons--created a sense of anxiety and timidity which lasted from the beginning to nearly the end of my 1995 Armenian trip.

The life-learning model of socialization, demonstrated by my lived experience in Armenia, privileges the impact of the immediate social environment on the beliefs and attitudes I held toward the Republic of Armenia prior to this trip. I believe I held the pre-
dominate attitudes and beliefs about the Soviet Union as most Americans socialized during that era, despite my participation in and support of left wing social and political events challenging the righteousness of American ideology. Consciously, I changed my beliefs and actions to reflect my political affiliations and professional aspirations. Yet, as I described in the second Autobiographical Statement in Chapter III, unconsciously I maintained prior fundamental attitudes and beliefs accumulated through life-learning.

Therefore, by definition these events were not life-lessons because the deeply held beliefs of my life-learning went unchanged. I am not suggesting I did not believe in my causes or did not act on these beliefs. I did, in fact, consistently act on these beliefs over the years. However, when I was forced to confront the actual country and people on whom these deeply held beliefs were based, and under the pressure of the moment, my conscious mind was flooded with patriotic feelings and ideas I thought were long ago purged from my being. Because I changed my political ideas without the pressure of a psychic emergency the beliefs and attitudes from earlier life-learning remained part of my unconscious store of knowledge.

Without events of sufficient personal magnitude to create the need for active human agency, regardless of what a person believes consciously or does physically based on those beliefs, the accumulated content of their life-learning remains intact. It is my contention the unconscious content of an individual’s life-learning results from the subjective gathering and interpretation of know-
ledge provided by interaction with his or her social environment. In other words, unless otherwise challenged at the fundamental level by a critical situation, life-learning (socialization) is dominated by social structure.

The dominance of the social environment over the content of an individual's life-learning is especially true for most, but certainly not all Caucasian--female and male--upper-middle class or above American citizens. People in these categories are raised with an immunity to powerful life-lessons, especially early in life. They live in homogenous neighborhoods, attend homogenous schools and have the best life can offer in terms of money, housing, education, and opportunity. They live the so-called American dream from their earliest days. This state of living remains unimpeded throughout their entire lives.

If and when a potential critical situation does occur, people in these groups are sheltered from having to be critically reflexive by their investment in an ideological lifestyle, social isolation, and the lack of diversity in their immediate social environment. As such, they hold onto deeply held beliefs and attitudes about the social world throughout their lives, no matter what happens. Critical situations are usually blamed on others so there is no need to change. The white, well-to-do's beliefs, values and attitudes are not fundamentally challenged by the world. They are immune to the psychic emergency experience. The United States is perhaps the only country in the history of the world where immunity to life-lessons
is possible. Where else can one live successfully for an entire lifetime being apolitical, ahistorical, and blind to the social inequalities occurring in and around their sheltered lives?

Like I stated in Chapter III the same cannot be said for members of minority groups or the poor--minority or Caucasian--living in the United States living below the middle of the middle class; or people from small and/or unstable countries across the globe. For these people, including the Armenians, life-lessons are part of the everyday social world. Gaining and maintaining the ability to adapt to rapidly changing political, social, or economic circumstances is the rule not the exception. It is an old and damaging misconception that all middle class Americans, especially Caucasian male middle class Americans, enjoy the same social, economic, and educational privileges as the group described above. At the community level--the point of lived experience--most people in this class do not realize the privilege of more financially stable American citizens.

Life-learning contributed to my psychic emergency precisely because the ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices acquired living in the United States had an impact on how I expected to view Armenia. As a result my expectations, developed in large part as a function of life-learning, affected how I responded to the circumstances when I first arrived. My American-born life-learning had a tremendous impact on my a priori expectations about life in the Republic of Armenia.
UNDP Documents

For a person unconsciously primed by life-learning to be wary and suspicious of the Armenian people, UNDP documentation for orientation further heightened my psychic emergency. After reading these documents, including information about the Armenian drug problem, crime, poverty, surveillance of foreigners, lack of potable water and food, and the apparent social and political chaos I was convinced my safety was a major concern on this trip. Also, I was certain to be under constant surveillance by government officials and local police.

This contemporary knowledge conspired with my life-learning to form my normative expectancies for this trip. They—the combination of life-learning and UNDP orientation—were the basis for my feelings about Armenia and the Armenian people. The new information inflamed longstanding knowledge bringing forward old beliefs and stereotypes which served to make me an even more wary and suspicious traveler. By the time I boarded Armenian Airlines in Amsterdam for the flight to Yerevan I was already well into my psychic emergency, step one in the resocialization process.

Living Conditions

While I was a full participant in the first stage of resocialization before my feet ever touched Armenian soil, when I arrived I learned first hand about the horrible conditions in which the Armenian people had lived for the previous four years. While UNDP
reports prepared me for some of this, I learned there is no way one can possibly be well-prepared to witness the unintended (or, perhaps intended) consequences of the demise of the former Soviet Union. As such, the following discussion responds directly to the second research question posed in this study, "To what extent do everyday living conditions in the host country affect intercultural adjustment?"

As I said above, by the time the airplane landed I was already deep into a psychic emergency. This is evident in the Chapter IV discussion of my reaction to the flight aboard Armenian Airlines. I allowed my anxiety to turn the flight into a more harrowing experience than it should have been. Yet, because the conditions aboard the airplane were so different than what I was familiar with, I became fear-stricken. This experience, routine for Armenians, was outside my range of believability. Following that experience I spent much of the next six weeks growing accustomed to the novel and unique living conditions and customs in and around Yerevan.

As Chapter IV describes in great detail, living conditions in Armenia during 1995 were difficult indeed. Economic collapse and the blockade by Azerbaijan and Turkey left the Armenian state in shambles. Their only goal was survival. What was once a routine and familiar existence turned into a nightmare of epic social and economic proportions with no appreciable end in sight.

For my part, I was initially overwhelmed by the conditions. Had I not witnessed and experienced a country without electricity,
heat, social life and hope I would have found it difficult to believe. This was, indeed the aftermath of war—a hot war with Azerbaijan and cold war with the United States. I wonder now as I recall their lives in 1995, was this our goal in the Cold War? Did we really want to break their government by destroying the people or is this an unintended consequence of America’s foreign policy? I am not sure about the answer to this question in light of global geopolitics. The opening of Eastern Europe and Russia provides fertile ground for the spread of American multinational corporations and modernity. It allows the mighty American hegemon to move towards what MacCannell (1992) called a form of "global fascism: one government, one system of money, one ideology" (p. 11). Because America won the Cold War they get to write its history. Therefore, the end of the Soviet state is a positive occurrence for the future of the world. Try telling that to the Armenians in the spring of 1995.

Accordingly, I was overwhelmed by the difference between Armenia and home. Armenia is different in most every respect from the United States. I had to learn about life again as if I was a child trying to find my way to school for the first time. In this context the true meaning of psychic emergency became clear. What I found routine in the United States was novel in Armenia. What I thought I knew about living, communicating and working was irrelevant and my professional preparation was moot. I needed to start over. As such, I learned to communicate through translators, avoid oncoming traffic, live without water and electricity and eat different foods.
I managed to perform my professional assignment while feeling unsure about the fit between my knowledge and practice and the Armenian culture. I was truly a visitor in a foreign land—without a tour guide or road map. I knew what I was supposed to do but not how to do it. This is quite a realization for a man who prides himself on being adaptable, flexible and in personal control.

I became homesick, but I did not show it in a way one might consider normal. Instead of outwardly or consciously wanting to leave the country—I never wanted to leave early—I demonstrated my homesickness by constantly comparing living conditions in Armenia to my familiar living conditions at home. I was longing to be out of Armenia, to find a place where life was familiar and comfortable. I was looking for where I belonged. According to Bauman (1995), whom I quoted in Chapter III, I was clearly in Armenia but I was far from being of Armenia. I was a modern tourist in a nonmodern country learning to live in accordance with their customs under horrible living conditions. I experienced this insecurity despite living in a hotel which, by Armenian standards, offered comfortable living conditions. In other words, my Armenian home was not as bad as most other Armenians that year, however I still felt lost and confused.

While analyzing that trip I discovered that a strange phenomenon occurred in my psychic emergency. My experience of the living conditions and with the people in Armenia refuted most of the information provided by UNDP. Just as rapidly, I also realized that most, if not all of my life-learning about the former Soviet Union
and communists was wrong. The negative stereotypes and false beliefs I learned as a United States citizen exploded as I came to personally know the Armenian people.

While my anxiety decreased because of this new knowledge, the living conditions were so much worse than I expected that my sense of radical ontological insecurity was actually maintained by the difference between my experience of the living conditions and normative expectancies about the same. The living conditions substituted for the misinformation of my life-learning. Once again I was duped by normative expectancies, this time because of my expectation of how the Armenian people lived in the wake of their tragic history.

The daily living conditions I described in Chapter IV and recalled in part here played a major role in my intercultural adjustment in Armenia. My lack of familiarity with this type of hardship, having never lived in the immediate aftermath of war, was a barrier to intercultural adjustment in the early days of the 1995 trip.

History and Culture

"I do worry about what seems to be a somewhat narcissistic wallowing in past monstrous grievances, for I fear this may tend to become self-reinforcing and can negate efforts at growth" (UNDP, personal communication, 1994).

I was unprepared for this powerful aspect of Armenian life and the extent of its impact on my ability to interculturally adjust.
The quote above—repeated from Chapter III—was the only clue about the extent to which Armenians relied on history and culture in daily life. I admit I completely overlooked it during preparations for the trip. I read about ancient Armenia before I traveled and knew about the Genocide, earthquake and Nagorno-Karabakh War. Yet, I did not understand. There was no way I could have understood without actually experiencing its infusion into every facet of the contemporary Armenian identity. Simply put, learning about the Armenian's long and mostly tragic history and their intensive daily involvement with this past increased the intensity of my psychic emergency.

As such, this discussion answers the third research question in this study, "To what extent does the interaction between a modern American perspective and the Armenian historical and cultural memory affect intercultural adjustment?"

The Armenia I discovered in 1995 was quite traditional despite their role as an industrial center during the Soviet period. As a result of the many crises over the previous decade, Armenia fell back on their long and deep cultural history comprised of family, tradition and religion. This is not to suggest they abandoned these characteristics during the Soviet period. However, their cultural and historical traditions were muted--especially religion--by the communist regime the previous seventy years. Armenian tradition lurked beneath the veneer of Soviet cultural compliance. When they needed it most to hold together a failing state and its people, their traditional culture returned full-force. They were a formerly
modern country who had become traditional in their lifestyle and beliefs. It was the only source of stability they could grasp during the bad times. The world may change and the ground may crumble beneath their feet but Armenian religion, culture, and history remains stable and firm. Armenians could trust this historical certainty.

The consultant I quoted above was correct in one way, the Armenians do consider their history the most important part of their existence. I heard many times on both trips, never forget the past, and, we are today, what we were in the past. Different from America, I never heard about the future in Armenia. Armenians believe only in the past. Thus, their positive and negative historical past, like I stated in Chapter IV, comprises a complex Armenian identity making them challenging indeed for an outsider to understand.

Because of this complexity I believe the consultant’s assessment was naïve and too narrow to be considered accurate. He presumed the only history Armenians focused on was tragic (i.e., genocide, Nagorno-Karabakh, earthquake). In other words, he omitted the most significant part of their relationship with history. The consultant focused only on the obvious.

Had he investigated further, I believe he would have discovered that the Armenians focused more on the self-proclaimed glory of their religion, strength of character and family, their traditional values forged across the centuries, their unique alphabet and lan-
guage, and Mount Ararat than they did on past monstrous grievances. This positive past provides the context for their historical grievances and the vehicle by which they survive as a people. The monstrous aspects are only one part of the Armenian identity. I learned from friends in Armenia--often the hard way--that it is inappropriate to oversimplify their preoccupation with history as narcissistic wallowing. These people are far more sophisticated and astute than I first understood. The complexity of the Armenian identity took weeks of intensive immersion in their culture and the help of close friends to understand as much as I now do, although admittedly I have a lot to still learn.

As an American, I am taught to push forward and look ahead. The past is the past and the only thing one can influence is the future. If one's history is filled with pain and disappointment, he or she should simply pick themselves up, dust off and look forward to tomorrow. Was it Annie who sang, The sun will come up tomorrow? This song would never make the Armenian Top Forty record chart. Our tradition of ignoring history is in direct conflict with the Armenian way of life, as I learned soon after I arrived in 1995.

I remember inquiring in several meetings about their hope for the future. In fact, one of the early goals of organizing an NGO, quoted from my journal, was to help them "see beyond the past to the future, to get out of their habit of looking backwards" (Johnson, 1995, p. 34). When the Armenians answered this naïve question it was always in terms of righting past grievances or enhancing trad-
itional values. However, more often than not this was the wrong question to ask a group of Armenians. The better question was, "what are Armenia's strengths that could carry them into the future?" This question routinely elicited long, detailed responses and intense discussion. This is the type of question one would never ask a group of Americans. What happened in the past is ancient history compared to the promise of a future guaranteed by the American dream.

The difference? The American dream is future-oriented and the Armenian dream is ensconced in a certain past. The Armenians learned by trial and tribulation their future is uncertain. They can not count on anything beyond the present and it can even change rapidly. Yet, Armenians know their heritage, history and past. They recognize their heroes and villains and they know their friends and foes. Armenians never forget friends, good deeds or those who helped or hurt them. They are quick to overlook or forget bad times like 1995. These times too will soon pass or become yet another continuing challenge they must confront.

After living there, I believe the Armenians posses a mature understanding of both sides of life: pain and suffering along with honor and tradition. These two spheres work together--like Yin and Yang--to create an unique appreciation of their culture. Armenians are not seduced by one-sided ideology which ignores the realities of the past or present. Theirs--unlike the Americans or the Soviets--is a realistic look at the struggles and defeats along with the
legend and glory which comprises the history of all ethnicities and cultures in the world. As such, while their historical memory may become "a stumbling block to the needs of the present" (Huyssen, 1993, p. 250), I believe it lights their path to the future, regardless of what arises along the way. The Armenians, in my opinion, are better prepared for the ebb and flow of history over the long-haul than are Americans. They have a culture, we do not.

In the end, the Armenian historical and cultural memory stands modernity on its head making it a difficult culture to grasp for an American. Theirs is a completely opposite way of viewing the world. While I believe Armenians hope for a better future--they are after all, human--they understand it cannot be predicted. All they can count on is the past and the immediate present of the here and now.

Another way of understanding their world view is to place the comparison between Armenian and American perspectives on history into social research terms. Americans, as part of our obsession with modernity, believe in a positivist future where today's reality can be generalized and the future predicted and controlled. Armenians, on the other hand disavow historical positivism by understanding that the only thing known for sure is what happened in the past and what is happening in the immediate, situated present. They realize that to generalize is to participate in an exercise in futility. Historical generalization cannot be made with any certainty since it is impossible to take a random sample of all possible past, present and future events in their country and around the world.
Therefore, the results of generalized historical findings are either pure speculation or hopeful myth-making. Until I came to better understand the complex Armenian identity and its foundation in history, I could not overcome my psychic emergency nor make progress toward resocialization.

The gap between my modern American life-learning, normative expectancies and the reality of Armenian tradition, history, culture and living conditions increased my level of anxiety and heightened my psychic emergency. Because of the contradictions created by these factors compared to my expectations, I found myself baffled by an intercultural setting completely different from my own. These circumstances conspired to create a psychic emergency of sufficient intensity to begin the process of resocialization through life-lesson. As such, I achieved the painful first step in the resocialization process.

Regressive Behavior

It is clear from the preceding discussion I experienced a psychic emergency in 1995. My familiar world was gone. I was a lost and confused tourist in a place where I did not share the local mutual knowledge of social interaction. Little about Armenian life was familiar. As such, the anxiety signaling the onset of my psychic emergency placed me in a classic state of radical ontological insecurity. In Yerevan, the routine was foreign and whatever accumulated knowledge I held in my conscious and unconscious mind
was irrelevant. In effect, I did not know what to do or how to act in their culture. At home when I confront uncertain circumstances I learn how to act by observing others and listening for clues. In Armenia this was impossible. Not only did I not understand their language but I also found body language and gestures inconsistent with my life-learning.

The second step in the resocialization process is the emergence of regressive behavior. An individual experiencing a psychic emergency will develop childlike behavior in the face of heightened anxiety and insecurity about the present. In other words, an individual is unable to perform or demonstrate the tasks required in daily life—behaviors he or she could easily accomplish in a familiar social milieu. My behavior early in the 1995 trip fit this pattern very well indeed.

I was afraid to venture out into community by myself. I believed I needed a local escort at all times. I limited my travel mostly to UNDP vehicle and always made sure I was accompanied by a local guide into stores, buildings and meetings. I became dependent upon my hosts for freedom of movement, sometimes feeling trapped in the hotel. I developed a similar tendency with communication. It is reasonable to want a translator for professional meetings but a majority of my time was not spent in these meetings. Most of my time was in routine social situations. Yet, I found myself shying away from trying to communicate. I allowed my anxiety to limit my willingness to experiment with language and other forms of commu-
nication. I was afraid to use what little Armenian language I learned for fear of mispronunciation and humiliation. I would not ask out loud for help from another English-speaker in a room. I remained quiet and non-communicative. Instead of forging ahead say, in a store or at the market, I simply did not purchase what I wanted.

For example, I refused to exchange money even in official money exchange shops in Yerevan, not to mention the black market. I was afraid of being robbed or making a mistake and accepting less than the daily exchange rate. Many days I was willing to wait up to twenty-four hours for a friend to make the exchange instead of trying myself.

I allowed my psychic emergency to keep me from events and routine social interaction. Walking down the street I focused on the ground or horizon so I would not make eye contact with passers-by. What, after all, would I do if someone smiled or greeted me? I attended social events where I had a guide and avoided them when alone. When I was not working I was in or near the hotel. In a very real sense, I was a dependent child reliant on local adults to ensure I was safe and protected at all times.

I did not realize this during the trip. I remember feeling anxious and scared, but unaware—until I began writing this study—of how regressive my early behavior in 1995 had become. I believe this was a product of two related factors. First, my pride and ego did not allow me to understand the psychic emergency. Had I under-
stood then what I now realize, I may have become paralyzed and un­able to accomplish my assigned professional task. I needed to be­lieve I was functioning well, taking risks and adjusting to the Ar­menian culture. Until I returned in 1997 I had no idea just how interculturally unadjusted I was in 1995.

The second reason was the structure of the UNDP mission. It was easy to be isolated from the Armenian people. I lived in a hotel with electricity and one of the few working restaurants in the country. I had access to a full-time driver whenever I requested his service, during and after working hours. I always had a ride available. I had a full-time translator if I wanted her services and an arranged schedule, including non-working hours. I was on an itinerary that allowed and encouraged my retreat into regressive behavior. Even in the professional realm the Armenians had come to expect so little from UNDP consultants that I was under no pressure to perform to a high standard. They expected nothing of value or usefulness to come from my efforts. Low expectations, a closely scheduled itinerary and my personal anxiety caused by the joint construction of faulty life-learning, normative expectancies, novel living conditions, and a foreign culture provided cover for my un­usual behavior. Therefore, the onset of regressive behavior went unrecognized and unnoticed in this context.

My UNDP protection is similar to the protection modern tour­ists have, allowing them to accomplish their vacation goals while not experiencing the full range of emotions and behaviors of a life-
lesson. They buy arranged tours, stay at Western-style hotels and eat American food while pretending to experience the host culture to its fullest extent. They visit arranged and planned monuments and other tourist sites with cultural safeguards built-in for the tourist's psychological and cultural protection. As such, modern tourists can venture into the nonmodern world and return home unscathed by their experience. They can learn about the traditional world without having their own version of home challenged beyond the superficial feelings of their good fortune to live in America or unexplained touristic guilt. Tourists never have to change despite claims to the contrary. Their ethnocentric comfort zones remain untouched. Therefore, modern tourists do not experience a life-lesson.

Intercultural adjustment must involve the two steps I just discussed for this process to occur. In otherwords, an individual must be in an emotional and behavioral state where they become open to the life-changing experience of a life-lesson. Without the passage of time and relative immersion in the host culture to the point where a psychic emergency and regressive behavior occurs, resocialization cannot happen. These two steps are the right of passage as it were, for an individual living or working in a foreign culture. In my view they are unavoidable unless one actively surrounds themselves with the trappings of home in order to remain foreign to the host culture.
Resocialization

Although these stages are unavoidable in an intercultural, non-tourist setting the movement from these states into one of intercultural adjustment is not guaranteed. Intercultural adjustment is not a naturally flowing process. The individual must seek resocialization by reflexively monitoring their thoughts and behaviors and by accomplishing a series of further steps. Moghaddam et al., (1993) provide three distinct, yet related elements that occur in an individual's resocialization process. Bochner (1982) calls this the process of culture-learning. Below I summarize my experience of these elements in sequence, although they are not distinct phases occurring in serial order. In fact, when these elements are achieved—if they are achieved—they happen concurrently.

Interpersonal Relationships

My experience with the resocialization process follows closely with the literature cited in Chapter V. I was able to develop, early in my first trip, interpersonal relationships with several Armenians who ultimately became important to my resocialization process later. These relationships progressed from professional to personal over the course of the first trip. Our relationships continued by e-mail until my return in 1997 and continue today.

Despite my psychic emergency and child-like reliance on their presence in 1995, somehow the relationships developed to the critical stage where we could be honest and open with each other. In
other words, I felt secure asking ridiculous questions and they to confront my inappropriate or culturally insensitive behavior. Without this type of relationship resocialization cannot happen. Because of their insistence and despite my apparent resistance to their efforts, my friends and colleagues forced me to reflect upon my actions and learn their culture. Somehow, they decided I could change.

Why and how did this happen given my difficult state of mind and behavior in 1995? I could say that befriending Americans on assignment is natural to the Armenians, but I witnessed otherwise. In 1997, I sought feedback on this question. Many said they sensed I was interested despite my obvious adjustment problems. Yet, while they now laugh at the way I was in 1995, several individuals agreed that my adjustment seemed less difficult than others. In other words, either I am good at hiding my discomfort, or other foreigners have a real bad time adjusting to Armenia. Perhaps the most telling comment made on this subject was that I did not react badly to their early critical comments about my words or behavior. My lack of defensiveness informed them that I was a willing candidate to learn and ultimately understand.

What made me a good candidate for resocialization? On this subject I can only speculate by looking at my autobiography. Perhaps growing up in a culturally diverse neighborhood and attending racially mixed schools were factors? I have never lived in an area without diversity nor have I been without close friendships and pro-
fessional relationships with African-Americans and other nationalities. Living a life involved with people from different cultures, races, disabilities and sexual orientations suggests I experienced intercultural adjustment as part of my life-learning.

I was forced by my immediate social environment to be open to different cultures, lifestyles and economies. My neighborhood and schools demanded I relate to rich and poor, old and young, divorced and married, gay and straight. I lived in a multicultural environment and thrived. My family lived below the middle of the middle class. As such, I was not protected from difference and was encouraged to interact with all people. I believe this played a major factor in my ultimate intercultural adjustment in Armenia.

When this factor is combined with my career choices I believe my relationships in Armenia are explainable. First as a therapist and then a program administrator in human services, I have worked with and for people of many races, classes and life situations for nearly two decades. My daily exposure to people's private troubles and the necessity of understanding the relationship of their troubles with public issues--welfare policy, discrimination, and prejudice, to name a few--prepared me for this quest in Armenia. As such, I believe this was the primary foundation which, despite my early psychic emergency in Armenia, let my new friends see that I was a candidate for Armenian resocialization.

Given the notion that developing interpersonal relationships with members of the host culture is the most difficult part of in-
intercultural adjustment (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), what does this mean for others attempting a similar feat in a foreign culture? I believe the content of an individual's life-learning is critical to their capability for intercultural adjustment. The more isolation from human, ideological, value, and attitudinal diversity and human problems, the more difficult will be resocialization.

In addition, lived experience is a critical element in re-socialization. If an individual’s lived experience is one of isolation and protection from the world, their prospects for intercultural adjustment are weak. If a person grows up in a situation where they are forced to relate to people or circumstances different and unfamiliar from their own or are forced to become active agents in the social world because of their social or geographical location, then the prospect for successful intercultural adjustment increases.

As such, I privilege lived experience as the central feature of resocialization over any other possibility including education and orientation. Looking back at the record and analyses of my Armenian experience it is obvious that until I lived it there was no way to adequately prepare myself for the experience. An individual must act, learn, and then act again based on feedback from their reflection on previous action in the social world. This is the trial by error method of life-learning. This method is often a painful but effective way of learning and understanding an intercultural world, whether at home or abroad.
If my speculation is accurate then the ramifications are indeed significant for training sociologists and social workers. For example, in my school of social work we teach a Human Diversity course for graduate students. Since it is the only course on the subject there is an expectation by students that successful completion prepares them for work with diverse populations in the field. Yet, I believe my study suggests otherwise.

While education cannot hurt—unless it is falsely stereotypic or ideological—unless the students have in their life-learning successful lived experience with diverse people and situations, they are no more prepared for the field than before they completed the course. Without hard-fought experience in the world, social workers and sociologists will struggle to develop the type of interpersonal relationships vital to the process of intercultural adjustment. In fact, I believe without lived experience and local tour guides these relationships will not develop at all. As such, unless a substantial experiential component is added to the curriculum where exposure to a wide range of diversity is guaranteed these students will be among the cadre of professionally trained modern tourists devouring foreign cultures while continuing to promote the spread of modernity’s assimilationist values wherever they travel, at home or abroad.

**Sense of Personal Well-Being**

There is a paradoxical relationship between developing per-
sonal relationships in a host culture and gaining a sense of personal well-being in that culture. It is inaccurate to suggest that relationship development precedes a sense of well-being. Without personal relationships it is difficult to achieve a sense of well-being and without a sense of well-being, close personal relationships cannot develop. Therefore, similar to my use of semiotic analysis in communication and language in Chapters IV and V, each of these elements occur in response to the other and is part of a waning psychic emergency. As such, achieving a state of positive personal feeling—a sense that one fits in the new culture—is critical to the resocialization process. Without it, by definition one cannot successfully achieve intercultural adjustment.

In my case this occurred when I stopped cognitively comparing what I discovered and witnessed Armenia to the familiar surroundings of home. Beginning somewhere late in the 1995 trip and throughout the 1997 trip I stopped thinking about home. My continual cognitive obsession with the differences between societies no longer dominated my thoughts. I lost my feelings of homesickness and began, in a sense, viewing Armenia as my second home. If and when I made comparisons Armenia was the cognitive reference group.

What greatly assisted this change happened when I purposely asked that news of home not be forwarded by e-mail. I wanted as close to total immersion in the Armenian culture as I could achieve by leaving news of home behind as completely as possible. As such, I was excused from hearing about the O.J. Simpson criminal trial
for a few weeks (what a relief), but missed news of the Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995. I did not hear about this tragedy until I boarded the Airplane in Warsaw, Poland for my return flight to the United States. This strategy was successful since the lack of electricity eliminated any possibility of watching CNN International which primarily reports news from the United States abroad.

As I ceased contact with home I stopped making social comparisons. I no longer evaluated Armenia by American standards. I began to understand Armenia by Armenian standards and through the interpretive frames of my friends and colleagues in Yerevan. As a result, in 1995 I almost immediately felt more comfortable and secure in Yerevan. In 1997 social comparison was never an issue. In fact, when I made a comparison in 1997 it was either to 1995 Armenia or Albania earlier that year. Either way, comparisons did not affect my sense of well-being; of being at home in Yerevan.

Another factor which began in 1995 and continued in 1997 was my sharing thoughts, feelings and observations about Armenia with Armenians. I began to share my observations and opinions, ask dumb questions and discuss my insecurities instead of transparently hiding myself from friends and colleagues. As I became more honest, paradoxically, I began to relax and understand Armenia more fully. I allowed my friendships to work so my sense of well-being in the Armenian culture could flourish. My friends became more receptive to me and I to them. I began to make historical and cultural connections, learn, remember, use parts of their language and gain the
self-respect and willingness to take personal risks I was missing in
the beginning. As such, my Armenian colleagues began to see me as
a good fit in their culture and our relationships solidified.

As a result, during the latter stages of my 1995 trip and the
whole of my 1997 trip I lost my psychic emergency and regressive
behavioral tendencies. I became part of the Armenian social world
by myself, allowing for the achievement of the final element of re-
socialization: daily task achievement in Armenia.

**Task Achievement in Armenia**

By the time I landed at Zvartnots International Airport in
1997, I was ready to assume a normal life in Armenia. I integrated
the experience of 1995 as a result of further travel to Belarus and
Albania, and was armed with several good friends and the memory of
feeling good about my self and my place in the Armenian culture be­
fore the end of the first trip. In 1997 I had a foundation of lived
experience, some painful and some happy, on which to base whatever
it was I discovered about the Armenian culture and myself on this
trip. This resulted in a sense of personal security and well-being
long before I boarded the airplane to make the long journey back to
Yerevan.

As such, performing the behaviors and tasks of daily living
was not a problem. From the beginning I lived without assistance.
I learned language and found ways to communicate without transla­
tors. I socialized, scheduled and held professional meetings and
managed to accomplish the routine daily tasks I needed as they arose. I was not limited by fear, anxiety or the lack of communication skills. I was resocialized.

Simultaneously my competence at performing daily tasks affected other aspects of resocialization. My relationships improved and I felt even more comfortable than I ever believed possible. I learned, integrated and understood more deeply and meaningfully the Armenian historical memory. I came to appreciate and understand the value of their unique perspective on the world. And, as I stated in Chapter V, I gained a new kind of respect for the Armenian people. This respect comes from living with them in the present and having experienced first hand the discomfort of their recent past. I was able to admit my shortcomings in 1995 and learn more about myself and the Armenians in 1997.

I still have much to learn and understand. My trip was not without communication problems and there were times, albeit very few, when I was glad to let my friends translate. Regardless of the remaining issues I need to resolve--mainly the attainment of conversational language skills--according to the criteria discussed in this chapter, I firmly believe I had achieved a comfortable degree of resocialization in Armenian society.

Final Thoughts on Resocialization

As I began writing this project I grappled with the difference between the term resocialization, as I use it in this study and
acculturation, as it is used in the professional literature. I wanted to make sure I meant something different when I used resocialization as my benchmark. While on the surface these concepts appear similar, I believe my use of resocialization is different. In this study resocialization has a more holistic connotation than acculturation.

In the two working definitions offered in the notes, acculturation implies the existence of a bifurcated cultural self. To be acculturated means to own and exhibit the capacity for a distinct separation between cultural identities. If this is true then acculturation implies a loss of self because little of the mutual knowledge necessary to live in either culture becomes part of an individual's unconscious store of knowledge. As such, an acculturated person becomes the owner of two shallow cultural identities, or they are without knowledge that operates outside of conscious awareness. In either instance the life-learning of the acculturated individual is meaningless. It has no bearing on a person's cultural and social identity. Which set of behaviors an acculturated person uses is the result of a rational choice based on whichever cultural context they are operating in at the time. I do not believe humans are that rational.

Another area of difference between the terms concerns the "element of force, either directly or indirectly" (Haviland, 1991, p. 626) included in the definition of acculturation. Accordingly, acculturation suggests the person or group becoming acculturated has
little choice in the matter. They change their cultural patterns, beliefs and behaviors simply because the social structural environment means for the change to occur. While this does describe one form of life-lesson—because of massive changes in a person’s life-learning—it ignores the type of life-lesson represented by my lived experience in the Republic of Armenia. I was not forced, either directly or indirectly, to adjust to the Armenian culture. As a result of the nature of the trip, the degree of psychic emergency I experienced and perhaps, my personality I chose to pursue a course of action that ended with changes to my life-learning. This was not an all-together rational choice but a choice nonetheless. Therefore, while acculturation represents one form of life-lesson it does not fit the description of the form of life-lesson I use in this study.

Resocialization occurs as a result of a life-lesson. An individual places themselves into a social situation where they experience a psychic emergency and regressive behavior followed by the development of a new way of thinking, feeling and acting in the new culture. When one is resocialized the accumulated content of their life-learning is forever altered causing the formation of a new holistic cultural identity that remains with the individual in both cultures. In other words, they do not simply add a new and separate cultural identity, but forge a fundamentally new selfhood. The individual is forever changed as a result of a life-lesson.

When I resocialized I did not simply added a new cultural
identity onto my old one. Yes, I became competent in two cultures but I cannot simply set aside my Armenian knowledge, skills, or perspective because I am living in the United States. For example I now worry less about time and have relaxed greatly the importance I place on material possessions and personal achievement for what I consider a more centered approach to the material world. This comes from my life-lesson in Armenia. These were not conscious decisions I made upon my return from Armenia in August 1997. As time passes, changes in my self occur as a result of my changed life-learning. As such, my behavior in both cultures--United States and Armenia--is a unique function of a combined and integrated store of culture-learning. I have become more than culturally competent in two separate countries, I am more competent now than ever before at home and in Armenia. When I am in Armenia I feel almost as much at home as I do in the United States. By becoming resocialized into the Armenian culture my world view about Armenia, the United States, the world and most importantly myself and my immediate social environment changed as a result.

My previously held life-learning has been replaced by new perspectives, attitudes, beliefs and behavioral choices as a result of action in a new cultural context, and reflection on that action with the assistance of friends and colleagues in Armenia. In this way, the model of resocialization I offer in this study stands traditional models of acculturation and social adjustment on its head. Instead of believing that knowledge attainment by education begets
action which causes adjustment in a new culture, I propose that social action begets knowledge which in turn creates, through the reflexive monitoring of behavior, resocialization. In order to adjust to a new cultural context an individual must first take action in the new culture—whether it be to develop relationships, communicate, or interact—before he or she can incorporate new knowledge and understanding about the culture in a meaningful way. Action and reflection—the hallmark of Paulo Friere’s method of praxis—is the only road to successful resocialization in a foreign culture.

What Was I Doing in the Armenian Culture?

This remains a question for immense speculation. Because one can never know for sure what were their intentions or motives in a particular situation, I am left to speculate about mine after the fact. Therefore, to answer this question I must look at my interpretation of these experiences for clues. Yet, because this is simply speculation based on what I believe happened I invite readers to speculate themselves about the larger question regarding my experience in Armenia in particular and intercultural adjustment in foreign cultures in general.

I began this journey in 1995 as a certified agent of the modern West. I was a representative of a hegemon and prepared by a lifetime of learning—personal and professional—in the United States during the Cold War. My mission as a modern tourist was to carry the message of modernity to the Republic of Armenia. Yet,
this message was not about the virtues of capitalism. I was not sent to Yerevan to create new markets for traditional American products (Sklair, 1995). My purpose was to influence the Armenian definition of drug problem so they would come to believe they had the same type of problem as Americans. I was asked to apply American drug prevention procedures, based on an ideology of the American drug problem, and by doing so construct a definition by which the Armenians should characterize the use of drugs in their society. The cure could not be applied unless the illness was diagnosed correctly.

Therefore, as a representative of modernity I fit the description of MacCannell's modern tourist. My job was to help modernize Armenia by paradoxically, introducing a language and technology to define and then prevent a major drug problem which may or may not exist in their culture. Perhaps it is true, a country cannot be considered modern unless it exhibits modern social problems.

Yet, some strange things happened along this road. First, I dismissed my original project when I discovered the Armenians did not need to define their drug problem. They simply did not have one, by any definition. Besides, even if they did have a drug problem, cultural differences rendered my expertise in drug prevention, in effect, meaningless in their context. I needed to start over learning about drug prevention in the Armenian culture if I was to be helpful.

Second, through observation I discovered the manner in which
Americans approached assisting the Armenians was rude and arrogant. I knew before I boarded Armenian Airlines in 1995 I wanted to be different than what I witnessed from the State Department employee in Amsterdam (see Chapter IV). I was the wrong person to send to promote a furthering of the Ugly American paradigm in international relations. I had no idea what the Armenians wanted or needed despite a lifetime of American life-learning telling me otherwise.

Third, I experienced a psychic emergency which plunged me into a situation where I wanted and needed to learn about the Armenian culture. This was not supposed to happen given the protected nature of my trip and my rigid work assignment described in the original Letter of Reference in Chapter III. I was supposed to fly into Yerevan, dazzle them with my expertise and fly home with mission accomplished. Actually, based on the performance of previous UNDP consultants, I was supposed to act like a disinterested tourist and submit a meaningless report which allowed UNDP to believe they helped while leaving the Armenians exactly where I found them. Yes, I know this sounds cynical, but I believe a review of the facts and circumstances of this assignment and the past behavior of UNDP consultants suggest there is a lot of truth in this statement.

Fourth, I fell in love with the Armenian people and culture. Instead of being a distant consultant, I wanted to learn. As a result I began meeting people, making friends and trying to understand what they needed from UNDP instead of what UNDP said they needed. While I was not completely successful in this effort in
1995, my efforts did ultimately result in two local grass roots organizations currently addressing real social issues in Armenia important to the people involved.

Finally, as a result of my passion for Armenia this experience became personally meaningful. Instead of maintaining an impossible, yet sought after distance between my personal and professional self I began a two year process of resocialization. Along the way I learned more about myself than I will ever learn about Armenia. These experiences became a life-lesson of major proportion at a time in my life when I was making significant changes in my career, educational status, and interests. I was primed for this life-lesson before I ever decided to make the trip. Since then, intercultural adjustment at home and abroad has become a personal and research interest and international community development my professional passion. Almost by spiritual conspiracy these factors converged to make this the beginning of a personal journey that transformed my life. This transformation continues to this day in other countries besides Armenia.

So, just what was I doing in the Armenian culture? Somewhere along the road between Armenia in 1995 and 1997 I retired my label as modern tourist and became of Armenia. I stopped trying to change Armenia and began to understand. I ignored old life-learning and developed new perspectives about the world and my place in it. I adopted my own version of Armenian/American values and beliefs that have changed the way I approach the world, my work and my personal
life. Instead of my helping the Armenians to modernize in the spirit of American global values, the Armenians helped change me in the spirit of their traditional values. I became the victim, as it were, of my original design. In effect, I became the client and the Armenians the social worker responsible for helping me become more like them. I am forever grateful for their efforts.
ENDNOTES

1 Throughout this study I use the term resocialization and its many forms synonymously with intercultural adjustment. In the body of this text I use both terms interchangeably.

2 My trip in August 1997 was funded by the Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership (CPNL) at Grand Valley State University in Grand Rapids Michigan, where I am an assistant professor of social work.

3 In this context, Westernization means the conversion from a command to free-market economy, privatization, and democracy-building.

4 According to Ross (1992), Essentialism suggests that America occupies an "exceptional place in history, based on her republican government and economic opportunity." As such, America was "guaranteed by a continent of virgin land...a millennial course and exempted it from qualitative change in the future." As a result, "America would forestall the mass poverty and class conflict that modernity appeared to be creating in Britain" (p. xiv).


^Actually, I was one of two consultants chosen for this assignment. Craig Love, Ph.D., a psychologist from Brown University was also chosen by UNDP and traveled with me throughout the 1995 trip. Wherever I refer to we, I mean Dr. Love and myself. I am indebted to Craig for his personal companionship and contribution to the project in Yerevan. In addition, our discussions about this experience provided a forum where many of the ideas and interpretations in this study were developed. In 1997, I traveled alone.

8Defined as the tendency for a person to view their way of life as superior to all others. I believe some degree of ethnocentrism is natural for humans, a product of social development in a culturally homogenous social environment.

9Defined as a sense of surprise, fear, dread, shock, or even horror when a person is confronted by a culture vastly different from their own. For this project the sense, as defined above, that occurs when the expectations one has about a new culture and the actual cultural conditions are substantially different.


11I recognize the contributions of the social constructionist model (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Vygotsky, 1978, Mannheim, 1936) and the ecological systems perspective (Brofenbrenner, 1989) to the interpretive perspective.

12According to Giddens, "ontological security" is the "con-
idence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity" (p. 375).

Freudian psychoanalysis has largely been rejected by the social work profession in favor of models that encompass the social embeddedness of the individual in their social world, (i.e., ecological systems theory, family systems theory, etc.). As a direct model of practice, Freudian psychoanalysis is, in my personal opinion based on 17 years experience, ineffective and sometimes harmful to clients seeking professional services for personal troubles. Therefore, if this model is ineffective in practice, I do not believe it can, in turn, be useful for description or explanation.

While I have objections to attribution theory and its application in cross-cultural settings, I believe in general these theories adequately describe the social sense-making process, refuting the notion in my opinion, that a priori drives, motives, or intentions cause an individual's social behavior since, by definition, if they are unconscious, one could only determine the content of these drives through a process of attribution.


This report was written after a trip to Yerevan that occurred shortly before my scheduled visit.

In 1993 the Michigan Association of Marriage and Family
Therapy (MAMFT) named me one of four "Michigan Masters" in family therapy for my work in substance abuse.

18 In this project I use the term "historical memory" as the evolving and changing quality of national memory that has an immediate and significant impact on contemporary daily life at the micro and macro level in Armenia.

19 For an interesting critique of the diversity movement, see Bernstein, 1994.


21 For further study see, Miller and Miller (1993) and Marsden (1993). There is also a growing body of professional literature about the Armenian Genocide, probably the result of openness after Armenian independence in 1991.

22 For more about this concept, see the discussion of the economy later in this chapter.

23 Not her real name.

24 Not her real name.

25 The AUA is an English-only university in Yerevan sponsored by the University of California at Berkeley.

26 Not her real name.

27 I borrow Paulo Friere's (1993) definition of praxis, defined as "the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 60). Ultimately, the action taken becomes the object of further critical reflection, in this case,
through analysis of my journal which reports on the reflection and action (praxis) taken to fulfill my assignment for the UNDP. According to Friere, this represents "true reflection" (p. 48). This working definition suggests a more unified relationship between reflection and action than does Marx's traditional definition of praxis whereby men and women take action on the material world and secondarily think about their actions.

Sklair (1995, p. 7) uses hegemon to describe any representative individual, organization, state or class, who is an agent of a key global power, whose "interests prevail in the struggle for global resources." While her definition is materialist, I use it here in a cultural-ideological critical framework.

Paying-off police officers was commonplace in Yerevan in 1995. On two occasions my driver was stopped for traffic violations. I paid between $25 and $50 USD for these offenses. I learned that drunk driving offenses cost between $50 and $100 USD depending on the severity of the drunkenness or how much money the officer wants.

Data taken from a conference I attended in Yerevan on drug and tobacco use in Armenia sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1995.

See, Chomsky (1965); Stubbs (1983); Mead (1934); Denzin (1992); Cicourel (1974); and, Maynard and Whalen (1995).

According to MacCannell (1976, pp. 23-24), a model is a "representation of an aspect of life," a medium is the "agency that
connects the model and its influence," and influence is the "changed, created, intensified belief or experience based on the model."

33 Defined by Giddens (1984) as "a lack of confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity" (p. 375).

34 I use Giddens' conception of "reflexivity." According to Giddens (1984) reflexivity is "not merely 'self-consciousness', but the monitored character of the on-going flow of social life" (p. 3). Humans are "purposive agents who have reasons for their activities and can elaborate upon them (including lying about them)" (p. 3).

35 Eda (not her real name) was a Swiss National en route to Yerevan as a representative of a Swiss relief foundation that has provided funding and guidance to the Armenian people since the earthquake in 1988. Eda became a close and valued friend and I am indebted to her for her friendship throughout this trip and beyond.

36 I read this news account in an English translated newspaper in Yerevan on August 10, 1997.

37 In this study, and especially in this chapter, I use the terms "intercultural adjustment" and "resocialize" and its various forms interchangeably. For further definition and explanation, see Chapter V.

38 I offer two definitions of acculturation, neither of which fits my definition of resocialization: (a) Acculturation occurs when
"groups having different cultures come into intensive firsthand contact, with subsequent massive changes in the original culture patterns of one or both groups. It always involves an element of force, either directly . . . or indirectly" (Haviland, 1991, p. 626), and (b) acculturation occurs by "Adding . . . new culture to the old, maintaining them separately like someone who is bilingual (Taylor, 1991, p. 141)."
Appendix A

Approval Letter From HSIRB
Date: 13 January 1997

To: Gerald Markle, Principal Investigator
    Jerry Johnson, Student Investigator

From: Richard Wright, Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 96 12 21

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Visitor in a Strange Land: Reflections on the Republic of Armenia" has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you must seek specific approval for any changes in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 9 January 1998
BIBLIOGRAPHY


