RESEARCH ON THE PECULIARITIES OF HISTORICAL IDENTITY

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Abstract
This study investigates the essence of the historical and cultural identity of modern Armenians. For this purpose, we conducted a nationwide representative sociological survey, the main results of which are presented in this article. Since the social memory has ability to form and preserve key criteria of historical identity, our study paid special attention to highlighting the content of contemporary Armenian`s public memory. The analytical material includes key narratives of social memory, which form the constructive basis of national identity; set of traditional values, as well as the root criteria of national identification. The issues of the presence of elements from the other cultures in Armenian national culture, the degree of closeness to the cultures of other peoples and the degree of self-reference in the personal perception of the presence of some elements from the other cultures are examines separately. The main results of conducted survey allowed us to determine the cultural codes of Armenian society, its structure, collective perception of Armenian national formation, language and spiritual culture, in the collective memory of people.
Keywords: history**,** culture**,** identity, values, social memory, sociological survey, Armenians.

Introduction

The research interest in the problems of cultural-historical identity in the field of humanity studies is currently increasing, parallel with the accelerating temps of development of civilization. The cultural-historical identity of the people is largely formed on the basis of historical memory and those significant historical events of the past that constitute the codes of national identity. The term identity was initially introduced into the scientific literature from the works of American psychologist E. Erickson (1968, 92). He presented identity as a dynamic quality that can change throughout a person's life. Since the middle of the last century, the concept of identity has become one of the most common topics in the humanity studies. The study of identity has become a strategic task, and over time, this term acquired the status of a special scientific category. Today "identity" is used in different sciences as an interdisciplinary concept, that can be found in philosophical, sociological, political and psychological literature. Investigations shows the general rising trend of publications and number of papers published in 2012-2025 years the overall trend is also upward. These data reflect the continuous concern of the international community on the issue of cultural identity (Kuang L. 2023, 42-43).

Theoretical concept of "identity" has become in sociology some kind of "a prism" through which many important aspects of modern society are viewed and studied (Bauman, Z. 2001,176). According to Samuel Huntington in modern world the role of ideology is declining, and at the same time the role of culture as a source of identity is increasing. (Huntington S. 2004). Identity is social in origin, and people usually identifies them with some groups from social and cultural communities whose traditional values and norms they share. For example, proficiency in a

national language "identities are manifested in language, first, as the categories and labels that people attach to themselves and others to signal their belonging" (John E. Joseph 2013). In sociology identity is defined as an individual's ability to remain oneself in changing social situations; as a result of self-awareness as a person who is different from others. By the sociological view the identity has a situational or contextual nature. Under the pressure of life's conditions and circumstances, people are drawn into an independent search for themselves (Giddens A. 1991, 12-14). Despite the fact that in recent years there has been a real explosion of interest in the concept of identity, it "remains vague and is often subject to criticism." (Hall S. 1996,1). French sociologist Nathalie Heinich sees many misunderstandings and misinterpretations of what identity is. "Identity is often distorted for political reasons, although it is an excellent intellectual tool for explaining and understanding societies." (Heinich Nathali 2022, 27). In postmodern era the identities have become more fluid and hybrid than ever before. The digital reality allows people to construct their identities around multiple environments, "often transcending geographical boundaries. (Luisa Conti 2024, 7). Today, as many authors observe the renewed interest in the complex, multidimensional process of identity construction in cross-national, cross-cultural work settings. (Helena Karjalainen 2020). By some sociologists, it may be a result of "increased global mobility and communication between people, which could impact to cultural identity and changing the nature of relationships in the society" (Wright, Craig S. 2022). The internet, development of social networks and media have revolutionized the processes of identity construction. Chinese sociologist notes that digital reality "provides a unique platform for users to actively participate in self-presentation and negotiate their identities". (Hu Y. 2024, 4).

In our survey, we relied on the definition of cultural identity formulated in the Cambridge Dictionary as a term denoting awareness of one's "belonging to, or feeling that you belong to, a particular culture" (The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology 2006). Cultural identity can be considered as an integral part of social identity, refers to the shared values, beliefs and symbols that define a culture and shape an individual's or group's sense of community. Cultural identity represents the "fundamental element of one's self-concept" and plays a fateful role in psychosocial functioning of individuals. Cultural identification comprises the sense of belonging to a particular culture and cultural group, which influences various aspects of his life (Simon Ozer, Seth J. Schwartz 2025, 1-11). Cultural identity as a rule provide norms and values against which the individuals define themselves through a clear self-perception (Ozer,S., V.Lado Gamsakhurdia and S.Schwartz 2024, 723-749). Additionally, it is clear, that self-perception and identity are not formed in a vacuum but rather are formed in the social and cultural contexts of personal life (Simon Ozer, Seth J. Schwartz 2025, 1-11). Different cultures in the world have different things what they see as important for their identity. Of course, each culture has its own unique history, own "values that make it what it is". (Friedman, J. 1994). These factors play a main role in shaping the cultural identity of the people. In case of Armenia, which is mono-ethnic state and 97% of population are ethnic Armenians, the cultural model of Armenian identity, as something a priori given, acquires special significance (Sargsyan H. 2018, 29).There are a number of important characteristics that shape national identity: huge common history, historical memory, cultural traditions, common religion, own language and literature, common geographical origin, common ancestors, and collective consciousness, which are distinguishing from others.

Methodological approach

The special sociological survey devoted to the study of social memory and socio-cultural identity of the adult population of Armenia was prepared and conducted by us in the fall of 2022, jointly with the professionals from the Armenian Sociological Association (ASA). The representative nationwide study was conducted by the questionnaire F2F survey method with the team of experienced interviewers, using the methods, norms and techniques applied in large international sociological projects, in which ASA has repeatedly participated, as the national member of

International Sociological Association (ISA), European Sociological Association (ESA) and ESOMAR (1998-2017). The sociological study was conducted in 37 cities and 66 rural areas throughout the Republic of Armenia. In total, 1,500 adult residents of Armenia aged 18 and above were included in our study. The confidence level correspondence coefficient of the sample of our sociological survey was 97%. The sampling error does not exceed the interval ±2.5% for the entire sample.

The main pillows of historical identification
Cultural identity refers to the shared identity of a cultural group. Features of cultural identities include race, ethnicity, religion, language, norms, customs, and traditions. The cultural identity is a broader concept than national identity and only partly determined by it (Helena Karjalainen 2020). The cultural identity is considered to be a most important and universal among the different types of social identities. It represents the identification of an individual specific cultural values, which reflects his/her sense of belonging in a concrete collective cultural context (Song Zhou, Lixia Jiang, Wenjie Lil & Man Leng 2025, 2). The religion and language always play a decisive role in shaping the cultural identity of any nation (Chris Drew 2023). Armenia is one of the oldest countries still in existence to adopt Christianity as a state religion. It was adopted during the reign of Armenian King Trdat III. In the 303 AD Etchmiadzin Cathedral was built, which is the religious center of the Armenians and the residence of Catholicoses (Poghosyan G. 2023). Religious identity is an important form of cultural identity, reflecting membership in a common faith and belief system. It is characterized by a specific belief, church-religious practices and rituals, unique teachings and Christian traditions. The adoption of Christianity is one of the main pillows of Armenian cultural identity. In our sociological study we tried to find out to what extent these cultural narratives have been imprinted in the national consciousness of modern Armenians. (Table 1).

Table 1. When Armenians adopt Christianity as a state religion?

In 301 - 310 AD	82.1%
Other dates	6.2%
Difficult to answer	11.7%
Total	100%

The 82.1% of respondents named the correct historical date of adoption of Christianity (in 301 AD). Proportion of respondents who gave the correct answer was higher (84%) among the urban residents, than among the rural ones (77.8%). A small percentage (6.2%) of respondents indicated the wrong dates, and 11.7% of respondents had difficulty answering this question. Among them, who found it difficult to answer, 52.6% were people with primary education and 29.2% with general secondary education.

The Armenian language and the unique Armenian alphabet, which did not repeat any other language in the world, played a very important role for Armenians. The Armenian language, being one of the oldest languages of the world, originating from the ancient Armenian language "Grabar", has preserved its identity for several thousand years and has survived to our days in the form of its two variety: Western Armenian and Eastern Armenian languages. Linguistic identity is one of the important forms of cultural identity, reflecting belonging to a common language. It is characterized by various linguistic features and unique cultural and historical experience. In this regard the question about historical date of creation of the Armenian alphabet was of no less interest in terms of the cultural identity of modern Armenian society. (Table 2).

Table 2. When was created Armenian alphabet?

In 405 - 406 AD	65.7%
Other dates	12.4%
Difficult to answer	21.9%
Total	100%

The same picture was revealed regarding the historical time of creation of Armenian alphabet, to which the majority of respondents (65.7%) gave the correct answer (in 405 AD). The incorrect dates were mentioned by 12.4% of respondents, and 21.9% found it difficult to answer. Among them, who gave the correct answer 78.9% were people with bachelor`s and 83.9% with master`s degree. Among the respondents with primary education only 57.9% gave the correct answer, among them with the general secondary education - 44.6%, and among the respondents with complete secondary education the proportion with correct answers was even less - 30.9%. The proportion of correct answers of respondents increases with the level of their education. In comparison to previous question about the time when Christianity was adopted, here the share of correct answers was slightly lower. However, to the question of who was creator of Armenian alphabet, the absolute majority of respondents (98.7%) gave the correct answer without hesitation. It can be note, the historical events of adoption of Christianity and creation of Armenian alphabet continue to remain the main codes of the historical identity of modern Armenians. The historical identity based on a sense of belonging to a common historical experience. The question of the origin, the ancient history and the time of historical emergence of Armenian people is also of equal importance for historical identification. (Table 3).

Table 3. When the Armenians arose? (%).

How many years ago	Age	(years)			Gender		Total
	18 - 29	30 - 49	50 - 69	70 +	Male	Female	%
Up to 2000	19.5	18.3	15.5	30.2	18.8	19.8	19.3
2000 - 4000	28.6	29.0	30.1	21.9	28.3	26.7	27.5
4000 - 6000	27.5	27.9	28.1	20.8	26.7	27.8	27.3
6000 - 8000	7.2	9.2	7.1	8.9	7.9	8.7	8.3
8000-10000	8.0	6.0	7.5	6.5	7.3	6.9	7.1
10000-20000	5.6	5.4	6.6	6.4	6.2	5.7	5.9
More 20 000	3.6	4.2	5.1	5.3	4.8	4.4	4.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The 27.5% of respondents indicated the time up to 4 thousand years. Over a quarter of respondents (27.3%) indicated that the Armenians emerged up to 6 thousand years ago. And according to 21.3% of respondents, they emerged much earlier: from 6 to 20 thousand years ago. The main answers of our respondents (54.8%) were grouped in the period of 2- 6 thousand years. By the scientific historiography the formation of Armenians dates to the XII century BC (Jacques de Morgan 1918). That, according to historians, the Armenian people were formed approximately four thousand years ago. The content of historical memory in the social consciousness of modern Armenians somewhat exceeds the accepted historical framework of the emergence of people. The results of sociological survey showed a wide range of opinions about the date of the emergence of Armenians.

In 2018, Armenia joined the Ancient Civilization Forum[1], 10 member countries of which (Greece, China, Egypt, Bolivia, India, Iraq, Iran, Italy, Mexico and Peru) organizing annual conference. Armenia participated these annual meetings as a representative of the Urartian

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[1] https://thenewgreece.com/interesting/ancient-civilizations-forum/ (accessed: 15.04.2025)

civilization[2]. In sociological survey we tried to find out which of the ancient peoples the Armenians themselves compare with. The question was who they consider to be more ancient peoples than Armenians. The third of our respondents (31.9%) indicated Egyptians, and 21-22% indicated Greeks and Romans, as more ancient nations. But more than a quarter of respondents (29.4%) did not indicate any other nation, apparently assuming that there is no one more ancient than Armenians. (Table 4).

Table 4. Who is more ancient than Armenians?

Nations	%
Egiyptians	31.9
Greeks	22.1
Romans	21.3
Jews	17.1
Asyrians	14.3
Persians	12.5
Chinese	11.1
Hindus	10.0
No one	29.4

The representatives of old generation (70+ years) pointed to "more ancient" peoples significantly less than the young generation, and third of them believe that no one is older than Armenians (36.7%).
The most fundamental form is national identity, which reflects a person's belonging to a certain nationality. The national identity is formed under the influence of history, culture, language, religion, traditions and other factors. The sociological survey made it possible to identify which nations, by the opinion of respondents, Armenians are most similar to. (Table 5).

Table 5. Which nations are Armenians most similar to, (%)

Nations	Similar*	Not similar**	DN
Georgians	35.9	64.1	2.7
Greeks	34.3	61.4	4.3
Russians	23.4	74.2	2.4
Jews	21.9	71.7	6.4
Iranians	20.2	76.5	3.3
Turks	19.2	78.4	2.3
French	14.9	80.2	4.8
American	10.3	84.2	5.5
Arabs	8.6	85.8	5.5
Other	3.5	-	96.5

* two responses "Very similar" and "Quite similar" are presented.
** two responses "Not very similar" and "Not at all similar" are presented.
Armenians believe that they are more similar to Georgians (35.9%), Greeks (34.3%), Russians (23.4%) and Jews (21.9%). And they are not similar to Arabs (85.8%), Americans (84.2%), French (80.2%), Turks (78.4%) and Iranians (78.4%). Representatives of the old generation (70+ years) more indicated the closeness to Russians and Georgians. Representatives of young people more indicated the closeness to Greeks, Jews and French.

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[2] https://www.armmuseum.ru/news-blog/2022/11/24/armenia-the-forum-of-ancient-civilizations-in-iraq (accessed: 15.04.2025).

The Britain scientists recently have mentioned that ancient Armenian gene has penetrated the roots of representatives of many nationalities (anthropological blog Dienekes[3]). Based on the conducted genetic studies they found that it was most often observed among the following peoples: Lezgins (13.8%), Georgians (12.4%), Italians (Tuscans) 11%, Turks (10%), Iranians (8%) (Garrett Hellenthal and all 2014:747-751). Some coincidences with the results of our sociological study were surprise for us. According to «A Genetic Atlas of Human Admixture History» (Garrett Hellenthal and all 2014:747-751), the Armenian gene has been found in a number of ethnic groups. About 4% of the Armenian gene has been found in the Chinese, 3.7% in certain groups of Afghans and Pakistanis, as well as among Jews, Greeks, Syrians, Cypriots, Poles, Lithuanians and even the Irish[4]. Armenians are considered Indo-Europeans.

One of the most striking examples of identity is the cultural heritage. It based on the language, traditions and values of nation. Each nation having own culture, along with those carries some features of the other national cultures. The feeling of Armenian`s closeness to other nations and cultures was revealed in the answers to the question of our survey: "Features of what other cultures are present in the Armenian culture today?" (Table 6).

Table 6. The presence of features of other cultures (in whole nation, and in respondents themselves; 5-point scale**)**

Cultures	Average ball (for nation)	Average ball (for himself)
Soviet	4,8	3,9
Russian	4,3	3,4
European	4,2	3,2
Eastern	3,1	1,8

In the Soviet culture Russian was dominant, and it turns out that, in the opinion of our respondents, features of Russian-Soviet culture are present most in the modern Armenian culture (4,8 + 4,3 score). In second place are features of European culture (4,2 score), and in the third place are Eastern (3,1 score). With an increase in the age of respondents, the points awarded to Russian and Soviet cultures increased significantly, and the points awarded to European and Eastern cultures decreased. Young people, on the contrary, awarded high points to the presence of features of European culture (4,7 score), which was expected. It was interesting to find out to what extent the respondents themselves carry features of the other cultures. The average score in the case of assessing the presence of other cultures in himself, was lower than in the assessment of the nation as a whole. According to the respondents, various features of the other cultures are present in the Armenian national culture to a greater extent than in the own culture.

The cultural identity is of great significance to the establishment of cultural self-confidence and formation of group consensus [Riquelme, E. H., Paez, D., da Costa Dutra, S. C., eds. 2024:42). It turns out that each individual Armenian believes that he or she has more features of the national Armenian culture than the nation as a whole. It is some kind of self-identity by the A. Giddens conception on self and society in the modern world (Giddens A. 1991, 12-14). At the same time, the ethnic self-identification of Armenians, despite its uniqueness, recognizes the presence of similarities with other peoples and nations.

The dynamics of main characteristics of national identity
The cultural identity is related to the inheritance and continuation of history and tradition and is the root of national unity. It affects the individual`s self-identity and belonging, as well as closely

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[3] https://armeniagid.com/ (accessed: 24.03.2025).

[4] http://admixturemap.paintmychromosomes.com/ (accessed: 07.04.2025).

related to social and cross-cultural interaction and communication. Additionally, cultural identity plays an important role in promoting ethnic integration, sociocultural unity and provides a big support for the stable social development (Guifang Fu 2024, 120). People usually define their identity by attributing themselves to a certain ethnic, national, cultural, religious, linguistic or professional group. The identity can be thought of as a kind of mosaic of various elements of language, religion, customs and cultural traditions that we inherit from our ancestors and which are meant to pass on to descendant`s generation (30 Cultural Identity Examples & Definition 2025). Through the identification, individuals are able to obtain value affirmations that extend to self-affirmation (Virgona, A., Ruby, M.B., & Kashima, E.S. 2024). Many researchers are convinced that identity is not necessarily constant and that it can change during a person's life. Moreover, a person can have several identities. For example, following Amartya Sen's concept of "plural identities," people are not reducible to one single identity. In all their identities people need to have some choices to act according to their values and beliefs. (Sen, Amartya 2001, 319–338). In in order to specifically define their identity, people resort to a certain set of characterological qualities that they consider necessary for self-identification. Such a set of necessary qualities includes blood relationship (nationality of parents), religion and religious commitment, knowledge of the native language, citizenship, the fact of birth or residence in the homeland of ancestors, as well as the possibility to freely choosing own identification with one or another group. The sociologists using a number of such necessary characteristics, the possession of which allows people to classify themselves as belonging to a certain national group and community. In a number of our previous studies, we used a similar set of characteristics. We included the same set of characteristics in the questionnaire of 2022 survey: "Which of the listed characteristics do you mean necessary to considered a person to be an Armenian?" (Table 7).

Table 7. Characteristics necessary to be considered as an Armenian, %

Characteristics	Necessary	Not necessary
Consider yourself an Armenian	56.0	44.0
Father was Armenian	53.2	46.8
Speak Armenian, master the language	41.1	58.9
Consider Armenia as the only homeland	40.8	59.2
Commitment to Armenian Apostolic Church	40.4	59.6
Mother was Armenian	38.3	61.7
To be born in Armenia	17.9	82.1

For the 56.0% of respondents the self-perception is main necessary characteristic for being considered Armenian. As the second necessary characteristic they mentioned the Armenian nationality of father (53.2%); then the nationality of mother (38.3%). All other characteristics were considered as necessary in a less degree. For the overwhelming majority of respondents (82.1%), the characteristic "to be born in Armenia" was less necessary. Actually, the homeland, religion, language, place of birth, were not so necessary for being considered an Armenian as the self-perception and father`s nationality (blood relationship). For the young people (18-29 years) the self-perception is higher necessary characteristic (59.8%), than for the older (50.8%). As well as, the nationality of father is less necessary for young people (50.1%), than for the older (56.0%). And the religious affiliation is less necessary for young people (35.4%), than for representatives of the older generation (47.3%). Among the women the significance of commitment to the Armenian Church is higher (43.1%), than among the men (37.1%). It should be note that about half of respondents (47.8%) considered the all mentioned characteristics as necessary for to be considered an Armenian. Chinese psychologist Guifang Fu noticed a similar pattern in his research: "With the increase of age, individuals often important personal factors affecting cultural identity". For example, women have more "national cultural identity than men; personal cultural identity generally comes from individual`s educational background". (Guifang

Fu 2024, 121). We were confident that some downward trend would be clearly revealed among the younger generation. To identify such temporary dynamics, we compared the results of three representative nationwide sociological surveys, conducted in Armenia in 2011, 2015 and 2022 among the young generation. This picture of dynamic of identity characteristics among the Armenian youth (18-29 years) presented bellow on Table 8.

Table 8. Trend of necessary characteristics of identity among the Armenian youth, (%)

Characteristics	2011[5]	2015[6]	2022
Consider yourself an Armenian	96.0	82.0	59.8
Father was Armenian	87.0	66.0	50.1
Speak Armenian, master the language	87.0	68.0	42.4
Consider Armenia as the only homeland	80.0	69.0	41.2
Commitment to the Armenian Apostolic Church	89.0	73.0	35.4
Mother was Armenian	72.0	57.0	37.3

Thus, for example, in 2011, 87% of the surveyed youth considered the nationality of the father to be a necessary characteristic; and in 2015, only 66.0% of the youth held a similar opinion, but in 2022 study - only 50.1% of the youth expressed such opinion. In fact, over the past 10 years (2011-2022), almost all the necessary characteristics of identity in the assessments of Armenian youth have decreased by more than 30%. For young generation the necessary characteristic of identity first of all, is self-perception. But for older generation the more necessary characteristics are blood relationship (father's nationality) and religious affiliation.

To summarize, it indicates a noticeable departure of Armenian youth from the traditional values and assessments concerning the characteristics of identity inherent in the generation of their parents. Famous American political scientist Ronald Inglehart devoted a fundamental study to the change in value orientations and life horizons (Inglehart, Ronald, 2018). Almost half a century ago, he wrote that transformations are taking place in industrially developed countries that will change the basic values of society, or more precisely, the value priorities of new generations. The first empirical evidence of such an intergenerational shift was recorded in 1970 in Western European countries, during sociological studies conducted to test the hypothesis of the transition from materialistic values to post-materialistic values (Inglehart, Ronald 2018:12). According to his hypothesis, rapid economic growth in developed countries can lead to global cultural shifts. From the existential need for survival, they moved to the freedom of self-development and self-expression. This, in turn, led to a process of intergenerational change in values, which transformed the politics and culture of high-income countries (Inglehart, Ronald 2018:15). R. Inglehart argued that in the recent decades, dominant values in highly developed societies have changed dramatically, transforming many cultural norms that had been preserved for centuries. (Inglehart, Ronald 2018, 17).

Conclusion

Our survey has revealed that the historical memory of modern Armenian society extends quite deeply, over two thousand years of national history. The overwhelming majority of respondents have knowledge of the historical events about creation of Armenian alphabet, its creator and the date of adoption of Christianity as a state religion, which obviously continue to remain the main codes of the national cultural identity. The sociological study showed, the features of Russian-Soviet culture are most present in modern Armenian culture, and in the second place there are the features of European culture, in the third place are the features of Eastern cultures. On average, each individual Armenian believes that he or she has more features of the national

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[5] Youth in Armenia, survey report. IPSC. 2011.

[6] Manukyan S. 2020.

Armenian culture than the nation as a whole. However, in personal terms, the younger generation of Armenians is more inclined to note the presence of elements of European culture in themselves. The study revealed that, in the opinion of Armenians, they are more similar to Georgians, Greeks and Jews, which is confirmed by recent international genetic studies. Traditional national values represent a fairly stable element in the structure of Armenian identity. The sociological investigation showed that the characteristics of identity, opinions, value orientations of differed not so much in the socio-demographic indicators of respondents (gender, employment, education or locality of residence), but rather in the age of respondents. The young people consider self-perception necessary characteristics of identity. Meanwhile, the representatives of older generation consider blood relationship, language, and religion necessary characteristics of identity. The intergenerational dissonance revealed in the study indicates the presence of a certain value trends among the young generation, despite the generally sufficient stability of the architectonics of cultural identity and the main narratives of historical memory. The generational trends, in particular the perceptions of the younger generation of Armenians, have demonstrated significant differences in terms of elements of cultural identity.

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